

# PRESS OFFICE BULLETIN

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## FALKLANDS

### BRITISH AIRWAYS JUMBO JETS

Contrary to this morning's reports MoD have not chartered any jumbo jets from B/Airways. They are however talking to B/Airways about the possibility of chartering aircraft but nothing has yet been agreed. It is, in any case, unlikely that jumbos would be appropriate as they are too big and too heavy.

### CARGO AIRCRAFT

MoD have chartered two Belfast aircraft from Heavy Lift Cargo Airlines Ltd. These aircraft originally belonged to the RAF. This is a normal charter agreement. Last Sunday's Order in Council covers ships not aircraft.

### SAS

We never comment on SAS deployments or activities. Last night ITN were speculating that an SAS unit had arrived at Punta Arenas (Southern Chile). MoD advised ITN that they had no knowledge of this and the Secretary of the D Notice Committee advised them that if they intended using the report it would contravene D Notice No 1. According to MoD the report is in any case untrue.

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their services in jobcentres. In return, these private establishments will provide reciprocal facilities for publicising Manpower Services Commission services. I warmly welcome these arrangements because they will assist jobs seekers in making use of all possible sources of help in finding jobs. I hope that as many private agencies as possible will come forward to take part in the scheme.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### World Development Fund

**Mr. Hooley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in international negotiations on the concept of a world development fund as suggested by the Brandt Commission.

**Mr. Neil Marten:** The Secretary-General of the United Nations has prepared a report on the proposal for a world development fund. At its thirty-sixth session the General Assembly unanimously adopted a decision taking note of this report.

### World Bank

**Mr. Hooley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what increase in front-end fees required by the World Bank has been made in the past 12 months; and whether increases are envisaged in the course of 1982.

**Mr. Neil Marten:** The executive board of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development agreed on 5 January to establish a front-end fee of 1.5 per cent. on new IBRD loans, the fee being a one time charge due on the date of effectiveness of a loan. Borrowers may elect to capitalise the fee and have it financed from the loan. The amount and the continued existence of the front-end fee is subject to periodic review by the executive board in the light of the bank's income prospects. There are no immediate plans to increase or decrease it.

**Mr. Hooley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much more will be paid to the World Bank by developing countries in 1983, as compared with 1982, on account of higher interest charges and lower disbursements from IDA funds.

**Mr. Neil Marten:** About \$10 million more will be paid by developing countries in 1983 than in 1982 in respect of the new service fee on undisbursed balances of IDA loans which was agreed in January. It is not possible, however, to quantify how much more they will pay as a result of the introduction of the front-end fee on new IBRD loans as borrowers have the option of deferring payment and capitalising the fee as part of the loan.

To compensate for the expected shortfall in IDA commitments during the World Bank financial year to 30 June 1982, lending by the IBRD to developing countries is being increased by \$800 million over this period. Current terms for IBRD loans are repayment averaging about 17 years, including a four-year grace period, at 11.6 per cent. interest—which has remained unchanged this year—and the 1.5 per cent. front-end fee. This compares with IDA terms of repayment over 50 years, including a 10-year grace period, at no interests, with a service charge of ¾ per cent. on disbursed balances and the ½ per cent. fee

on undisbursed balances. The amount of interest payable in 1983 on the new IBRD loans will depend on the timing and rate of their drawdown, and any variation in the interest rate for loans not yet approved.

### Sudan and Sahel Region (Desertification Measures)

**Mr. Hooley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department would be prepared to assist the cultivation of jobs in the Sudan and the Sahel region to combat desertification.

**Mr. Neil Marten:** Subject to the priorities attached to the use by the recipient Governments of our bilateral aid, we would be prepared to consider requests to assist in combating desertification. Whether this would include the cultivation of jobs would depend on the particular characteristics of the area involved. We already provide assistance for international research, including institutions concerned with arid and semi-arid regions.

### Ethiopia

**Mr. Watson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to the reply of the Lord Privy Seal on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 183, relating to the figure for aid being given to the Government of Ethiopia.

**Mr. Neil Marten:** Total expenditure in 1981-82 is now expected to be about £75,000. This represents the fulfilment of long-standing commitments and comprises £40,000 for places on extended training courses begun some years ago but not completed until 1981 or 1982, and £35,000 towards a commitment of £100,000 towards the total costs of a building connected with water resources. The remaining £65,000 of this latter commitment is expected to be spent in 1982-83; and the final expenditure on the training awards will be about £4,000. Ethiopia also benefits from aid from multilateral organisations to which Britain contributes.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Nuclear Test Ban

**Mr. Hooley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will support the proposal by Japan at the United Nations committee on disarmament in Geneva that the committee should make use of the seismological data and telecommunications system which the World Meteorological Organisation possesses, in order to facilitate the seismological verification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban.

**Mr. Hurd:** Yes. The United Kingdom has already joined in two experiments using the World Meteorological Organisation's global telecommunications system to exchange seismic data on a trial basis. We support the fullest possible use of the World Meteorological Organisation network and will continue to seek progress on verification issues relating to a comprehensive test ban.

### Falkland Islands

**Mr. Alan Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the

substance of the agreement between the Minister of State and his Argentine counterpart reached at the negotiations in New York in March and to which his predecessor referred in his speech in the House of Lords on 3 April.

**Mr. Pym:** At the New York talks the two sides considered in detail an Argentine proposal on procedures, including the setting up of a negotiating commission at ministerial level, for a more rapid tempo to negotiations on the dispute. We agreed to consider this proposal and to give a reply to the Argentine Government.

**Mr. Alan Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the substance of the sealed orders held by the governor of the Falkland Islands to be opened in the event of an Argentine invasion.

**Mr. Pym:** The governor was given instructions to make his dispositions as he thought fit to resist an invasion. As commander-in-chief he was given discretion to carry on resistance for as long as he considered to be in the interest of the Falkland Islanders. The Marines resisted and repulsed an attempt to seize Government House. There were casualties on the Argentine side. The order to cease fire was only given when the defenders were surrounded by overwhelming odds and further resistance would have caused needless loss of life to both the civilian and military population.

**Mr. Alan Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what exchanges, including those at an informal level, have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and that of the Argentine since the invasion of the Falkland Islands.

**Mr. Pym:** Following the severance of diplomatic relations, British interests in Argentina are represented by the Swiss embassy, which is in touch with the Argentine authorities as necessary on our behalf. In London the Brazilians are the protecting power for the Argentines. There have been no exchanges of substance between ourselves and the Argentines since the breaking of diplomatic relations, although we have been in touch about arrangements for respective embassy staff.

**Mr. David Young** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are in the Falkland Islands; and what steps are proposed to ensure their safety.

**Mr. Pym:** The latest Falkland Islands' census showed 1,723 British nationals and Commonwealth citizens resident in the islands. The safety of the Islanders is of the highest priority to the British Government and all possible steps will be taken to assure their protection.

**Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many residents of the Falkland Islands have the right of abode in the United Kingdom under the Immigration Act 1971.

**Mr. Pym:** Of the 1,800 residents of the Falkland Islands, about 1,400 have the right of abode in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has given an assurance that no Falkland Islander, whether he has the right of abode or not, will have any difficulty over admission to this country.

## CIVIL SERVICE

### Efficiency

**Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he has been able to quantify the improvement in Civil Service efficiency since 1979.

**Mr. Hayhoe:** Yes, wherever possible. Examples were given in the White Paper "Efficiency in the Civil Service"—Cmd. 8293—and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on January 28—[Vol. 16, c. 400]—savings from firm decisions on the programme of scrutinies introduced by Sir Derek Rayner have so far amounted to £130 million a year and £28 million once-for-all. We are also particularly concerned to remove underlying obstacles to efficiency by means of the programme of lasting reforms.

## EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

### School Meals

**Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of children entitled to free school meals do not claim; and how much revenue is saved as a consequence.

**Dr. Boyson:** Information is not available on the take-up rate of this benefit.

### Micros in Schools (Training)

**Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many teachers received in-service training into the use of micros in schools in 1981; and how many he estimates will do so in 1982 and subsequent years;

(2) if he is satisfied that there are sufficient teaching staff trained in information technology; and whether steps are at present being taken to encourage further training.

**Dr. Boyson:** It is estimated that some 3,000 teachers attended short pilot courses of in-service training supported by the micro electronics education programme—MEP—during the financial year 1981-82. In each of the following years—1982-83 and 1983-84—11,000 teachers are likely to benefit from similar MEP schemes. Comprehensive information about the training arrangements made by local education authorities independently of the MEP is not centrally available, but the number of teachers receiving some form of training is likely to increase steadily as more schools purchase microcomputers subsidised by the Department of Industry. In 1981-82 at least two teachers from 1,500 schools received some training as a condition of participation in the micros in schools scheme, and this number is likely to be exceeded in 1982-83. Longer in-service training courses in polytechnics, colleges of higher education and universities, concerned with information technology and/or computer applications in schools, provided places for some 1,300 teachers in 1981-82; and a further 100 teachers attended DES short courses organised by Her Majesty's inspectorate. It is likely that the demand for such courses will increase, and, although my right hon. Friend has at present no plans to earmark additional resources, there is evidence that in-service

recognised that, until multilateral agreements on disarmament that maintain the security of nations at lower levels of forces are achieved, the United Kingdom and other countries around the world will have to rely on adequately equipped armed forces to protect our independence and deter aggression. Just as we need to buy arms from our allies from time to time, so countries without their own defence industries will look to the United Kingdom and other industrialised nations to supply them with the equipment they need to defend themselves, and it would be inconsistent for us to deny them the right to adequate means of defence.

#### BAOR (Television Service)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of maintaining the British Army of the Rhine's television service for 1980-81 and 1981-82; what is the estimated cost for 1982-83; and what is the size of its audience.

Mr. Blaker: The costs of the English language television service for British Forces, Germany, including those incurred on related works services both here and in Germany by the Property Services Agency, were £5.5 million in 1980-81, and are estimated to be £3.9 million in 1981-82 and £4.7 million in 1982-83. The service is now estimated to reach an audience of 158,000.

#### Aircraft Flight Recorders

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that a flight recorder be lodged in every military aircraft.

Mr. Pattie: No. Although most new aircraft are fitted with accident data recorders, it is not practicable to fit them into older ones.

#### Cruise Missiles

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the weight of a cruise missile; and what will be the approximate total weight of any road transporter carrying such a missile.

Mr. Pattie: The General Dynamics Tomahawk ground launched cruise missile weighs approximately 3,000 lb. The weight of the transporter-launcher which will carry the missiles will be about 30 tons—that is, about the same weight as a large commercial vehicle.

#### MCV 80

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the state of progress with the MCV 80 project; and whether any problems have been encountered.

Mr. Pattie: MCV 80 entered full development in 1979. Work is proceeding satisfactorily.

#### Argentine Navy (Warships)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all British-built warships, by name and class, that are now in the possession of the Argentine Navy.

Mr. Pattie: The Argentine Navy possesses two United Kingdom-built type 42 destroyers the ARA "Hercules"

and the ARA "Santisima Trinidad", six ex-RN "Ton" class coastal minesweepers and an ex-RN "Colossus" class aircraft carrier purchased from the Netherlands Navy.

#### Argentina (Defence Equipment Sales)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is now prepared to answer questions on the volume of defence equipment sales in respect of Argentina.

Mr. Pattie: All defence sales to Argentina have been suspended. In the present exceptional circumstances I am prepared to consider questions on our past sales to Argentina on their merits.

#### Falkland Islands

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate in detail the number and function of all Armed Services personnel available in the Falkland Islands at the time of the invasion.

Mr. Blaker: A detachment of 75 Royal Marines together with a small survey party of Naval personnel from HMS "Endurance" were on the Falkland Islands at the time of the invasion.

The function of the detachment was to assist the Governor of the Falkland Islands in maintaining the seat of Government and to support him in his role as commander-in-chief in resisting any incursion.

Mr. David Young asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest estimate of the number and functions of the Argentinian force which invaded the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Blaker: I do not believe it would be in the public interest to disclose this information.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are being taken to keep essential personnel in the Royal Navy who would otherwise be entitled to leave the Service during the Falkland Islands operation.

Mr. Blaker: Steps are being taken to extend the service of those Royal Navy and Royal Marine officers who are nearing the end of their commissions but who are needed for the current operation. In addition, we intend to invoke the powers under section 4 of the Armed Forces Act 1966, and under schedule 7, paragraph 4A of the Army Act 1955 to retain in service ratings of the Royal Navy and Royal Marine other ranks for a period not exceeding 12 months from the date they would otherwise be entitled to be discharged or fall to be transferred to the Royal Fleet Reserve. The reason for these actions, beyond ensuring the continuance in service of all essential personnel, is to protect their status as members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces. We intend to use these powers only in the case of those who are needed for this operation, and to release them as soon as they can be spared.

#### EMPLOYMENT

##### Women

Miss Joan Lestor asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the total number of unemployed women who are not registered at employment exchanges.

the Government as a contribution thereto, as provided for in the fund regulation. There were no applications for loans from the European Investment Bank from firms in this area.

#### Inmos Ltd.

**Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Industry if the National Enterprise Board has any plans to raise additional funds from the private sector for investment in Inmos Ltd.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** This is a matter for the NEB.

**Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Industry when an announcement will be made on the siting of the second Inmos production unit in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Norman Lamont:** This is a matter for the company. However, my right hon. Friend has received assurances from the company that its second United Kingdom production unit will be located in an assisted area, although it is too early to say what the actual location will be.

#### Hanson Trust

**Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for Industry what regional aid grant has been made to the Hanson Trust and for what purpose; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. MacGregor** [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 April 1982, c. 286]: No regional development grants and no selective financial assistance under section 7 of the Industry Act 1972 has been made to date to the Hanson Trust.

### AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

#### Common Agricultural Policy

**Mr. Deakins** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will support common agricultural policy price increases on products in surplus.

**Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** The Council of Agriculture Ministers has held three meetings to discuss the Commission's price proposals for 1982-83 and on each occasion we have urged the need for prudent price increases for products in surplus.

#### European Community (Grants and Aid)

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums of money were paid by way of grants or aid to agriculture from the European Economic Community to organisations in the Morecambe and Lonsdale constituency in the last year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Peter Walker:** I regret that the information requested is not available.

#### European Community (Exports to Russia)

**Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his replies of 2 March, *Official Report*, c. 66, and 19 February, *Official Report*, c. 235 to the hon. Member for Southend, East concerning export rebates for food exported to the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics, he has now received the comparable figures for 1981 from the Commission in respect of the other member States of the European Economic Community.

**Mr. Peter Walker** [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1982, c. 204-5]: The Commission services have now given, as requested, an estimate of the cost of refunds paid for exports to the Soviet Union from the European Economic Community—excluding the United Kingdom—in the period January-September 1981. These are aggregate figures for the whole Community for each commodity, since I understand that the Commission does not have the figures broken down by individual member States. The figures that I have received are as follows:

Tariff heading and Product	Estimated total cost (million ECU)
02 Meats:	
Beef	98.51
Poultry	9.68
04 Milk products:	
WMP	26.70
08 Fruit:	
Lemons	1.32
10 Cereals:	
Wheat	11.33
Barley	17.84
11 Processed cereals:	
Flour	40.67
Malt	8.52
15 Oils and fats:	
Olive oil	0.10
17 Sugar:	
White sugar	85.42
Raw sugar	—
21 Diverse food products	50.0
22 Drinks:	
Wine	9.76
23 Residues etc.:	
Soya cake	—
Animal feed	18.22
	379.07

### DEFENCE

#### British Antarctic Territory

**Mr. Murphy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider affording extra protection to the British Antarctic Territory.

**Mr. Blaker:** Article 1 of the Antarctic treaty prohibits any measures of a military nature in Antarctica. The United Kingdom, together with 24 other States—including Argentina—is bound by this provision.

#### Equipment Exhibition (New York)

**Mr. Frank Allaun** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in view of the adverse effect on the United Kingdom's negotiating position of holding an exhibition to promote sales of military equipment at the same time as the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament in New York, is taking place, he will postpone the British Army equipment exhibition due to take place from 21 to 25 June.

**Mr. Pattie:** No. There is no conflict of interest between these two events. We are fully committed to the pursuit of arms control and disarmament, but we have always

## Falkland Islands

*Motion made and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Budgen.]

3.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Pym): I come to the House to open this debate less than two days after becoming Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. I am deeply conscious of the heavy responsibilities that have been placed upon me and I shall discharge them to the very best of my abilities.

My predecessor lifted high the reputation of Britain and British foreign policy. He made full use of his great skills and gifts and his especial flair. He registered some important achievements. He was a very fine Foreign Secretary, and the nation owes him its gratitude. He had under him a very fine diplomatic service, which has served us, and continues to serve us, well. I look forward to working with it.

The circumstances of my predecessor's departure were most unfortunate and I come to my new post at a critical time in the history of the Falkland Islands. I shall bring to this task all the determination that I can command, and I approach it in a spirit of realism and, I hope, of calm—determination, because we intend to show Argentina and the whole world that Britain is resolved to succeed in this crisis; realism, because I shall proceed in full recognition of the major difficulties that lie ahead; and calm, because we must give the most careful consideration to the practical options open to us and reach the right decisions as we advance towards our objectives.

The House knows what those objectives are. They were stated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Saturday. We intend to see that the Falkland Islands are freed from occupation and returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment. To do that, we must look forward in confidence, and not backwards in anger.

The whole House and the country is struck by the appalling nature of the aggressive action the Argentine regime has committed. As recently as the end of February, as the House is aware, we had held talks with Argentina about the Falkland Islands. The Argentine Government were fully aware of Britain's position: that is to say, total firmness on the right of the islanders to determine their own future; but, subject to that, willingness—indeed, desire—to deal with the Falkland Islands problem by means of fair negotiation.

Why did Argentina's ruler suddenly decide in the last days of March to resort to arbitrary and brutal aggression? I suggest that part of the answer lies in the very brutality and unpopularity of the Argentine regime itself. Inflation is raging in Argentina, at the rate of 140 per cent. a year. The regime is notorious for its systematic contempt of all human rights. Since 1976, there have been thousands of arrests and killings, often described in a tragic and disgraceful euphemism as "disappearances". Only a few days before the invasion of the Falkland Islands there had been riots in Buenos Aires, and many people had been arrested. Harassed by political unrest at home, and beset by mounting economic difficulties, the regime turned desperately to a cynical attempt to arouse jingoism among its people. The Falkland Islanders have thus become the victims of the unprincipled opportunism of a morally bankrupt regime. Our purpose is to restore their rights.

Since the debate on Saturday, there have been a number of developments, and I should bring the House up to date. The Governor of the Falkland Islands and the Marines from Port Stanley have been evacuated to this country. I am sure that the whole House will wish to join me in paying tribute to them.

The governor, Mr. Hunt, conducted himself with courage and dignity amid the danger and confusion. He proved himself worthy of the trust which the British Government had placed in him and of the manifest respect which he had inspired among the islanders. The Royal Marines proved equally and characteristically valiant and trustworthy. They did all that could possibly have been expected of them. They gave the invaders a sharp taste of what even a very small detachment from the British Armed Services can do when attacked by overwhelming force.

On Saturday, the Argentines occupied South Georgia. The small detachment of Royal Marines on that island put up a gallant and spirited resistance, but of course they could not stand up against overwhelming strength.

The Argentines have also been consolidating their presence in the Falkland Islands themselves. We believe that they may now have a sizeable occupation force. While we have no reports of direct maltreatment of the islanders, it is quite obvious that the occupation force has no intention of treating them other than as a conquered population. Tight restrictions have been placed on their activities. It is essential, at the very least, that the Argentine authorities respect their international obligations to the civilian population.

The House is aware that we have despatched a large task force towards the South Atlantic. We are confident that it will be fully adequate for any action that may be required in exercise of our undoubted right of self-defence under the United Nations' charter. While no formal state of war exists between this country and Argentina, we are fully entitled to take whatever measures may be necessary in the exercise of this right. This task force is an essential part of the means for attaining our objectives. It gives the strength from which to urge a settlement, and in the end it may only be strength that the regime in Argentina will understand.

There will be time before the task force reaches the area to do everything possible to solve the problem without further fighting. We would much prefer a peaceful settlement. We will do all we can to get one, and we shall welcome and support all serious efforts to that end. The House and the country should be in no doubt about that. But if our efforts fail, the Argentine regime will know what to expect: Britain does not appease dictators.

This is a tense and difficult period. We are using the interval immediately ahead for maximum diplomatic activity. The need is for all the world to bring pressure on Argentina to withdraw her Armed Forces from the islands. Britain herself has already taken various measures. We have broken diplomatic relations with Argentina. The British ambassador in Buenos Aires and most of his staff are being withdrawn. We have informed Argentina that its consulates in Liverpool and Hong Kong must now be closed. I might add here that we have increased our broadcasts in Spanish to Argentina and in English to the Falkland Islands.

A small British interests section will continue to work in the Swiss embassy, and we are most grateful to the Government of Switzerland, who are most expert in these matters, for agreeing to this arrangement. We have been

advising the many British subjects living in Argentina to depart, unless they have special reasons for remaining. We have frozen all Argentine financial assets in this country. We have stopped new credit cover for exports to Argentina. We have banned the exports of arms to Argentina, and, as the House was informed yesterday, we have imposed an embargo on the import of all goods from Argentina from midnight last night.

The despatch of our naval force and the economic measures we have taken should show the Argentine regime quite clearly that we mean business. Yet, if we are to convince it that aggression does not pay, we shall also need the support of the world community and all who believe in freedom.

The Security Council of the United Nations promptly and decisively endorsed the British view of the invasion of the islands. It adopted—the very day after the invasion—a resolution put forward by Britain. That resolution demands an immediate cessation of hostilities and an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces, and it calls on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences and to respect the United Nations charter. Britain immediately accepted the injunction to seek a diplomatic solution and observe the charter.

But Argentina displayed her contempt for world opinion by coldly declaring that she would not comply with the resolution. The resolution is mandatory. It represents the expression of world opinion. It is binding in international law. I hope that the Argentine regime will be brought by the pressure of world opinion to fulfil its legal obligations.

The whole world has an interest in the fulfilment of this resolution. There are many such territories across the world which are vulnerable to aggression from more powerful neighbours. The preservation of peace depends on the exercise of responsibility and restraint. It depends on the strong not taking the law into their own hands and imposing their rule on the weak. It depends on the international community supporting the principle of self-determination and punishing those who wilfully and forcibly violate that principle. It is the Falkland Islanders who today are being deprived of their right to live in accordance with their wishes. If the world does not oblige Argentina to restore their rights, tomorrow it will be someone else's turn to suffer aggression and occupation. The world will become an even more dangerous place.

Since 4 April, the Government have been making these views known to a large number of countries across the world. We have urged them to take measures, similar to those that Britain has taken, to bring Argentina to her senses. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent a personal message to our partners in the European Community and also to other countries with which we have particularly close ties.

Active discussion is now under way about measures by the European Community against Argentina. We have also been in close contact with the members of the Commonwealth, many of whom have responded with support, which bears witness to the strength and value of our Commonwealth links. All this diplomatic activity will continue.

The case for other countries to follow Britain in taking economic measures is very strong. The Argentine economy depends greatly on export earnings and on raising finance to pay for imports and cover the external

deficit. The scope for measures by our friends is extensive. About 40 per cent. of Argentina's exports go to our major partners, including the members of the Community. Argentina frequently tries to raise funds in the leading financial centres of the Western world.

We are asking our friends to do everything they can to help us. They may not be able to take exactly the same measures as Britain herself. I do not think that precise similarity is necessarily the answer in this kind of situation, but the supply of arms and military equipment to Argentina must be stopped in present circumstances, and I hope that our friends and partners will encourage their banks to make no new loans to Argentina. I hope, too, that they will follow us in terminating official export credits. Above all, we are asking our friends and friendly countries to take measures against imports from Argentina. I ask also that they should announce what they are doing. This will impress Argentina, and encourage others to follow suit.

We are confident of the support of the world community and in particular of our friends. With this support, we hope to make it clear to Argentina that withdrawal from the Falkland Islands and a negotiated settlement constitute the only legal and acceptable approach in the dispute and the only one which is in Argentina's own interests.

The first responses to our approaches to friendly countries have been encouraging. Many countries across the world have condemned Argentina's aggression. Our friends in Europe and the United States were among the very first. New Zealand has severed diplomatic relations with Argentina. Canada has placed an immediate ban on military supplies. Canada and Australia have withdrawn their ambassadors from Buenos Aires. The Netherlands, France, Belgium and Germany have taken action on arms sales. We hope that this list will soon grow much longer both in terms of action taken and the number of countries involved.

Meanwhile, our naval task force is on its way to the South Atlantic. It is a formidable demonstration of our strength and of our strength of will. The challenges which it may be called upon to face may also be formidable. I have no doubt that it will be equal to it. I know that the House will join me in offering full support to those who are now embarked in defence of British territory and to protect the rights which we and the Falkland Islanders hold equally dear.

It is intolerable that the peaceful people of the Falkland Islands, who are British by choice and by inheritance, should be the victims of unprovoked invasion by a powerful and covetous neighbour. It will be far from easy to reverse this situation. The difficulties speak for themselves. We shall spare no effort to reach a peaceful solution. The Falkland Islanders have reacted with courage and dignity to their rape of the islands. I assure them now that Britain will stand by them. We have always said that their wishes are paramount. We shall do all in our power to show that their confidence in us is justified.

I know that our objective of liberating the islands is shared in all parts of this House. If we in this country are to achieve our objective as swiftly and as peacefully as possible, then we must all unite in our resolve to succeed. Of course, there has been criticism of the Government's handling of the matter before the invasion. We are acutely conscious of that. Yet I believe—certainly I hope—that I

[Mr. Francis Pym]

judge the mood of the House and the country rightly when I say that the Government have their support in the determined course we have taken to solve the problem.

What we in Britain must now do, with the support and backing of all freedom-loving countries right across the world, is to see to it that Argentina's illegal and intolerable defiance of the international community and of the rule of law is not allowed to stand.

4.4 pm

**Mr. Denis Healey** (Leeds, East): I think that I should start by congratulating the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire (Mr. Pym) on his new post and on the vigour of his speech. I believe that he always wanted to serve at the Foreign Office. Each of us may have his own views about how long he will hold his office and where he will go when he leaves it. Meanwhile, I think that he was right to say that he carries a heavy responsibility. Indeed, it is an awesome one, because he must guide our nation through the most dangerous crisis that it has faced for a quarter of a century—one for which not only Lord Carrington, his predecessor, who has resigned, but the Prime Minister, who remains in office, carry overwhelming responsibility.

I do not propose to waste my time by asking for the right hon. Lady's resignation, although I am a little puzzled that she could applaud the sense of honour that led Lord Carrington to resign and remain oblivious of the fact that honour should indicate the same course for her.

I shall not concentrate unduly on the inexplicable errors of action and judgment that led to the Government betraying their duties to the Falkland Islanders—except in so far as they are relevant to the future—but in view of the Prime Minister's performance yesterday I must draw the attention of the House to a sequence of events that raise questions which still demand an answer.

In January, according to an American senator who spoke on the radio this morning, the American Government were given positive intelligence of the Argentine Government's intention to launch an assault on the Falkland Islands. At the same time, the leading Argentine paper, *La Prensa*, said that the Argentine Government would threaten military action against the Falklands in the near future.

At the end of February the then Minister of State met the Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister to agree a framework for negotiations, but the agreement was never published in the Argentine. On the contrary, a day or two later statements were made by Argentine officials and by the Argentine press threatening unilateral action.

On 3 March, when questioned by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) on that statement, the then Minister of State told the House that it had created grave concern in the Government, but no action was taken by the Government to follow up their concern.

On 3 March the then Minister of State knew that, at that very time a large NATO naval force, consisting of 30 ships, including a British submarine, a frigate and Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, was embarking on an exercise, which was to last until 18 March, in the Gulf of Mexico—not to deter aggression by the Argentine against the Falklands, but to frighten Cuba and Nicaragua, with neither of whom we had any dispute. Indeed, at that very

time Her Majesty's Government, instead of taking action to counter the Argentine threats, were the only Government outside the United States in NATO, and the only Government in Europe, to join the Argentine in legitimising the elections in El Salvador.

On 23 March the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), who was then a Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made a statement to the House on the Argentine landings in South Georgia, but failed to disclose in his opening statement that the invaders had raised the Argentine flag and had arrived there in a naval vessel. That had to be brought out in subsequent questioning. There is now conclusive evidence that on 29 March—the Prime Minister almost admitted this yesterday—the Government received detailed intelligence of the assembly of a large Argentine naval force. But that very day the Secretary of State for Defence pooh-poohed a question from the hon. Member for Oxford (Mr. Patten) drawing attention to the danger. The Secretary of State said:

"I do not intend to get involved in a debate about the Falkland Islands now."—[Official Report, 29 March 1982, Vol. 21, c. 27.]

The next day, on 30 March—

**The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland** (Mr. John Patten): I did not ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence a question.

**Mr. Healey**: I should have said the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). The next day, on 30 March, the only concession that the Government would make to the deep and widespread concern on both sides of the House was that they would keep HMS "Endurance" in the area as long as necessary. Three day later, when the Argentine forces landed on the Falkland Islands, the Government, knew nothing about it until hours after the rest of the British people had heard of it.

I learnt from journalists that the Governor had no independent means of communication with the Government in London, although scores of amateur radio enthusiasts were sending messages every day. When the invasion was known to be imminent no steps were taken to crater the runway on the islands, and I am told that no explosives were available for that purpose.

This history of indifference to an evident threat to a people for whom we are directly responsible is one of the most disgraceful episodes in British history. I do not believe that there was collusion between the Foreign Office and Argentina, as some people have said, but I believe that Her Majesty's Government's conduct over three months, if not longer, was seen by the Argentine Government as an open invitation to invasion.

Perhaps the most distressing revelation in the past day or two was that following the now resigned Foreign Secretary's interview on Monday, in which it was indicated that the Foreign Office did not expect an invasion until the end of the year, when HMS "Endurance" would have left the South Atlantic. We know that if the Argentine Government had waited until 1984 half of the frigates and destroyers in the task force would have been sold to foreigners or would be in the scrapyards. HMS "Invincible" would already have been serving in the Australian Fleet and HMS "Hermes" would have been in the junkyard.

If the British Government had behaved in that way on a vital British interest 200 years ago, the Prime Minister



would have been impeached. The right hon. Lady has chosen to stay, but from this moment she has no moral or political rights whatever to ask the Opposition to give her a blank cheque. No responsible Opposition in this situation could surrender their freedom of thought and action to a Prime Minister who had demonstrated such a monumental lack of judgment. However, we have a duty to the nation and we shall fulfil it, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition did on Saturday when he spoke for Britain as a whole and was praised for so doing by nearly everyone on the Government Back Benches.

I now turn to the problems raised—the serious and difficult problems, as the Foreign Secretary said—following the despatch of the British task force to the South Atlantic. Some people have sought to see a precedent for the despatch of this force in what happened at Suez a quarter of a century ago. The argument in Suez was about property rights—that in the Falkland Islands is about human rights. At Suez a British Government violated the United Nations charter. In the Falkland Islands crisis the Argentine Government have violated the United Nations charter and the British position has won overwhelming endorsement from the Security Council. Suez offers no precedent here.

Others say, as was said in 1938, that the Falkland Islands is a far-away country that is indefensible and that we must accept the geographical and strategic realities. However, I hope that the whole House supports the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination and to live in peace under a Government of their own choosing, as they have been able to do for the past 150 years.

The right of self-determination is a fundamental human right that we are responsible for restoring, as the right hon. Gentleman told us. If we turn our backs on that responsibility the next thing we shall see is an invasion of Belize by the brutal dictatorship in Guatemala, a possible invasion of Nicaragua by her neighbours, an invasion of Grenada or Cuba by their neighbours, and, perhaps, the invasion of Guyana by Venezuela. Indeed, there could be threats to British overseas colonies such as Gibraltar and Hong Kong. I hope that the Secretary of State for Defence, who is to reply, will give a firmer assurance than we have had heretofore, that the Government have no intention of withdrawing British forces from Belize while the threat from Guatemala persists.

I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the United Nations now has a duty to take action to prove that dictators cannot get away with the product of their aggression. If the United Nations is unable to take such action, the whole framework of world order would be under threat. On that I totally agree with the Foreign Secretary.

Britain has a major responsibility to help the United Nations. She has the right to do so under article 51 of the United Nations Charter. However, I remind the House that the resolution to which the right hon. Gentleman referred commits Britain to seeking a diplomatic settlement of the crisis. That commitment was drafted by the British Government in presenting the resolution to the Security Council.

We all know from bitter experience that it is impossible to negotiate with a military dictatorship except against a background of strength. A dictator will not concede in negotiation what he can keep by force. Therefore, the Opposition support the despatch of the task force to the area, but I must warn the House of the appallingly difficult

and dangerous situation to which the Government have exposed the nation. The wrong use of that task force could lead to the unnecessary loss of life among our soldiers, sailors and marines in the task force and to appalling economic and political consequences. The Government must now tread a narrow path between two dangers. The first danger is surrender in a diplomatic settlement that sells the Falkland Islanders down the river and is totally inconsistent with the objectives that the right hon. Lady set herself on Saturday—to see the islands freed from occupation and returned to British administration.

I understand that the Government are not insisting on British sovereignty as a result of the settlement that might be reached. I say that because the Prime Minister added on Saturday that if there is to be a change of sovereignty it must be with the consent of the islanders and with the approval of the House. The Prime Minister will know that under her own Administration the Foreign Office raised with the Argentine Government a couple of years ago the possibility of a transfer of sovereignty with a lease-back over 25 years.

First, there is the danger of a settlement that is inconsistent with our responsibilities to the Falkland islanders. The other danger is that of a large-scale military conflict with Argentina in circumstances that cost us the support of the United Nations and world opinion. Even if we won such a conflict in those circumstances we would be thought to have acted inconsistently with the Security Council resolution and the situation of the islanders following our victory would be intolerable. They would be threatened permanently by a new invasion and, as we were told on Saturday, Britain could not conceivably give permanent protection against such an invasion.

Perhaps the most dangerous enterprise of all—

**Mr. Robert Mellish (Bermondsey):** I am trying to follow the logic of my right hon. Friend's argument. I understand what he is trying to say and I understand the importance of avoiding what could be a major conflict in which thousands of lives could be lost. Let us suppose that the Fleet sails to the Falkland Islands and diplomatic overtures have been made. The United Nations, and all that it represents, might ask to be part of the Fleet and that request might be refused. That will mean that, in spite of diplomatic efforts, the Fleet will be off the Falkland Islands. Is my right hon. Friend saying that in those circumstances the Fleet should turn round and go home?

**Mr. Healey:** I am coming to deal with that question.

**Sir Bernard Braine (Essex, South-East):** Answer.

**Mr. Healey:** I am coming to deal with the question and I shall do so in my own way and in my own time.

**Mr. Robert Atkins (Preston, North):** Answer now.

**Mr. Healey:** I wish to put to the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer".]—that perhaps the most dangerous scenario of all would be that of an all-out assault on the Falkland Islands at a time when we were dangerously weak in air power and when the Argentine forces would have had a further two or three weeks to build up their strength and their stores on the island, and would certainly outnumber the forces that we could mount against them. For that type of sea-borne assault a superiority of 3:1 or 5:1 is normally reckoned to be required.

I quote Colonel Jonathan Allford of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, who many hon. Members

[Mr. Healey]

will know as a most respected strategist and who was a member of the British Army until recently. He has said that our task force is not designed or equipped for a major amphibious landing. Indeed, he said:

"Trying to storm the beaches against that sort of opposition" —

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman trying to question the credibility of our Armed Forces?

Mr. Healey: No. The colonel continued: "would result in the Government fulfilling its pledge up to its neck in dead marines."

It is not defeatism to say that. The Argentines can read that as well as I have read it to the House. What we need at this time of all times, as the Secretary of State has said, is realism and calm. I tell the Prime Minister that the hard facts of military reality cannot be swept away by flabby rhetoric or misquotations from Queen Elizabeth I.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Barton): The right hon. Gentleman should know.

Mr. Healey: Worst of all, an opposed landing would inflict intolerable casualties on the Falkland Islanders, whom it is our duty to protect. They are not asking for the peace of the cemetery. Somehow—I am coming to answer the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Mellish)—between the extremes we must seek and find a diplomatic solution that the Falkland Islanders can accept and that is consistent with the commitment that we have made to the Security Council.

The main purpose of our naval task force—I believe that the Government see it in this way—is to give us the strength with which to negotiate. I make the following point as someone who was Secretary of Defence for six years and someone who for most of the last world war was involved in combined operations in various parts of the Mediterranean. Too many people without experience of war see the choice as being between Armageddon and surrender. I hope that the principle of the economy of force will always be the key to the British use of armed forces in a situation that requires a diplomatic settlement. I refer to my experience as Secretary of State for Defence during the long war of confrontation with Indonesia. We rightly kept large air forces, including bomber forces, in Singapore as well as very large naval forces. However, I never allowed our bombers to drop one bomb and we won the war after four years —

Mr. Robert Atkins: And then we pulled out.

Mr. Healey: We made a peaceful agreement with Indonesia, and the people of Borneo and Indonesia have been living together harmoniously ever since. We lost fewer men in casualties during those four arduous years of jungle patrol and fighting than we lose on the roads on the average Bank Holiday weekend.

We cannot guarantee that we shall not be involved either by the accident of war or through attacks by the Argentine forces in a much larger scale conflict than I would wish. However, that prospect must lead the United States Administration to use all its influence for a peaceful solution. The evidence that has been published so far is that the United States is now engaged in continuous activity to try to find a way of getting under way the process of reaching a diplomatic settlement. I hope that the

right hon. Gentleman can confirm that Vice-President Bush has been accepted by the Government at least as a sort of go-between by the United Kingdom and Argentine Governments. This may be the first step towards getting the process of a diplomatic settlement in motion.

I hope that we shall also involve the United Nations at the first opportunity.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): We have.

Mr. Healey: No. I hope that we shall involve it in an active search for a solution, which has not so far happened. It is possible that, while negotiations proceed, the United Nations might provide an administrator for the island and perhaps a peacekeeping force after the withdrawal of the Argentine forces. I note that the Government propose secession of sovereignty with lease-back over 25 years, and there have been proposals for a condominium.

Mr. John Farr (Harborough) rose —

Mr. Healey: Any solution that is reached between Britain and Argentina with help from the United Nations must be acceptable to the Falkland Islanders. They may take a different view of what is acceptable to them after the experience of the past few weeks, and even more so after the experience of the coming months.

Mr. Farr rose —

Mr. Healey: Our central concern, interest and responsibility at present—I think that the Foreign Secretary was emphasising this—must be the Falkland Islanders themselves, their rights and what they will accept. We must not allow any other consideration to impede the search for a solution that is acceptable to them.

Mr. Farr: The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the lease-back solution. He will be aware, of course, that this was considered in the Falkland House of Assembly, which unanimously rejected it. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not put that forward as any possible solution.

Mr. Healey: I was not putting it forward. I was pointing out that the Government put forward the suggestion two years ago. It is not for the Opposition to make specific proposals for a settlement. I was merely pointing out that it is possible to envisage changes in the status of the islands. The problem always is to ensure that those changes are acceptable not only to the British and Argentine Governments but to the Falkland Islanders themselves. Their view of the situation is bound to have been affected both by their recent experience and their experience during the coming months.

The Government must recognise that their record on this issue has not only faced our nation with difficult and dangerous choices, which I have attempted to put to the House, but has damaged their authority not just in Britain but throughout the world, as can be seen from the behaviour of the financial markets in the past few days.

The problems have also put the Opposition in the difficult and unenviable position of supporting the nation's interest, even when that interest is represented abroad by a Cabinet that has lost its authority at home. Nevertheless, we shall support the Government's efforts to solve this crisis so long as we are satisfied that their activities are inspired by the desire for a diplomatic solution consistent with the wishes of the Falkland Islanders and the principles

of the United Nations, and that their actions are well calculated to fulfil those principles. That is where our confidence has been badly shaken over recent weeks.

The Opposition will watch the behaviour of the Government with unremitting vigilance over the coming weeks and months. We shall not hesitate to warn them when we feel that they are in danger of betraying the nation's interests. I hope that the Government will agree to the recall of Parliament if that appears desirable at any time during the Whitsun or Summer Recess.

Last Saturday hon. Members in all parts of the House spoke to a united nation. We must continue to fulfil that honourable role as long as the present crisis persists. The Opposition will put the unity of the nation first. I call on the Government to do the same.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. Before the debate continues I wish to tell the House that over 80 right hon. and hon. Members have already indicated their wish to catch my eye, including 14 privy councillors. It is already clear to me that they will not all be called. I hope, and I make this appeal to the House before continuing, that now that the house is aware of the facts nobody will come to the Chair during the debate seeking to canvass reasons why they should be called. This makes my life intolerable when I want to concentrate on the debate.

I hope also that the House will bear in mind that what happened last Saturday has brought to me an enormous correspondence. The country is watching anxiously how we debate these matters.

**Several Hon. Members rose—**

**Mr. Mellish:** I trust, Mr. Speaker, that you will bear in mind that there are some Privy Councillors who almost never speak in the House?

**Mr. Speaker:** The right hon. Gentleman has had years of experience of not speaking in the House.

4.35 pm

**Mr. John Peyton (Yeovil):** I am one of those Privy Councillors to whom the right hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Mellish) referred. Recently I announced my decision to leave this place and in those circumstances the urge to speak on every subject at great length has left me. However, today I welcome the opportunity of saying a few words about the position in which our country finds itself.

Last Saturday's debate was a very sad occasion for all of us. It has not been made any the less sad since then by the departure of Lord Carrington from the Foreign Office. I am sure that today we are all bound together, as we were on Saturday, by feelings of sorrow, shame and anger.

We feel sorrow for the people of the Falkland Islands, the framework of whose lives has been smashed; shame for ourselves that undertakings or assurances given, perhaps unwisely, by successive Governments to defend the islands to the best of our abilities, should, in the event, have meant so little; and anger at a piece of gross international misconduct.

Sorrow, shame and anger may not be good counsellors now. They can easily drive us to take as little account of the unpalatable circumstances that now confront us as we apparently did of the growing and mounting dangers. I do not believe that it is either cowardice or defeatism to take note now of this formidable combination of difficulties that confront us.

First, there is the plain fact of geography—the difference between the 400 miles that separate the islands from their nearest neighbour—the Argentine—and the 8,000 miles that separate us from the islands. We have to face the fact also that we have no base in the South Atlantic. I do not wish now to raise the issue of Simonstown, but were we still enjoying use of that base it might be helpful to us now.

One wonders what form of defence will ever be effective against a near neighbour. The 100 Royal Marines were not enough, but it is inconceivable in our country's present circumstances that we could mount and establish such a huge naval base as would render at all times the defence of the Falkland Islands beyond all doubt. It would involve not only an unacceptable cost but a huge and equally unacceptable diversion of forces from their main role. We have to face the fact that the Falkland Islands will inevitably depend for much of their sustenance on their nearest neighbour—the Argentine—for supplies, education services and medical requirements.

We also have to face the fact that we are confronted with an entirely odious regime. One wonders what confidence it will ever be possible to place either in that regime or in any successor. We have to learn from its conduct towards its own political opponents at home, and we have to learn from the present international outrage for which it has been responsible. Whatever may happen, it is hard to believe that from this tragic episode there will not be a legacy of bitterness and mistrust which it will be extremely hard for the islanders to live with.

We should take most careful note of the passage of time. As time passes, it is likely under such circumstances that the support, sympathy and understanding of friends will be eroded. It already appears from reports in the newspapers that the United States, the President and the Secretary of State have shifted somewhat to a neutral position. They have put themselves halfway between right and wrong.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Nantwich) rose—**

**Mr. Peyton:** What defence arrangements will be made by those who have raped the islands. It seems that they will have an unlimited opportunity to prepare for defence. undoubtedly, the islanders will have a special role in that defence as hostages. There are those who are not our friends who will undoubtedly use the opportunity to fish in troubled waters.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor rose—**

**Mr. Peyton:** Those people will judge the situation by yardsticks entirely different from those that they use to judge their own conduct in Afghanistan and Poland.

Those considerations are likely to appear with increasing starkness in the coming weeks. So, too, will the advantages that are always enjoyed by bullies and thugs as opposed to the inhibition under which those who care for peace and justice always labour.

The Government have acted with, I believe, the support of Parliament and the nation. Believing that both their honour and the nation's is involved, they have committed themselves to the recovery of the islands. I take the opportunity of wishing my right hon. Friend the new Foreign Secretary well. I congratulate him on his first speech at the Dispatch Box in his new capacity.

We must also bear in mind that British forces are on their way to we know not what. It is clear that they must

[Mr. Peyton]

be assured of our support. The Government must know that to hold out hopes now which subsequent events that are now reasonably predictable could dash would make the situation worse. The Government must ally caution and wisdom to their courage and be prepared to move slowly. I am certain, too, that the Government will need to watch with care the sympathy and support of their friends, which in foul weather cannot be taken for granted.

4.43 pm

**Mr. James Callaghan** (Cardiff, South-East): The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) has made a sombre speech, with parts of which I agree. However, I cannot applaud the spirit in which he made it.

It is correct to point out the difficulties with which the Royal Navy has been charged in the mission that the Government have given it. It is correct to ask questions about it. But there must be a spirit in which the House approaches the matter that makes it clear that the position of those living in the Falkland Islands must be protected and restored. Moreover, aggression that has been condemned by the United Nations must be repelled and set on one side. The right hon. Member for Yeovil is an old friend of mine, but his speech was rather defeatist.

Since the House met last Saturday—I regret that I was not present—the Fleet has sailed. That will alter the nature and temper of today's debate. The Navy has been given the task of restoring and re-establishing British administration—

**Sir Bernard Braine:** Sovereignty.

**Mr. Callaghan:**—or is it sovereignty? Which is it? The Foreign Secretary used the word "administration". To my recollection, the Prime Minister also said "administration" last Saturday. We should have an answer immediately, because it would clear up much misapprehension. I was half intending to interrupt the Foreign Secretary to ask whether there was a significant difference in the meanings of the two words. Will he tell us now whether by "administration" he means "sovereignty"?

**Mr. Pym:** I was quoting my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. She used the word "administration"—advisedly, I believe. Within two days I am not competent to make a precise definition of any difference that may exist there. The intention is to restore the rights of the people of the Falkland Islands. The words that we phrased, we believe, describes that accurately.

**Mr. Callaghan:** The Prime Minister had no difficulty in muttering the word "sovereignty" when I put the question. She could put the matter beyond dispute if she will now make it clear that that is what she means.

**The Prime Minister** (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I shall quote from my speech on Saturday:

"We have absolutely no doubt about our sovereignty, which has been continuous since 1833. Nor have we any doubt about the unequivocal wishes of the Falkland Islanders, who are British in stock and tradition"—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 633-4.]

I regard the Falkland Islands as being still British and as still having sovereignty. I tried to make clear in that speech that an invasion, an unprovoked aggression, has not altered and does not alter the fact and the law of British sovereignty over those islands.

**Mr. Callaghan:** I am much obliged to the right hon. Lady, but I am not sure that she has cleared the matter up. British sovereignty, as she said in her speech on Saturday, has been clear and sustained by everyone for 150 years. But there is a difference between sovereignty and administration. It is not possible, as I understand it, to equate those words.

For example, if the islands were handed back under some form of leasing arrangement—I understand that that has been discussed by the Foreign Office—and then leased back to Britain for our administration, would that solution satisfy the Prime Minister?

**Mr. Percy Grieve** (Solihull): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Callaghan:** I ask that question in no spirit of attempting to trap the right hon. Lady. I believe that the House wants to know what is the nation's objective in the matter on which we have sent the Royal Navy.

**The Prime Minister:** It is the Falkland Islanders wishes that are paramount. In every negotiation—if the right hon. Gentleman calls it that, and I have called it that—that we had, we had some of the Falkland Islands Council with us. They were with us in New York. It is their wishes that must be paramount.

**Mr. Callaghan:** I do not press the Prime Minister further this afternoon. I do not regard her answers as satisfactory. I shall come later to ways in which I believe that these issues must be solved and worked out. We have embarked on a most difficult and dangerous exercise which carries very great risk.

**Mr. Grieve rose—**

**Mr. Callaghan:** I have had a number of exchanges with the Conservative Front Bench. I think that I should try to get on, in view of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak.

The world has shown a remarkable and, to me, rather surprising understanding of Britain's position. With resolution 502 at the United Nations, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, France and the European Commission all supported us in the position that we have taken. So far, so good. But when I hear Government spokesmen use the words "we are ahead on points", I must say that I feel a little squeamish. This is not a game of tennis. We are engaged on a most serious operation.

This afternoon, I wish to look ahead, but before doing so I wish to have a retrospective look. If the right hon. Member for Yeovil is correct, as he was, in saying that there has been shame, sorrow and humiliation, and if, as he half suggested, we have to swallow that shame, sorrow and humiliation—[Hon. Members: "And anger."]—and anger and outrage, it is not too much to ask whether we should ever have been here at all.

**Mr. Peyton:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I did not say that we had to swallow anger, shame and rage. I suggested that they could be bad counsellors.

**Mr. Callaghan** I agree absolutely. There is no need for a dispute between us on that.

The Prime Minister's defence is that she did not know and could not possibly know and, until Argentina had taken the decision to invade, she could not possibly take action, but that is not the real question. The real question

is this. Was the available evidence of such a character that she should prudently have taken precautions at an earlier date? My answer to that question must be "Yes".

It was the concern of the Government. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) asked a very important question on 3 March—a month before the invasion—in which he referred to the aggressive statements appearing from the Argentine and asked what steps were in hand to ensure the protection of the islands. The reply given conveyed the Government's anxieties. The then Minister, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) said that the Government felt "deep concern" and that it caused "deep anxiety". If that was the feeling in the Foreign Office, I should have expected some precautions to be taken. It seems frivolous not to take precautions if there was deep concern and anxiety about the position.

That is my first charge against the Government and particularly against the Prime Minister on this matter. Today our Fleet is sailing towards hostilities that could have been prevented. That is my case. I shall not spend time on the fact that we are sending an aircraft carrier that has already been sold to meet cash limits from a port that is to be closed and with 500 sailors holding redundancy notices in their pockets. I find that humiliating, too, and I hope that other hon. Members feel the same.

This, if it ever came to it, would be the unnecessary war—a war that need not have taken place and which yet, I trust, will not take place. In my view, the seeds of the present invasion were sown when our will to protect the people of the Falkland Islands seemed to be weakened in the eyes of the Argentines by the announcement on 25 June 1981 that HMS "Endurance" was to be withdrawn. I know, and we all know, that we had a policy of high risk in relation to the Falklands. We always said that we would have the symbol of protection there as an earnest of our determination. That is what the deterrent is all about in that sphere, as in others. It is a symbol of our determination. I believe that it was that card that was thrown away at that time.

The Government were warned time after time about this. For example, on 9 February, I asked the Prime Minister a question about the withdrawal of HMS "Endurance" and I warned that it could have serious consequences. The Prime Minister replied:

"My right hon. Friend . . . felt that other claims on the defence budget should have greater priority."—(*Official Report*, 9 February 1982; Vol. 17, c. 857.)

Sir Nicholas Bonsor *rose*—

Mr. Callaghan: I shall give way in a moment, but I wish to finish this point.

I cannot conceive of a more naive invitation to a military dictator to invade than to say that there are other, higher claims on our defence budget. When I consider the cost that the present expedition will eventually bring home in bills, I can only say that we have wasted a great deal of funds and resources by not taking precautions at the time when we should have done.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) for giving way, particularly as my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) thought fit not to do so. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that now is not the time for an inquest on how we are arrived at this position. In the interests of our country, it is imperative

that the House should now show its united resolution to see the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands returned to our people.

Mr. Callaghan: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but it is also the responsibility of the House to declare its judgment of those who sit on the Government Front Bench. I yield to no one in my determination in these matters, but I also want to have confidence in those sitting on that Bench. At the moment, I do not have it, and I shall be making proposals on that.

Of course the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence receive the telegrams and the intelligence assessments, but so does the Prime Minister. Every week, she has all the major telegrams, all the intelligence assessments and, if she wishes, the raw material on which those assessments are made. If I may say so to the right hon. Lady, they are for her guidance. It is for her to use her judgment on the information that is put before her, and on this occasion she made a gross blunder. I know that Conservative Members always throw a protective cloak around the Prime Minister when she is attacked, but it is necessary to question her past in this matter if we are to consider what part she is to play in the future.

If Conservative Members' words mean anything, they must understand that we are living in a period of half peace and half war. Technically, it is a state of war, but in fact it is half peace and half war. I tell the Prime Minister that there cannot be business as usual. As these preparations mount and as an unprecedented diplomatic effort has to be undertaken by the Foreign Secretary, it will not be possible to go on running Departments as they have been run in the past.

This aspect of the matter is important if we are to avoid further humiliation and possible defeat, which would be worse even than the present situation. What is the division of responsibility now? I congratulate the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. He has a remarkable and wonderful job to do. I certainly enjoyed it very much and I am sure that he will, too. But let us consider his responsibilities. He has not only the Falkland Islands to think about. He has a very large problem on his hands concerning the European Community and the budget. That, too will take up some of his time. There are other problems with which he will be concerned, although I dare say that Britain's voice will not be heard so loudly now in the Middle East or even, regrettably, on Poland because the Foreign Secretary will have to play himself in on a number of those issues.

The Secretary of State for Defence has a tremendous task to do to ensure that the fleet is properly provisioned and supplied and that its orders are properly worked out. He cannot co-ordinate all those matters.

The Home Secretary is sitting next to the Secretary of State for Defence. He faces one of our greatest problems, which is law and order and how we deal with crime in our inner cities. The Prime Minister, with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has to try to run the whole economy as well as she can. Those are big and important jobs. At the same time the Prime Minister will have to undertake the most difficult task that the country has faced since Suez, which is: how do we get peace with honour? That task will demand all the time and attention that can be given to it.

In our national interest and in the interests of those who are now steaming towards possible action with resultant deaths on either side or both sides, it is necessary that we

[Mr. Callaghan]

should adapt the Government machine to that possible task. I urge the Prime Minister to do what has been done on earlier occasions—not only to establish a group of Ministers inside the Cabinet who will have to take full responsibility for handling these matters, but to ensure that a Minister, not distracted by day-to-day affairs, as other Ministers will be, can take charge and co-ordinate this interlocking and difficult task that we must face.

We have given ourselves a self-imposed ultimatum of a fortnight. It is a fortnight before the Fleet arrives at the Falkland Islands. It will not get there, turn round and come back if there has been no settlement. I cannot believe that. Therefore, we have a difficult role.

It is hard to say this to the Prime Minister, but I intend to say it. I do not believe that the Front Bench as constituted at the moment has the time or the experience to handle these matters when they are taken in conjunction with the other important issues that Ministers will have to face. There are other Conservative Members of experience who should be invited and charged with the task of co-ordinating this difficult problem of interlocking diplomacy and preparation for possible war.

It is absolutely vital that the Navy should understand what are its orders and that we should know exactly what objective it is fulfilling. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) asked, are we to go for a full-scale landing? That is not for my right hon. Friend to answer. It is for the Government to answer. It is not for us at this stage to become involved in these matters. All of us can see the difficulties. The Government must give us and the Fleet a clear lead on those issues and on the limitation of the Fleet's orders. The Navy must be empowered to use the minimum force. My right hon. Friend was correct to say that if we cannot achieve our objective in any other way, the fleet must be empowered to use minimum force to do two things. The first is to ensure that the islanders' wishes to live in freedom are met and the second is to ensure that aggression does not pay.

Reference has been made to the position of the United States. I welcome its intervention. It can bring greater pressure to bear upon the aggressor than anyone else. However, this should be made clear to the United States. The United Nations' resolution demands an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands. That is the initial condition that must be met if the United States is to start putting forward conditions that we are asked to accept.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Yeovil that after the troops have been withdrawn we can begin discussions on the problem that for years has beset every Foreign Secretary as well as the Falkland Islanders who have lived under the shadow of the Argentines so that they can regulate their relations with the Argentines. Then there can be a period of peace which, incidentally, would enable the Falkland Islanders to develop their prosperity. Those things can come only once the troops have been withdrawn. Let that be made clear to the United States in any effort that it undertakes.

I wish to say one other thing that perhaps will not be palatable. We shall be scrutinised by the world. One of the issues for a co-ordinating Minister in conjunction with whatever group of Ministers is made responsible for these matters is to decide quickly whether Britain intends to declare a war zone. I dare say that even now enterprising

newspapers are chartering aircraft to fly over the Fleet so that journalists can see what is happening when it reaches the South Atlantic. I am sure that Soviet submarines will be poking their noses in—possibly from other fleets, too—perhaps from friendly nations. If we want to avoid third party incidents, one of the earliest decisions that the Government must reach is whether to declare a war zone.

I have mentioned those matters in passing because I want the House to realise—I believe that it does—the tremendous complications that arise once one sends the Fleet on its way, especially when one has only a fortnight before action will be joined in some form or another. Those are issues that the Government must solve and bring to our notice.

I regret that the Prime Minister has not spoken today. She should be in personal charge of all these matters. When Sir Anthony Eden was involved in Suez, he came to the House every day and made his own report. The right hon. Lady knows that Sir Winston Churchill personally assumed responsibility. We look to the Prime Minister to give the lead on these matters and assume responsibility for what is taking place in all those areas, whatever ministerial co-ordination may be involved. The right hon. Lady has made a mistake—if I may say so—by not taking that lead and speaking to the House.

It is our responsibility to put our own case on one side. As the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devon (Mr. Clark) said recently, we are talking about a peaceful and inoffensive community of British subjects, which has been occupied by a repressive and Fascist régime. Those people have been threatened with 60 days' imprisonment without trial if they show disrespect. The hon. Gentleman said that we must react to that. Of course, the hon. Gentleman is right. Of course, we must react. Britain must do its best to secure peace with honour. Despite our heavy criticisms of the Prime Minister and the Government, we shall support that end.

5.08 pm

Mr. David Steel (Roxburgh, Wolkirk and Peebles): Since the humiliation of the takeover of the Falkland Islands and our debate on Saturday, the Foreign Secretary and two other experienced Ministers in the Foreign Office have resigned. It is right that we on the Liberal Bench should place on record our appreciation of the distinguished services rendered to this country by Lord Carrington, particularly during his period in office as Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

It may be thought by some to be an exaggeration, but a senior Minister in a Government to which this country attaches some importance told me yesterday that in his view—it is sometimes instructive to listen to the views of our friends outside the House—the loss of Lord Carrington from the Government was more serious to the Government than the loss of the Falkland Islands. That is a measure of the standing that he enjoyed in many parts of the world. Lord Carrington performed one last important service—[Interruption.] I hope that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will shut up during his speech.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It so happens that I did not hear what the hon. Member said.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I did not say anything.

**Mr. Speaker:** I hope not. The whole House is tired and fed up with the hon. Gentleman interrupting other hon. Members. **Mr. Steel.**

**Mr. Skinner** rose—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. I have called the Leader of the Liberal Party.

**Mr. Steel:** Lord Carrington performed one last important service which we, as parliamentarians, should recognise. He restored to its full dignity the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. That is of great importance. I hope though, that he will not simply be made the scapegoat for what has happened.

I do not want to go back over the past. The questions raised by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) were of great importance. To those, I would add only one further question that must be answered. There is no doubt that we and our allies in the United States spend quite a lot of money—rightly so—on intelligence. I cannot believe that intelligence information was not available over the days immediately before the naval attack by the Argentine. Clearly, a political misjudgment of the most serious type was made.

During the debate on Saturday the Prime Minister said that if she had sent an aircraft carrier to the islands she would have been accused of being bellicose. That is a fair point. But, as I remember, no one suggested sending an aircraft carrier. The right course would have been to send one or two of the fast hunter-killer submarines to the islands, and to make it clear to the Argentine Government through the normal private channels, that any intrusion on the territorial waters of the Falkland Islands would be firmly dealt with by those submarines. That would have been the correct course. I very much welcome the fact that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has decided that it will hold an inquiry into this episode on behalf of the House. That is right and proper.

The only other passing reference that I wish to make to the past is to support what the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East said about the defence priorities of the Government over the past three years. It is a cruel irony that only 24 hours before the invasion the Prime Minister was attacking my colleagues on the Liberal Bench for weakness because they did not support the Trident missile programme. Who was looking weak on Friday? It certainly was not Liberal Members.

We have witnessed a deliberate policy of priority decisions, particularly in forward spending, which have involved the resignation of the Minister responsible for the Navy and a change in the Secretary of State for Defence. Further, as a result of those decisions, of the two aircraft carriers leading the expedition to the Falkland Islands one is already under sale to the Australians and the other is due to be scrapped. When this immediate episode is over, I do not think that the House can do other than return to the question of defence priorities and the defence budget.

I wish to say something that I hope the House will accept in the right spirit. The Prime Minister has chosen not to consult other party leaders on the expedition. The country, therefore, is not on a war footing. We, who have to maintain a responsible position in the House leading

other political parties, have no choice but to support our Service men, in the expectation that the Government do have a strategy and know precisely what they intend to do.

I wish to make it clear that in giving that support, we register it with the aim of safeguarding the lives and freedom of the 1,800 citizens on the Falkland Islands. That must be the objective. The objective must not be to conduct a necessarily bloody battle over the recovery of imperial territory, much of which might be destroyed in the process, and still less, should it be to save the Government's reputation. Its clear purpose must be to display the unacceptability of this invasion from the Argentine and to secure by diplomatic means conditions in which the Falklanders can make a free choice about their future. At last, and belatedly, we shall, by sending the force, be negotiating from some position of strength. On this point, I disagree with the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East. I hope that once we have secured a settlement we will not again be offering the Falkland Islanders an unrealistic choice.

An hon. Member intervened earlier to say that the Falkland Islands Council had previously firmly rejected the proposals for a lease-back solution. I accept that—but it rejected it because it thought it was making a choice between a lease-back solution and Britain's protection and perpetual sovereignty over the islands. Had it been offered a choice between a lease-back solution and an invasion from the Argentine its choice would have been very different. I hope that we shall not go back to creating false illusions and false choices for the people who live there. That is why I believe that in the future the Government will be right—once they have secured the withdrawal of the Argentine forces—to discuss openly the question of a condominium and the lease-back proposal. That is why, although the Prime Minister did not say so in answer to the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East, the word "administration" is being used instead of "sovereignty" in ministerial speeches.

**Mr. Skinner:** She wants to share out the islands.

**Mr. Steel:** In that process, it is right that we enlist the help of our allies in the United States, the Organisation of American States, and—here I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey)—we should build on the support that we already have from the United Nations. It is not enough just to get the approval of the United Nations for the resolution adopted by the Security Council. We should explore the possibility of the United Nations' role as a means of getting the Argentine off the hook of our sovereignty argument. The Government would be right to explore the possibility, as we are one of the five Powers involved, of a role for the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

Our objective must be to safeguard the interests of the 1,800 citizens principally concerned. When the settlement is made, we shall have to make compensation to those islanders who wish to leave the islands. We may also have to consider compensation for those who are prepared to stay on, in view of the suffering that they have endured. I repeat that what matters is our responsibility to those people, and not to any isolated territory.

5.16 pm

**Mr. Richard Luce** (Shoreham): As the House knows, last Monday it was with much regret that I resigned from

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the Government. I approach this debate with the greatest of humility. Last Friday, as the House knows to its pain, Argentine military aggression took place on British sovereign territory in the Falkland Islands. This was, as we all feel, a humiliating experience and a grave affront to the people of the Falkland Islands above all, and to the people of the United Kingdom. That action was totally and utterly unacceptable to all of us.

In these circumstances, I believe that it matters not whether the invasion took place 80 or 8,000 miles away. It matters not whether it is 18,000 or 1,800 or 18 million British subjects who have been invaded. Whatever the circumstances, it remains a great affront to the islanders and to our nation. In these circumstances, at a time of great national difficulty, I felt that it was vital that the Government should have the full confidence and support of the country. To that end I thought that it was right for a new Minister to take my place.

My distinguished colleagues, my noble Friend Lord Carrington and my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Atkins) took the same view. I hope that the House will feel that we acted in the national interest.

I wish to say a word about my noble Friend Lord Carrington. It was for me a great privilege to have served under his leadership. He served his country with distinction for a very long time, particularly as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I am very proud to have been one of his Ministers.

At this difficult and challenging time we must look to the future. The islanders will be foremost in our minds. Their wishes are paramount. Above all, we need a sense of national unity to face these tasks.

Like my noble Friend, I now believe that this country is entitled to have complete confidence in my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the new Foreign Secretary, whom I warmly welcome to his job, and all my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench.

As for the past, of course there has been much agonising criticism. I must tell the House in all humility that in the past few days I have thought carefully about the events of the past few weeks. I can only say that, irrespective of whatever judgments will be made by the country—and the country is entitled to make them—I do not see that in the circumstances of the time my right hon. Friends and I would have made any different decisions. I say that in all honesty. But with the benefit of hindsight—I have noticed that in the past few days a number of hon. Members have been enjoying the benefit of hindsight—we were wrong, and that is now a fact of history.

I wish to say a word about ministerial responsibility. Amidst all the welter of speculation of the past few days, one allegation needs to be firmly refuted. Serious things have been said about the Foreign and Commonwealth officials. In response—I believe that it is my duty—I must say two things. After three years of service in the Foreign Office as a Minister, I am convinced that the officials are dedicated to our country's interests and have a high sense of public duty. Secondly, it is an insult to Ministers of all Governments, of whatever colour or complexion, to suggest that officials carry responsibility for policy decisions. Ministers do so, and that strikes at the very heart of our parliamentary system.

For the future, we must keep our sights on the objective. With the support of all other parties in the House

as well as of the country, we must see two things done—first, the withdrawal of the Argentine forces and, secondly, the restoration of the right of the islanders to choose their own way of life and allegiance. To that end, all diplomatic means must be used, including working closely—as my right hon. Friend is doing—with all our allies and friends.

At the end of the day, Government, Parliament and country will know where our duty lies. My last act as a Minister on Monday was to receive the Governor and Royal Marines on their return to this country. It was a moving occasion. I have nothing but admiration for them. Moreover, I have total faith in the competence and courage of our Services. They will serve our country faithfully in the weeks and months to come.

I give my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her ministerial colleagues all my support. I believe that they will show the wisdom and determination that is required. I wish them god-speed.

5.24 pm

**Mr. Ioan Evans (Aberdare):** The House listened with great sadness to the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) who, with his two colleagues, Lord Carrington and the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Atkins), resigned as a consequence of the events in the Falkland Islands.

The House should realise that this is not a question affecting only the Foreign Office or only the Ministry of Defence. This is primarily a question of the co-ordination of the two Departments. The Prime Minister's role is that of co-ordinator. Honour is not being served in the chaotic circumstances of the Falkland Islands while the Prime Minister continues to hold office.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), who, as a former Prime Minister, had knowledge of these things, spoke well. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister:

"Has the right hon. Lady been able to study this morning the reports in many newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* that the information about the attack was known in London 10 days before the invasion? Is the right hon. Lady aware that this is claimed to be on unimpeachable sources and that, if that was true, it would have been possible for action of interception to have been taken? Will the right hon. Lady say whether that information is correct and if it was received, what action was taken by the Government?"

She persistently refused to answer the question. In kindness, my right hon. Friend then asked:

"If the right hon. Lady cannot give us and the country an accurate answer on the matter now, will she study the matter further and make another statement to the House tomorrow, as many of her Ministers have had to do before?"—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 824-5.]

Did the Prime Minister know that there would be an invasion of the Falkland Islands? If she did, she is guilty of a dereliction of duty as Prime Minister. If she did not, she is incompetent and should not be Prime Minister. If the right hon. Lady is now prepared to answer the question put by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, I am prepared to give way. Clearly the right hon. Lady cannot answer, and that illustrates the seriousness of the debate.

Some Conservative Members have called for the resignation of the former Foreign Secretary. They achieved that. They have called for the resignation of the Secretary of State for Defence, but it is said in the Tea



Rooms that the Government will leave him there to see what happens. However, it is the Prime Minister who must answer for this.

I cannot recall in British history a more humiliating position than that which has led to the invasion of the Falkland Islands. Not only have Labour Members pointed to the dangers, but time and again during foreign affairs questions and in defence debates we have spoken of the possibility of an invasion. Only a week ago, during our debate on Trident, the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), the former Navy Minister who was sacked because he said that the Government were doing away with our Navy defences, argued that the Government were now putting all their eggs in a nuclear basket. They are spending £8 billion to £10 billion on a Trident force, but to do so they have had to cut our naval defences.

The Falkland Islands issue has exposed the Government's defence policy. We have the nuclear capacity, but the Argentine does not. Are the Government prepared to use nuclear weapons against the Argentine? Are they prepared to have a Hiroshima in Buenos Aires? It shows how fantastic the Government's policy is that they are prepared to cut conventional forces in order to concentrate on nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Churchill (Stretford):** Perhaps the hon. Member for Aberdare (Mr. Evans) is not aware that in 1982-83 the Government are spending on the Royal Navy non-nuclear force about £440 million more in real terms than the Labour Government spent in the year that they left office.

**Mr. Evans:** That shows how efficient and cost-effective the Labour Government's policy was.

The Secretary of State for Defence announced that a ship that had been in the area for a long time was withdrawn, which was almost a green light to the Argentine Government to invade. The two ships that have invaded the shores of the Falkland Islands are British-made and were sold by the Government to the Argentine. We have two ships that the Government have said are to be scrapped, and another that was sold to the Australians but which has been brought back into service. Those are the ships that will fight in what may yet be a major conflict. The most damaging indictment of the Government's attitude to conventional naval defence is that the young ratings who are gathered in the flotilla have their lives in the hands of this Government and their redundancy notices in their pockets. Has the Secretary of State withdrawn the redundancy notices that were presented to those naval ratings?

**Mr. Michael Mates (Petersfield):** Is the hon. Member for Aberdare (Mr. Evans) aware that all those notices are for voluntary redundancy?

**Mr. Evans:** Perhaps we can have confirmation of that from the Front Bench and not from the Back Bench. We have got ourselves into such a state that we must turn to P and O and British Airways to help us in the conflict, whereas if we had only shown a presence in the Falkland Islands, as the Labour Government did, the war that is now threatened could have been avoided.

**Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be correct for the Foreign Secretary to withhold information from the House? Information that I have received in the past 10 minutes shows that the Foreign Secretary was aware of a meeting with Mr. Haig planned either for tonight or tomorrow morning.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. That is not a point of order. The hon. Gentleman is inserting an argument into the debate.

**Mr. Evans:** The Government are not putting the full facts before the House. If they had put their cards on the table and told us what was being done, we would not be in such a serious position. The Leader of the Opposition and Labour Party spokesmen have put our position clearly. We condemn without qualification the action of the Argentine military Fascist Government in taking over the Falkland Islands by force. I hope that the Government will not in future sell arms to the Argentine or train Argentine sailors, as they have in recent weeks, to fight against British forces.

The Government have failed abysmally in their duty to protect the people of the islands. The responsibility is that of the entire Government, especially the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is guilty. Conservative Members should put Britain first before their own party's position. I have heard colleagues say that they hope that the Prime Minister stays in office because, party politically, it might be advantageous to us in the next election. I believe that we must put country before party. The 1,800 inhabitants of the Falkland Islands and the 17,000 or 18,000 British citizens in Argentina have been put in a position that could have been avoided had the Government taken proper action.

We should support the efforts being made to restore the position by diplomatic means and we should especially welcome the support of the United Nations Security Council. At times the Government have not been wholeheartedly behind the United Nations, but this is an occasion when, rather than solving the problem by resorting to war, we should do so through the United Nations.

If the Prime Minister is to carry the people of Britain with her—which she is not doing at the moment—she must tell the House what is happening. We are in this plight because of her blunders, and if she wishes to have the assistance of the Opposition parties to extract her from the war that is the consequence of her actions and inaction, she must tell us fully what she intends to do.

5.36 pm

**Sir Hugh Fraser (Stafford and Stone):** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his admirable speech on assumption of the great office of Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I also wish to congratulate the Ministry of Defence on the swift mobilisation of a remarkable armada.

I must call to mind the immense gravity of the problem that faces Britain and the House. Already this century there have been two major battles around the Falkland Islands. The House must face the fact that now the world is in danger of a third. Nothing should concentrate people's minds more than that grim thought, which must fill many of us with foreboding. I know that some of my hon. Friends believe that it is wrong to go over the past, but at such a time, however jingoistic or bellicose one should be, it would be wise to remember the dictum of Dr. General von Clausewitz, who said in the usual, if inaccurate, English translation:

"War is . . . the continuation of politics by other means."

The question that the House must ask itself is, what is Britain's policy in the South Atlantic?

In 1977 I initiated an Adjournment debate in the House. I said that, unless the special report of Lord Shackleton for

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the implementation of a strategic airfield in the Falkland Islands was carried out, they would become an Argentine colony. I do not want to attribute blame in the short-term to either Front Bench, but I see why the people of the Falklands should feel themselves betrayed. Neither the defence committee of the Labour Government nor, I believe, the defence committee of this Government faced up to the danger should something happen to the Falkland Islands 8,000 miles away. That is, I fear, the grim fact that the House should face.

There are three parts to this issue. First, there is the question of the totally unjustified aggression of the Argentine against the people of the Falklands. The whole House is, I think, agreed that we must, and will, take the necessary action. For that reason, the Front Bench should be given full support over the sailing of the British Fleet. Beyond that, there are two questions to be examined. One concerns the position of the people of the Falklands, and the other concerns the position and the interests of this country. I believe, with great respect to my hon. Friends and to many other hon. Members, that these interests coincide. If, however, there is a difference, the interests of this country must be paramount. Until this is realistically accepted, I see no possible progress in the diplomatic field.

I have many friends in the Falklands. I have been a devout supporter of the remarkable, independent people of those islands. I have many friends in the Argentine. Once the British Fleet has brought to bear the sanctions that have never previously been behind British policy in the Falklands, we must have a policy in the South Atlantic that can be sustained and that can last. The idea of freeing the Falklands only to have to re-invade them every five years is a policy not worth pursuing. This is where realism must be brought into play.

I believe, as I stated in my speech in 1977, that our interests in the area extend beyond the Falkland Islands. There are interests that we perhaps lost in Simonstown. There is still a ring of British islands around that part of the world that are important. From them flow our interest in the Antarctic and the possible development of that region in the years to come. But one ally we should have in this matter. That ally and that friend, leaving out whoever is the dictator of the country today, should be the Argentine itself.

The history of this country, the liberation and help that we have given to the Argentine and the manner in which we have built up Argentine resources, the friends we have there and the British population mean that, far from being enemies, we should be natural allies. Let us talk, as the Prime Minister and others have said, from strength, as we can talk today but as we have been unable to talk in the past 25 years in the region. Let there emerge a policy in the South Atlantic that will hold and that will not be destroyed by the whim of any dictator.

5.44 pm

**Mr. Robert Mellish (Bermondsey):** I think that I can say, like Dame Nellie Melba, that this is positively my last performance.

I tried hard to understand the point of view of the right hon. Member for Stafford and Stone (Sir H. Fraser), but he did not answer for me the fundamental question of working out a policy in the South Atlantic—a policy in

which the Government know where they are going in this vast area that we are supposed to cover. What happens now? That is the important question.

I feel for the chaps on board the ships. They are out there now. They have what I think are called butterflies in the stomach—I certainly had them in the last war. I want to demonstrate to the House that, whatever I say and whatever I do, I have this in mind. The Prime Minister political nous will tell the right hon. Lady that this is not the last time that there will be an inquest on the Falkland Islands and all that has led up to the situation. Papers will be demanded. There will be need for further searching inquiries.

We are confronted by an enormous challenge not only to Britain but to our so-called allies. They are on test as much as us. What was the last war all about? We, the so-called victors, although we were economically destroyed, emerged expecting Utopia. But one result of the last war was a strengthened League of Nations, together with a dream and a hope that never again would there be world war because the might of all nations, united together, would avert it.

I have been a member of this House for 36 years, almost as long, Mr. Speaker, as yourself. I have seen many crises of war and peace. I remember well the Berlin airlift. That took courage and guts. It needed a fine Foreign Secretary. We had one in Ernie Bevin. He told the Russians to get off, and showed what he meant by it. I recall, too, that much underrated Prime Minister Clem Attlee at the time of Korea. He showed a lohof guts. There were many sneers and jeers, but he stood up and was counted. It paid handsome dividends. I am sorry to have to go back over time, but these incidents in my parliamentary lifetime come rushing back.

The weakness of Suez was not that we were fighting a man who had a good cause. I had nothing but contempt for Nasser. I once told a public meeting that a brigade of Guards could knock out that lot. That was not the issue. What was appalling about Suez was that we ignored the United Nations and tried to take unilateral action. That was the great fault of Suez, as we learnt afterwards. There was great shame at the time for Eden and all those involved. In fact, we almost achieved the impossible. That wretched man Dulles, the American Secretary of State, spoke about honour and integrity. I have never felt so humiliated in my life. We almost achieved the impossible. We almost lost the friendship of the Americans. Only the Tories—the daft lot—could have done it. That was another lesson learnt. Now we come to the present issue.

One cannot say that the United Nations and all that it stands for and represents is not on our side. It has been said time and again. A former Prime Minister has said it. The new Foreign Secretary has said it. The Security Council has voted overwhelmingly to back Britain. What does that mean? Is it simply a bit of paper? Is that a resolution? Our lads are now on the way, with butterflies in their stomachs. In 10 or 14 days, our Fleet will be off the Falkland Islands facing a disastrous position. I lack no guts; I lack no courage. I reckon that those lads, if asked, will go in. But what will be the cost? I put this question to the Americans and to NATO. What is the purpose of the NATO pact if it does not help at a time like this? The British Fleet should not be on its own. There should be other ships with it.

We should be saying to the Argentine Fascists "This is not simply Britain talking but 10 nations. Now get out before you are attacked by the whole world". In that event,

the Argentines would want to get out. However, I am a realist and that may not happen. I understand that we are going through all the diplomatic manoeuvres possible. However, even if the Fleet is composed only of British ships we may ultimately have no alternative but to go in. That is a terrible thing to say because there could be the most appalling loss of British life. Let it be recorded that some of us will hold our so-called allies just as responsible as anybody else for the deaths of some of our lads. There is no point in having NATO, the Common Market and the United Nations if they will not stand up to be counted when we are in great distress. That is what the issue is all about.

5-50 pm

**Dr. David Owen** (Plymouth, Devonport): I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on his speech and wish him well in the onerous task that lies ahead of him. Given what I said on Saturday about Ministers considering these positions, the House will understand when I say that I am personally sad about the former Foreign Secretary's decision to resign. Like the former Lord Privy Seal and the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) the former Foreign Secretary made the right choice. They all made the right decision and deserve the respect of the House for re-emphasising the responsibility of individual Ministers—not officials—for the decisions that are made.

It is also good that, once again, we have a Foreign Secretary in this House. I have always believed that that office cannot be fully discharged unless there is democratic accountability to this House. The Foreign Secretary's speech was notable for his emphasis on withdrawal and a negotiated settlement, and for its stress on his wish to see a peaceful settlement and on his readiness to reinforce diplomacy with strength. As has been said, diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments. In this world, it is a fact of life that one cannot negotiate if one has no reserves and no strength and if one has no basic readiness to assert one's will.

On Saturday, I committed my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Government's decision that the Royal Navy should set sail for the Southern Atlantic. I see no reason to qualify that support in any way today. It is of paramount importance that the House should demonstrate to the world that there is no weakening or wobbling and that the decisions and judgments that were reached collectively on Saturday remain as firm and resolute today.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (West Lothian): For how long would the right hon. Gentleman commit significant forces to the Antarctic? Would he commit them for as long as the lifetime of the youngest among us?

**Dr. Owen:** Of course not. The hon. Gentleman is sensible enough to know that the dispute will ultimately be solved by negotiation. The question is how to negotiate and on what basis. The Foreign Secretary was wise to stick to the wording used by the Prime Minister. After all, we were asked to endorse that wording on Saturday. The Prime Minister said:

"It is the Government's objective to see that the islands are freed from occupation and are returned to British administration at the earliest possible moment."—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 633.]

The Foreign Secretary was right not to be drawn into making too great a qualification of that by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), the

former Prime Minister. Indeed, I pay great tribute to the role played by the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East in 1977. He demonstrated the co-ordinating role of a Prime Minister dealing with a crisis. The Foreign Secretary must leave his choices open and must preserve all his negotiating options.

The former Foreign Secretary, in his letter of resignation, was right to say:

"We must . . . do everything we can to uphold the right of the islanders to live in peace, to choose their own way of life and to determine their own allegiance."

At this juncture, it is dangerous to be drawn too far into the United Kingdom's negotiating position. However, it is vital that the Government should know that the House's support for our armed Service men is not totally without conditions. Indeed, neither the Foreign Secretary nor the Prime Minister would expect it to be. They realise that they will have to justify their decisions in the House. We are committed to the terms of the United Nations charter. Britain must develop its diplomacy round that charter and the mandatory Security Council resolution.

The Foreign Secretary asked the House to unite. Having listened to yesterday's Question Time and to some of today's speeches, I believe that the Prime Minister must recognise that it is in the interests of the whole country that we do not continue with a post mortem on what went on during the past few weeks and months. However, we are entitled to expect a clear-cut pledge from the Prime Minister about the form of the investigation of these events. An inquiry should be set up that can look at the telegrams, the intelligence reports and at all the documents in the Government's hands. In the words of the inquiry in 1916—which was a Special Commission—it should look at

"the origin, inception, and conduct of operations".

Nothing else will do. The history of Select Committees that have investigated such issues is not happy. The issue requires a Special Commission. The Prime Minister must satisfy the House that if we are to hold back from continually pressing the Government about the events of the past few weeks and months, they cannot escape from the major investigation into what went wrong.

I had not intended to say too much about the past. However, I gave the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn) notice that I would take up some of the points that he has made in speeches. He is a powerful figure and probably speaks for many people in Britain. Therefore, he deserves to be taken seriously. When a former Privy Councillor, who has served in four successive Administrations, makes the speeches and takes the action that he has during the past few days, it is right that he should be answerable for it. The papers tell us that he has urged that the Labour Party should dissociate itself from what he would call "Mrs. Thatcher's military adventure". We are told that he proposed a motion that was defeated—fortunately—by six votes to five. That motion was that the Labour Party could not support sending the task force, because it would endanger the people of the Falklands, whose safety and security should be Britain's first concern.

On Saturday a rumour was going round the House that the right hon. Gentleman was at last accepting that he was a member of the former Labour Government. I sometimes wish that he would show some signs of doing so. [Interruption.] I fully accept my responsibility. The right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East was involved in these

[Dr. Owen]

issues in 1977, as I was, and that needs to be said. In retrospect, I have no reason to doubt the decisions taken by us collectively and by myself as an individual.

The question arose of whether HMS "Endurance" should go. At that time, I made it clear that if we paid off HMS "Endurance", it would be a clear admission of weakness on our part and would show a lack of determination to defend our interests. I said that such an announcement would have a serious effect on the morale of the Falkland islanders. I also pointed out that we would be faced with a public and parliamentary outcry and that we would be attacked for withdrawing defence support from the islands at a crucial juncture and accused of paving the way for a sell-out to Argentina. The decision taken about "Endurance" was a great mistake. At the time the possibility of invasion was considered by a group of Ministers under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister. As Foreign Secretary, I argued that it was important that we should not be obliged to negotiate from a position of a total vulnerability. I argued that it was important that, if the Argentines were to attack our shipping or invade the islands, we should not be seen by public opinion to be unprepared. We took the decision to be prepared.

The right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East, as Secretary of State for Energy, was present when the decision was taken to buttress our negotiating position by deploying a force of sufficient strength to convince the Argentines that military action by them would meet resistance. The right hon. Gentleman was as much a party to that decision as was anyone else. It did not necessarily involve a force of sufficient size to ensure the defeat of a determined attack with reinforcements. It could not have done so. It also did not imply that a decision had been taken to fight.

However, it was a decision to negotiate from a position of strength and it is about time that the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East faced up to some of the decisions that he took in Government and stopped parading himself around the country as a symbol of conscience and of everything that he did not represent when he was in Government.

It is time that some of the right hon. Gentleman's comments were made in the House and not in Salisbury, Wiltshire. Our fleet is sailing to the Southern Atlantic and it is time that the right hon. Gentleman was challenged to justify why he could support that decision in 1977, but is unable to support negotiations now—and we are talking only of negotiations and a recognition of the need to negotiate from a position of strength. That was included in the wording to which the right hon. Gentleman objected. No doubt he will have an opportunity to explain his position.

The right hon. Gentleman has also raised the question of what weaponry will be involved. He knows that it is not the practice to reveal such information. However, he could have asked when the ships were deployed in 1977. When the nuclear powered submarine and the frigates were sent to the South Atlantic he could have asked what weapons they carried and he would have been given the answer, in private. I find it hard to understand why the right hon. Gentleman has to rush into making public statements on every conceivable occasion.

The right hon. Gentleman must start facing a few more responsibilities. He has been allowed by the House to escape those responsibilities for too long. The country has the right to ask that he should justify his position a great deal more than he has in the past. [Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I tell the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that unless he keeps quiet I will order him out of the Chamber.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There can be no point of order, but I will order the hon. Gentleman out of the Chamber if he continues his running commentary.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There can be no point of order on my ruling. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. If he does not do so, I will order him out of the House.

Dr. Owen: The House must give the Government the benefit of the doubt, and there are grave doubts. We have a new Foreign Secretary who has the task of rescuing us from a very difficult situation.

The term "pacific blockade"—a form of blockade short of war—was last used in Greece in 1916. Preventive force is in keeping with article 2(4) of the United Nations charter and is consistent with a peaceful means of settling disputes as envisaged by the charter, which provides for the collective use of military and economic sanctions.

The Government are right to take action, but they must take account of the mandatory decision of the Security Council, which commits the House and the Government to use every diplomatic means to achieve a settlement.

When the Foreign Secretary said that he would much prefer a peaceful settlement and that he would "welcome and support all serious efforts to that end" he spoke for every right hon. and hon. Member. He said: "we shall also need the support of the world community." Indeed we shall. The Foreign Secretary is right to remember that there are grave dangers in the present situation.

The Soviet Union's abstention on the Security Council resolution does not mean that it will stand aside from the controversy and crisis in the Southern Atlantic. I suspect that as our Navy is heading for the Southern Atlantic, so is the navy of the Soviet Union.

The United States has a heavy responsibility. I say to the United States, as a friend, that it cannot just be even-handed in the issue. It has to be clear in its condemnation of naked aggression. We are dealing not with aggression between two countries, but with aggression from one country—Argentina. The United States has an important role as a mediator. It must obtain withdrawal and a negotiated settlement, but we will then have to be ready to listen to the United States about what form of settlement is possible and we shall also have to listen to the views of the Falkland Islanders.

All Governments who have been involved in negotiations about the islands in recent years have taken the Falkland Islanders with them to the negotiations, have trusted them and often given them confidential information about our negotiating position. That information has never been leaked.

I believe that the islanders may be more realistic than many hon. Members about the possibilities of a negotiated settlement. Do not let us be more militaristic, more

stubborn or more zealous in the protection of the interests of the Falkland islanders than the islanders themselves would be.

6.6 pm

**Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud):** The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made a powerful speech, and I hope that the Government listened carefully to what he said about negotiations and the various avenues that could be open to us.

I share the view expressed by many hon. Members that an essential ingredient in the solution to the problem is that the Argentines must leave the Falkland Islands—preferably through negotiation; if not, they should be made to do so by force.

We have the legal sovereignty of the islands. That has never been sacrificed, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right to insist on the return of administration as well. I hope that nothing said by any hon. Member has called into question our sovereignty over the islands.

**Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest):** My hon. Friend is aware that our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred in the House yesterday to the "restoration" of sovereignty.

**Sir Anthony Kershaw:** Certainly. We can be agreed that not only sovereignty, but administration, is sought, and then we must take precautions to ensure that the drama cannot be repeated.

Like others, I regret the resignation of the Foreign Secretary and his colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), who spoke so impressively earlier in the debate. Lord Carrington was one of the great Foreign Secretaries of our time and it is sad that he has had to go.

A mistake was made, as has been honourably admitted, but we were following a policy of high risk in the Falkland Islands. We had done so for the past 150 years, and particularly in the past 25 years. We always knew that we could not defend the islands.

It would be unrealistic to suppose that we could maintain a garrison of sufficient size to defend the islands against a serious attack. If we had maintained such a garrison to ward off an attack a terribly high price would have been paid over the years. It would have been very expensive and we might have left other areas less well defended. We would also have faced the hostility of the Hispanic nations of the world, who are important to us and cling together more than some hon. Members may realise. Lastly, I am sure that we should have been condemned by many of the Third world countries for maintaining that posture. Thus, the islands were always at risk. The situation depended on the Argentine behaving in a civilised way. The mistake that was made on this occasion was in trusting the Nazi ruffians who have recently come to power in the Argentine.

To have deployed a force occasionally in that part of the world would not have been the answer. Moreover, it would have been extremely expensive. I am far from convinced that the deployment in 1977—about which we have had hints but no solid information, which I fully understand—was instrumental in securing the retraction of claims at that time. To begin with, we were dealing with a different set of people. The present-day Government of Argentina cannot be trusted to behave in a civilised way.

What shall we do now to rectify the situation? After the lesson that we have had, we cannot go back to the status quo ante. Even if we destroyed the Argentine Navy—I hope that it will not come to that—that would only postpone for a short time the military situation and it would raise terrible questions of morality for the rest of our future. Thus, the alternative of a large permanent defence force seems out of the question.

If one does not have a large permanent defence force or try to sit on one's bayonets for the rest of time, one must negotiate. There has to be some form of sharing the responsibilities or the sovereignty in that part of the world. Various negotiations took place in the past. They were considered by the Falkland Islanders and not completely thrown out of the window in the circumstances of those days. The possibility of a condominium or a lease-back were discussed in the past, and could reasonably be discussed again, provided that the islanders agree and are associated with the negotiations, as the right hon. Member for Devonport said.

Whatever is decided, there must be cast-iron guarantees in which the United Nations join to make sure that such a situation does not happen again when the Armed Forces leave.

The negotiations can be conducted in the sphere of the United Nations. We are already doing that, with success. The negotiations can also be helped by the United States, which has a great influence in that part of the world. She has influence with the nations of Latin America. She has influence with Israel, which supplies some of the arms that go to that part of the world. She has influence generally because she is the most important nation in that part of the world. We now look to the United States to exert that influence. I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport that it is not just a question of being halfway between right and wrong. The United States must decide that we have not been the aggressor, and it must act accordingly.

Finally, our European colleagues could bring some influence to bear. The right hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Mellish) suggested that they should be associated in a warlike fashion with our expedition. That is perhaps too much to hope, but by diplomatic expressions, by using their economy to take measures against the Argentine economy, they could give us important help during the coming weeks and months. To hurry along the negotiations, I believe that the threat of force is justifiable. It is not for us to tell the admirals how to fight a war, but clearly a blockade is one option that may be less bloody than others.

Some people are worried that we are sending our troops to war on an issue that is not vital to the country. Those who say that do not view the matter correctly. What is at stake is the credibility of this country—whether or not we intend to defend ourselves, if we do not defend the Falkland Islands, some may believe that we will not defend other territories and interests. Would we be led, step by step, down a road of appeasement, which some of us have seen before? Would we defend ourselves in NATO? Would we even defend ourselves in this island? If such questions were asked and were not answered clearly, sooner or later the choice would be offered to us again and again until finally our option would be world war or defeat and humiliation.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Bristol, South-East): The major change that has occurred since the debate on Saturday is that a battle fleet is now under way towards the South Atlantic. We should make it quite clear that the Prime Minister herself has full responsibility for giving orders that that fleet should sail. Some hon. Members have said that when our sailors are moving across the oceans towards a possible enemy we must unite around them. Let us be clear: they did not choose to sail to the Falklands; the Prime Minister has sent them. It would be absolutely improper for those who have sent them then to ask us to unite around those they have sent when the decision rests here. That is what parliamentary accountability is about.

The second point that I want to make is that now that a battle fleet has been sent with instructions, to which I shall come in a moment, events cease to be under the control of the Prime Minister. Having followed what was said by the Secretary of State for Defence, it seems that the Argentine Government are now in a position where they can take the initiative against the battle fleet. So this may well be the last occasion on which Parliament meets to discuss the matter before our troops are fired on. That is why I underline what my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said: Parliament must not go away for Easter while this situation develops. We must at least be available to meet and keep the situation under control. *[Interruption.]*

Many hon. Members wish to speak, but I want to make my comments absolutely clear. I am sure that the House agrees that we cannot leave our Servicemen at risk and claim our full Easter holiday. I am sure that people outside the House would support that.

The House is united in saying that an act of aggression in international law has taken place. No one disputes that. No one has defended the junta or the Government of the Argentine, or has argued anything other than that we are faced with an aggressive fait accompli. The real question is quite different: What do we do now? It is to that question that the House should address itself, and I shall do so briefly.

The task force has been sent. Despite the exchanges between the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), the Government's objectives are very unclear. There is all the difference in the world between saying that we are going to recover the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands under the British flag—which is what I thought the Prime Minister was hinting at—and saying that all that we want is an administration under anybody's sovereignty, where the Falkland Islands can be safe. The Prime Minister must be clear on that. She tried to get out of it. I do not wish to be personal but we must know what the task force will do. All that she said, when pressed was "We have always had sovereignty. It's all about allegiance". The first question that must be answered tonight is: Is the Prime Minister saying that the task force is there to restore sovereignty under the British flag to the position as it was before Friday?

**Sir John Biggs-Davison** *rose*—

**Mr. Benn:** I am putting a question to the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister calls, as no doubt she will, for a measure of support, people must know what they are supporting.

The second question is: What orders have been given to the Fleet? No one expects the operational orders to be revealed, but the Secretary of State for Defence was asked a lot of question on television on Sunday by Brian Walden. One was:

"Do you exclude an attack upon the mainland of Argentina?" The Secretary of State for Defence said—I speak from memory, but the sense of what I recall is correct—"We do not exclude any option." *[Interruption.]* That was what was coming out of the television interrogation—that we are sending a battle fleet to the Falklands with instructions that it may fire upon the mainland to restore—*[Interruption.]* That is what it is about—instructions that it may fire upon the mainland—*[Interruption.]* Before the House starts jeering, let it consider what effect this will have on world support, because that is my next point.

If the instructions are that we do not exclude an attack upon the mainland to recover the full sovereignty of the island, then, in effect, we are waiting for the fleet to engage this country in major war.

I sent a message to the Prime Minister's Office this morning to satisfy myself on one other question to which we are fully entitled to know the answer. Will she give a categorical assurance that there are no nuclear weapons of any kind in the task force that we have sent to the Falkland Islands? Not for one moment do I imagine that the Prime Minister has in mind the use of such weapons, but were a ship that carried such weapons to be sunk, that would be a major question too.

The Prime Minister must tell the House the nature of the weaponry that is carried in the task force. Given the lack of clarity about the objectives, about the nature of the orders and about the weaponry, the Prime Minister cannot seek unity for the task force as she conceives it. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East made that clear. *[Interruption.]* Yes, he did. No blank cheque for this operation has been given to the Government by the Opposition Front Bench. If somebody is to try later to cash a blank cheque, it might be better to say now that we do not want to issue a cheque at all. That is my position and I will give the House the reasons. Some of them came out of a courageous speech from the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton). The risks of this exercise far exceed the gains and, indeed, contradict the legitimate objectives of the Government.

If the islanders are first blockaded and then bombarded, and then a landing is made, there may then be no islanders to consult. Therefore, to speak of this as a great military operation, with photographs in the newspapers of marines landing at the training camp on the South Coast, is to describe—in anticipation—the death sentence on those who live in the Falkland Islands and whose welfare must be our prime concern.

To commit Service men in the Falkland Islands at this time of the year—it is winter there—in territory they do not know, against a fleet that is armed with British weapons, the spares for which were supplied recently—

**Mr. Skinner:** Thirteen days ago.

**Mr. Benn:** Thirteen days ago. The Prime Minister may know the period more accurately. To submit our task force to attack by a navy that is well equipped with British ships and British weapons is to put it to a risk to which it should not be put.

**Mr. David Stoddart** (Swindon) *rose*—

Mr. Benn: There are many hon. Members who wish to speak and I want to be brief. I want to leave no doubt as to what I am trying to say because I believe that many people want these questions to be put.

There are also British interests and British citizens in the Argentine. When the memoirs are written, in my judgment—and I can only make a guess—Lord Carrington will be shown to have resigned in part because no responsible Foreign Secretary could put at risk so great a set of British interests, in pursuit of the objectives that the Prime Minister has set. But we shall have to wait to see that.

I wonder also whether it is conceivable—because no one has fought a naval battle of this character with the sort of weapons now available—that some military defeat might be inflicted upon us. If the Prime Minister knew about these events only last week, could the Chiefs of Staff really have favoured or advised the filling of the ships for a task force within four days and then sending them off like some armada in medieval times?

I tell the Prime Minister that this is an ill-thought-out enterprise and will not achieve the purposes to which it is put. By acting in that way, she has lost the support that was carefully garnered for the Security Council resolution. Let no one think that, because the Security Council correctly opposed the aggression of the Argentine, that gives us a blank cheque to launch a major attack upon the Falklands—and perhaps upon the Argentine—because the Hispanic world will not support it.

The United Nations has been urging negotiations for ages. The Falkland islanders were reluctant to have them, because they knew that the United Nations would want some settlement involving sovereignty.

Above all, the Prime Minister should make no mistake about the American interest in this matter. Like some hon. Members, I sat in this House during the Suez enterprise. I was here on 2 August 1956, when there was a debate not so dissimilar from last Saturday's debate. The whole House was up in arms in disgust at what Nasser had done. It was said to be in breach of international law. The Americans were most friendly. Dulles thought up the Canal Users Association. But by the time it came to the invasion, the Americans had withdrawn their support. It was Mr. Harold Macmillan who had to tap the then Prime Minister on the shoulder and tell him that the game was up.

I tell the Prime Minister that President Reagan will not only be neutral; he will be bitterly hostile to any act of war against the Argentine, because American power rests on the rotten military dictatorships of Latin America. [Interruption.] Of course it does. For years it has rested on those rotten anti-Communist dictatorships. So long as they were anti-Communist, they could get United States weapons, but the weapons are not for fighting the Russians; they are for fighting their own domestic populations.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way. I am trying to be non-controversial.

I put to the Prime Minister this last parallel. President Carter was president of the most powerful country in the history of the world, with nuclear arsenals, with missiles, with aircraft, with fleets and with rapid deployment forces. Yet he sat paralysed in the White House when the

Ayatollah Khomeini held the American hostages in the embassy in Tehran. The Prime Minister must have an astonishing view of her power if she thinks that she can bring 1,800 hostages out of the Falkland Islands with the British Fleet, operating 8,000 miles from home, when Carter had the humiliation of seeing the inauguration of his successor before the Ayatollah Khomeini would release the hostages.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Benn: No, I shall not give way because I am talking common sense. [Interruption.] No, I shall not refer to the right hon. Member for Plymouth Devonport (Dr. Owen), who thinks he launched a battle fleet in an exercise that came off. He spoke as though he had launched a battle fleet and everyone capitulated, and that if only the Prime Minister were as clever as himself—[Interruption.] The right hon. Gentleman lives in his own dream world of history. [Interruption.] What was done by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East, the previous Prime Minister, was correct. He tried to have some sort of show, to indicate that negotiation would bring about a solution. But to say that to do what he did, without fuss and bother, is the same as launching a battle fleet with the orders that this fleet has been given is completely to misunderstand what the whole thing is about.

We must be constructive today, because our people here at home, some of whose sons will be serving in that fleet, will want to know what we think should happen. I give three objectives to the Government. First, the safety of the islanders should be our prime concern. If we get it wrong, as I said, there will be no one to consult. That must mean seeking a local administration that will protect the islanders from the tyranny of their new, occupying consul. Alternatively, there must be resettlement, but do not threaten them with landing craft. Their little wooden houses would quickly be destroyed by either the invader or our assault troops.

Secondly, a United Nations peace-keeping force must be established in the Falkland Islands. [Interruption.] Every time the United Nations is mentioned hon. Gentleman jeer as if it was a direct attack upon our interests. If we want the world to support us and to help the Falkland Islanders, a United Nations peace-keeping force, that we have advocated elsewhere, has the only chance of assisting the islanders. If that proposal includes a United Nations mandate, the question of sovereignty could be merged into the United Nations, and the world will support Britain against Argentina. It will not support us with the Prime Minister's strategy of threatened war, bluff, or both.

Thirdly—previous Foreign Secretaries have tried to negotiate and we have little leaks about what might have been agreed such as a lease back and so on. Now is the time to come forward with concrete diplomatic proposals. One cannot be explicit about the Navy's plans and covert or secret about diplomatic proposals. Now is the time for the Prime Minister to say that we would be prepared to cede sovereignty to a condominium or to the United Nations. Sovereignty is not what we want, it is the welfare of the people. We must be prepared to contemplate a range of solutions provided the Falkland Islanders can live in peace.

None of those legitimate and constructive proposals require the task force. The task force involves enormous

[Mr. Benn]

risks. I say as a neutral observer that it will cost this country a far greater humiliation than we have already suffered, and if history repeats itself, it will cost the Prime Minister her position. The attempt will fail. What would win world support and help the Falkland Islanders would be a decision not to send the task force. My advice, for what it is worth, is that the task force should be withdrawn.

6.32 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Rippon** (Hexham): We must all be saddened by the circumstances that brought about the resignation of the former Foreign Secretary, but I am sure that we also wish the new Foreign Secretary and the Government god-speed in the difficult task that lies before them.

I am sure that we all congratulate the Foreign Secretary on his clear and unequivocal speech. I wish that the speech from the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had been as clear and unequivocal. I am afraid that it was not. In those circumstances, we are entitled to rely on the Leader of the Opposition's statement last Saturday. As long as the Opposition remain firm behind what he said last Saturday, we shall have gone a long way towards establishing national unity of purpose.

As to the speech of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn), no one can call that clear or unequivocal. The reception that he received from his own right hon. and hon. Friends shows that they know in what perspective his remarks should be put. I leave it to him and his former colleagues to sort out his degree of responsibility while he was in Government and his degree of abrogation of responsibility since he left it.

We have had the advantage of a number of speeches from right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches that we warmly welcome. I do not necessarily agree with every word of the right hon. Members for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), Bermondsey (Mr. Mellish) or Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), but they were robust, not defeatist, speeches. The right hon. Gentlemen made the essential point that although there must be negotiations, they cannot take place until the invading forces are withdrawn. If we can be clear in that message which goes from the House today, we shall have accomplished a great deal. We can leave the inquests for later.

We all admired the tone of the fine speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce). Although there can be no inquest today, we know that anxieties have been expressed from both sides of the House that cannot be dismissed as the wisdom of hindsight. They will have to be looked into in due course. Possibly our views on the management, or mismanagement, of the situation will go a long way back—perhaps as far back as what many of us regarded as the folly of the unilateral abrogation of the Simonstown agreement. We may possibly want to consider a redrafted defence White Paper that I hope is now being prepared in order to secure the future.

This afternoon we must concentrate on the immediate necessities—our unity of purpose, the objectives of our policy and how those objectives can be achieved. We must face the facts as they are, and not as we should like them to be.

If we accept what the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State said, it is clear that we are saying that the islands

must be freed from occupation—to repeat the phrase used by the Prime Minister on Saturday—before we can or will negotiate. In that sense, there must be a restoration of British sovereignty. Thereafter, negotiations of the kind that have been discussed for some time can take place. I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East only in the sense that we must understand today just what that means. It can only mean that if a withdrawal is not negotiated we must use force to whatever extent is necessary to secure our objective. That follows clearly from what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said on television last Sunday—at least, as reported in *The Times* on Monday—that the Government are prepared, without hesitation, to order the sinking of Argentine ships if necessary, or to storm the Falkland Islands. We must not underestimate the seriousness of such a statement made in public by the Secretary of State for Defence.

To take up another point made by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East, that means we must make it clear that if the invaders do not withdraw they must not assume that there would be no attack on the Argentine mainland. That is, of course, different from saying that that is our intention, but it must not be assumed by the Argentine Government, that they can just sit there.

The best, if not the only, hope of securing withdrawal by negotiation is through strength. That is not just through strength of force, but strength of will. The best and perhaps only hope of avoiding bloodshed is to make it plain beyond any shadow of doubt that we stand rock firm behind the Prime Minister in a declaration that these islands remain British territory and that no aggression or invasion can alter that fact.

We have perhaps had our bluff called once by Argentina. We must not let that happen again. There is no need, as the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East said, for a declaration of war, but we are moving towards a potentially serious military action. Of course, we are entitled to act under article 51 of the United Nations charter, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, South-East explained.

However, while we have the force of law behind us it is important to remember that international law is not in a very certain state. Military action can be justified under international law on many grounds, but it has been well said that there is nothing more injudicious than an unsuccessful military action. We must accept that before a man jumps he must be sure that he will land on his feet, that he will be facing in the right direction and that he will be able to continue the journey.

If we are to ensure the success of our policy and our objective, it is, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) and others have said, of the utmost importance to mobilise our own public opinion and world opinion to support and sustain us. That requires unity at home. That is why it is so important that the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition should not resign from what he said on Saturday, when he declared:

"There is no question in the Falkland Islands of any colonial dependence or anything of the sort. It is a question of people who wish to be associated with this country and who have built their whole lives on the basis of association with this country. We have a moral duty, a political duty and every other kind of duty to ensure that that is sustained."—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1982, Vol. 21, c. 638.]

I hope that nothing that happens in the next few days or weeks, or whenever, will deflect him from that statement.



We have at present the support of the mandatory resolution of the United Nations Security Council, which demands the withdrawal of the invading forces. That opens up possibilities of sanctions and other action. The resolution by its very nature acknowledges British sovereignty—so far so good. However, the recent performances of the United Nations, as some right hon. and hon. Members have said, have not been exhilarating when it has come to following up the words with the necessary action. As time passes I have no doubt that representatives of member States in the United Nations will not feel inhibited because of self-interest or geographical position in attacking the twice defender of the freedom of the world in this century for taking military action against a dictator who has invaded British territory to bolster his regime and divert attention from domestic disorder and brutality.

That is why I urge the Government to produce a White Paper or some other document, which is what we did not do at the time of Suez, to explain clearly the basis on which we acted, the purpose of our action and whether we are, for example, seeking restoration of sovereignty or administration. That needs to be put in a document of some substance. We must recount what has happened over the years. We need to explain the history of British sovereignty, which goes back before 1833, since when we have had continuous, peaceful and effective occupation.

We should set out the history of the negotiations that we have had, including those in New York, where the Argentine representatives obviously acted in bad faith. We should explain what happened in 1964 when the resolution of the United Nations once again reaffirmed, in effect, British sovereignty and dealt with the matter in the context of independence for colonial territories. It was said that we should move towards independence subject to the interests of the population and the principle of self-determination. We have never departed from those principles and clearly we shall not do so now.

We should emphasise the implications for us and for the 21 other signatories of the Antarctic treaty of 1959. If we can inspire world opinion and get confidence in the justice of our cause, the Prime Minister will be proved right when she said in her television interview on Monday that we must go calmly and quietly to success. That means, as she said, using all our professionalism, all our flair, every bit of native cunning and all our equipment.

It will be fine if we achieve withdrawal and the restoration of administrative sovereignty. At that stage we shall negotiate, but we must have the political will to succeed in our present activities. As an old Malay proverb has it:

"Where there's a will, there are 1,000 ruses. Where there is not, there are 1,000 excuses."  
There must be no excuses this time because they will not be readily accepted.

6.46 pm

**Mr. George Cunningham** (Islington, South and Finsbury): There are probably a large number of hon. Members who are concerned about the difference in the atmosphere of this debate from the debate on Saturday and who feel that the backing which is given to our forces by the debate today is much weaker than it was on Saturday, and that that therefore imperils them. I suggest to the House that the mood on Saturday, when the House was virtually united, could be summed up as one of gung

ho. That ought to give way to the more serious discussion of the merits and the methods that are open to us which is taking place today.

That should not be seen as undermining our forces in the Atlantic. It is doing them no service not to contemplate the difficulties that will be faced physically not by us but by them. The right hon. member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) set the House a pattern, and a good one, in permitting himself to address himself to these difficulties.

It has been said that this is not the time for an investigation of how we got where we are today. Clearly no investigation can begin now. However, I think that it is right that the House—not today but immediately after the Easter Recess—should take a decision, first of all, that an investigation of that kind will take place and, secondly, on how it is to be done. I heard only during the debate that apparently the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has an intention of conducting some kind of investigation. I put it to the House—this is in line with what was said by the right hon. member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs is not the right body to conduct such an investigation.

The investigation should be conducted by a Committee of the House, but a small Committee specially created for its very special and demanding purpose. It should be composed of senior members who have held senior office in relevant posts. Members whose previous posts are such that making evidence available to them would not entail providing them with more sensitive kinds of information than they have previously had access to. Let us not mince words. I do not want highly sensitive material to be going to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and I say that with the very greatest respect to the members of that Committee.

This is not the time to make up a Committee, and I do so for the purpose only of illustration. We shall have to do that and we shall have to call off the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. I would see it as being a small Committee, composed, let us say, if the Labour Party will forgive me for making the suggestion because I am no longer a member of it, the former Prime Minister—the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), who would be an obvious member to represent that Party. I also suggest that the former Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil (Mr. Rowlands), should represent the Labour Party on the Committee. The right hon. Member for Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and perhaps the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) would be suitable Conservative Members. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport, the former Foreign Secretary, would be a suitable member on behalf, I hope, of the whole SDP-Liberal alliance. If that were not so and if the Liberal Party had to be separately represented, one would be getting away from the notion that I put forward of having Members who have previously had access to the kind of material which they would need to have access to in order to do this job. If the Liberals had to be represented, the leader of Liberal Party would be an excellent member—he is a Privy Councillor—of such a Committee. We are not setting up this Committee now, but I think that the Government have to give a little bit of consideration to what they are going to do on that, and such a Committee is, I think, the right Committee to use. We should tell such a Committee that it is to start its work

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not now, but when it is satisfied that doing that work would not interfere with the diplomatic and military operations that are now afoot.

It is also desirable to look backwards in the interests of learning some lessons that need to be immediately applied not actually to the Falkland's case but elsewhere. The failure is best illustrated by this fact—the battle fleet is on its way down the Atlantic and the Argentines are surprised. That is the very essence of the failure of diplomacy. The object always should be that the person to whom you may do something knows that you may do it. If you are a good diplomat you get him to believe that you will be able to do more than you actually can.

The British have no quality of that nature. The French do. But at least, you do not allow your enemy to think that you will not do something that in the event you actually do. Let us learn the lesson for the conduct of our diplomacy elsewhere and, indeed in general.—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is a bit late."] It is not a bit late because there is Gibraltar, there is the Common Market. We are conducting diplomacy the whole time and this lesson needs to be learnt.

Diplomacy, one can say, is of two kinds—the easy kind and the hard kind. The easy kind is when you are nice to somebody this week in the hope that he will be nice to you next week. The Foreign Office can do that awfully well. It is the other kind at which it has no skill, no experience and towards which it has no inclination. It is a skill that the French have to a tremendous degree—the skill of maximising every card in their hand and pushing a few up their sleeve and getting the other people to believe that there are some more up the other sleeve as well. Unless we change our diplomatic methods in that way we shall always be losers in the future as we have tended to be in the past.

I apply this to Gibraltar. The Government have to say to Madrid now that there will be no more discussions about the status of Gibraltar. Discussions about the border, whether open or closed, yes, but no more discussions about the status of Gibraltar. We have nearly 30,000 people in Gibraltar, not fewer than 2,000, and those people want to live there. I think that there were only a few handfuls of exceptions in the referendum. The people want to remain British and to remain British in Gibraltar. We should say to Spain that, as far as we are concerned, that is the beginning and that is the end of it. And we have no more discussions with Spain on the subject.

**Mr. Frank Hooley** (Sheffield, Heeley): Call that diplomacy?

**Mr. Cunningham:** Yes, that is what I call diplomacy. That is what is most likely—[*Interruption.*] My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Hooley), for whom I have great respect, by his intervention and his laughter perfectly illustrates what is wrong with British diplomacy—a failure on those issues where one wants and is able to take a tough position and to make that clear from the beginning. You are not always able to take that tough position from the beginning, but also you are not always unable to do so. In the case of Gibraltar, we are able to do it. I shall say what I should wish to do.

We must tell Spain what France would tell Spain—that it is not coming into the Common Market unless it gives renewed assurances that there will be no more trouble in

Gibraltar. That is the kind of thing that France would do, and it is high time that we started behaving in the same way.

**Mr. Hooley:** I thought that the basis of diplomacy was to understand the nature of the times that we are living in. We are not living in 1882 but 1982. The way that the hon. Gentleman talks about Gibraltar and the way that some people talk about the Falkland Islands makes me think that the shadow of Viscount Palmerston is still about.

**Mr. Cunningham:** In some past centuries it would have been regarded as perfectly right and proper for a metropolitan country to say to the people of a certain place "We are handing you over to another country". That is not the spirit of the twentieth century, and it is not right and in the spirit of 1982 for us to say to the people of Gibraltar "We are treading on your wishes and are prepared to hand you over to another country to which you have never belonged and do not want to belong."

I return to the problem before us. The Prime Minister quoted the notorious quotation of the words of Queen Victoria of there being no possibility of defeat. It was all very well for Queen Victoria to say that because she was not actually conducting the operations. She could say such a thing, but anyone who is actually in charge of mounting a diplomatic and military operation must contemplate the difficulties ahead, and they are very real in the present circumstances. I beg the Prime Minister not to take that attitude in the detailed consideration and planning of the operation as she has done in public.

Finally, the question that we should all be asking each other, and trying to educate each other upon in the course of the debate, is what do we do, literally, next? I do not think that anyone can envisage the scenario through to the end. It must involve the possibility of sinking Argentine ships and going ashore with troops. There was no point in sending the battle fleet unless that was in our minds to do, and it should be in our minds to do that if necessary, subject, however, to one thing.

As has been said by others, we have never claimed the Falkland Islands as bits of territory. We have claimed them because of the wishes of the people. At least in the last 50 years our claim has been that we could not give in to the Argentine because the people of the Falkland Islands did not want us to do so. If they had wanted us to do so then that would have been a different situation and we would have behaved differently.

Until now, we have known what the people of the Falkland Islands wanted, but the situation now is not the same as it was then and can never be the same again. We do not now know and have no means of finding out, what the people of the Falkland Islands at this moment actually want. It must be the case that some of them think that this is a new ball game that they are now in and want to leave. It must be the case that some think that.

I should like to see the United States take the initiative of proposing that there should be an international commission headed by itself and associated with it, let us say, Australia and Sweden—not Switzerland because Switzerland is acting for our interests in Argentina. An international commission would go to the Falkland Islands to which the United Nations would require—persuade—the Argentine to give the commission access.

The commission would have two functions in the Falkland Islands. The first would be to satisfy itself that

the people of the Falkland Islands were being well treated. The second would be to talk to the people of the Falkland Islands—after all it is only about 1,000 families—in order to ascertain what their current attitudes were about their future. The commission would report back to Britain, as the power with legal responsibility, and to the United Nations.

What happens thereafter I am not remotely sure of, but I am quite sure that that, or something like it, ought to be one of the most immediate steps now. We cannot go on behaving in various ways without knowing what the attitude of people of the Falkland Islands' in the situation in which they now find themselves. I hope that if the United States were prepared to take such an initiative that we would be prepared to encourage it to do so, and go along with it.

6.59 pm

**Mr. Michael Mates (Petersfield):** I am glad that some sense of perspective seems to have returned to the debate today, with one or two notable exceptions. In the past few days some people have completely lost sight of the events in the context in which they have happened. That applies to many of the people who comment on us in the media.

Of course, we have suffered indignity and humiliation. Of course, we are angry and shocked that the country should have been taken completely by surprise when we might have been warned and better prepared. However, let us remember that when incidents such as this occur and undemocratic regimes take illegal action contrary to international law and use the violence with which they sustain their internal dictatorships against others it is always the aggrieved party that comes off worst to start with. Recent history is littered with examples too familiar to need rehearsing at length. Suez has been mentioned. What about Anguilla, that great embarrassment to the British Government of the day? What about the invasion of Cyprus by the Turks in 1974?

If illegal action is taken, we always start off on the receiving end of an embarrassing situation. I was serving in the Ministry of Defence when the Turks invaded Cyprus. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) has left the Chamber. While I was sitting in the Ministry of Defence with my colleagues, having made a number of contingency plans, he was agonising over whether and how to respond. Naturally, that took some time. That incident occurred in the Mediterranean, where we existed in strength and had a naval carrier force. That incident was not 8,000 miles away, where, by its very nature, we can have no forces.

While the sense of outrage is natural, the unthinking responses that we have heard from some quarters are neither rational nor helpful. Those who have been baying for the Government's blood and for heads to roll have been answered in part. I hope that they are happy. I hope that they believe that our Government, our country and our standing in the world have been enhanced by the resignation of one of the best Foreign Secretaries we have had since the war. The departure of my right hon. and noble Friend leaves us immensely the poorer—not because of what has been happening in the past weeks but because of the immense respect in which he is held overseas and the superhuman efforts that he was making to sustain the fragile peace in the Middle East. That was just one of his almost impossible tasks. That is what I mean by a sense of perspective.

There are those who have called, and one or two who are still calling, for further resignations. It is my heartfelt hope that those voices will now be stilled because we have set out on an immensely difficult operation. If, having set our shoulder to the wheel, because of pressure from within the House and outside the Defence Secretary feels that he has to go, we would be immeasurably the poorer and the less able to sustain what we have set out to do.

Others have demanded quick solutions. Armchair strategists and those with the wisdom of hindsight proliferate daily in an atmosphere such as this. I shall attempt to avoid falling into both those traps in an attempt to explain from some of my experience why some of those suggestions are so dangerous.

First, there is the quick solution by force. Several hon. Members—most notably and surprisingly the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen)—have been advertising the panacea of the nuclear-powered submarine as providing the instant solution to a problem that might have arisen. Had it been there—we do not know whether it was there on that fateful day—some people think that that would have been the end of the matter. The strongest card that we have in our hands at the moment is our international standing. Because we have behaved in a correct fashion in the United Nations and because we have been seen to be totally in the right, the Argentines have been seen to be totally in the wrong over what has happened.

**Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham):** That is not the point.

**Mr. Mates:** That is the point. I am coming to the point. My hon. Friend might listen to my point before he argues with it.

We can now make a graduated response with all the options that are available. The problem with the nuclear-powered submarine is that it is only one option. There is only one thing that can be done, and that is to blow a ship out of the water. The submarine cannot surface to give warning because if it does that the advantage of its technology is lost.

On Friday morning had we, in the fog of war, caused the first casualties, if 1,000 Argentines had been killed and if their aircraft carrier had been sunk, I wonder what our friends' attitude to us would have been and what the international voices would have said. Some people may say that they do not care. That is the sort of remark that we would have lived to regret through the difficult days and weeks ahead.

**Mr. Eric Ogden (Liverpool, West Derby):** If we had warned the Argentine that an Argentine fleet going to British waters to attack British sovereign territory would be treated by us as an act of war, would the Argentine fleet have invaded?

**Mr. Mates:** That is an impossible question to answer because, if there had been a submarine there, there would have been no way in which it could have given that warning. The only way—

**Mr. Ogden:** We could have given that warning.

**Mr. Mates:** I shall not become involved in a tactical argument as I should then be falling into the trap that I set out to avoid.

I was merely saying that, when one sets out on such an operation, one is well advised to have every shot in one's locker. One is well advised to wait until all the options for

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action are available. To have gone off too soon with too few options might have made the situation much worse than it is today.

There are those who, when we start to talk about logistic difficulties, say "Please do not bore me with these details. Just do the job". It is with some trepidation that I take my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. du Cann) to task for what he said on Saturday. He said:

"Let us hear no more about logistics".—[Official Report, 3 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 643.]

He said that the Duke of Wellington did not whine about Torres Vedras. The whole point of Wellington's action in Torres Vedras was to shorten his lines of communication and make it impossible for the French to sustain theirs. There was an occasion when he spent four months settling logistics before he went to war. In a despatch to Lord North, he said:

"Articles of provision are not to be trifled with or left to chance."

There is no escaping the logistic difficulties of mounting this operation. Too little has been said about this. The Ministry of Defence and the Services have done a magnificent job in getting the show on the road on the morning tide on Monday. We do not operate our services at war stations in times like this. Perhaps we shall, now that we have had the warning. I shall not go into the lack of notice. Getting that lot going and seeing the Fleet disappear down the Solent on Monday morning was a major logistic achievement. Everyone should be grateful that our forces are professional enough to be able to do that job at such short notice.

Another argument which does not bear examination is that the changes in the posture of the Fleet proposed in the defence White Paper are somehow responsible for the fact that we do not have a fleet in the South Atlantic. We have not had a fleet in the South Atlantic that we have been able to sustain for 20 years. I shall not go into the history of why that happened. Now, all of a sudden, my right hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and Stone (Sir H. Fraser) says "Well, we shall keep a fleet down there in future". I remind him that 15 years ago, when our Navy was immeasurably larger and stronger, we had to mount the Beira patrol. One ship was required to be off the coast of Mozambique. It was not there half the time because we could not sustain it.

People who wish that our imperial past would return are wishing for the impossible. They do not help the credibility or the resolution of the Government by complaining that we have neglected our defences and by saying that that is why we have been left in this state. It is not the neglect of our defences that has led to this situation but the fact that for at least a decade the perspective of our defence effort has taken our forces elsewhere than the South Atlantic where our interests, great and crucial though they are, are much more limited than our interests in preserving the peace of the West, the stability of Europe and the credibility of NATO against the real enemy. That is the difference. We cannot have it both ways. Hon. Members and other people who wish to have it both ways must face the facts.

I have mentioned difficulties. I shall make one point that has not been mentioned very much. If we believe that we have problems, my goodness, the Argentines must think that they have problems. First, I do not believe that

they expected the swift and certain response that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet have given. Secondly, I do not believe that they thought that we would send the might of our Fleet down there to sort them out. We may have to sustain some losses. Let us not gloss over that. But they cannot afford to sustain any losses. Their Navy is limited. Their ships are irreplaceable anywhere else and they have an uncomfortable relationship with their neighbours. Therefore, there is enormous pressure upon them now for a diplomatic solution. That is why I believe that, despite all the peril that we are in, there is ground for some cautious optimism.

Britain has suffered embarrassment and humiliation. I trust that that is now in the past. We shall continue to face an extremely difficult and awkward time in the coming weeks and, possibly, months. Most hon. Members have made quite clear what is required of the Government.

The Government will fail at their peril to match the resolution in all parts of the House for firm action. I do not believe that they have any intention of doing that. The best approach for the House is to give the Government the maximum support and the minimum interference. We should let the Government get on with the job with all the facts that they have at their disposal and leave the inquest until afterwards.

7.11 pm

**Dr. John Gilbert** (Dudley, East): The first and most emphatic message that ought to go out from the House is that Britain has absolutely no quarrel with the Argentine people. We have many friends in Argentina and other parts of Latin America. Unfortunately, as my right hon. Friend the leader of the Opposition pointed out in a speech in another part of these premises earlier, most of our friends in Argentina are in jail or in concentration camps.

I wish to make clear at the beginning of my speech, which will be controversial on some points, that I support the despatch of the Fleet and the use of force if necessary. On that point, I echo what the hon. Member for Petersfield (Mr. Mates) said. The Opposition would also like to congratulate the Ministry of Defence on the extreme efficiency with which it has gathered together the task force.

I take absolutely no pleasure in saying that I support the use of force. There is something profoundly unattractive in the sight and sound of middle-aged men baying for brave young men to put their lives in peril—a peril that none of us is ever likely to face again. We should think carefully about our posture before we speak too loudly about these matters.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn), who is no longer present, commented on nuclear matters. It might be helpful if I tried to allay some of the fears that his speech may have raised. I am not privy to the dispositions taking place in the South Atlantic now, but I know a little about matters nuclear—not a lot, certainly, but a little.

So far as I am aware, none of the British planes involved in the task force is nuclear-capable. Nor, so far as I am aware, do any of our torpedoes have nuclear warheads. Nor, so far as I am aware, do any of the missiles—either surface to surface or surface to air—on our ships or aircraft have nuclear warheads. That is probably as far as I need to go on that subject.

There has been much discussion of the intelligence sources available to the Government in the weeks and

months preceding this catastrophe—for catastrophe it is. The House should make a clear distinction between political intelligence and military intelligence. With regard to military intelligence, I should have thought that we should have had the clearest of indications at least two to three weeks before the Argentine fleet steamed out. I find it inconceivable that the Argentines could have mounted an operation of this type in any less time. Heavens above, when they went ashore they were equipped with press passes to hand out to any journalists who might need them. I accept that it does not take long to print a press pass, but it takes quite some time to build up the necessary organisation to think in those terms.

As to political intelligence, I find it inconceivable that the Government could not have had clear political intelligence before Christmas of what was about to happen. General Galtieri has never made the least secret of his intentions. Like Adolf Hitler before him, he made it clear from the day that he arrived in office that his principal preoccupation was to regain sovereignty of the Falkland Islands for his country. We have misread the signs at our peril. The point of no return—the point at which it was no longer possible to deter him by sending a token force to the South Atlantic—was at least three of four weeks before the invasion took place. I am sure that there was no question but that we could have deterred him at that stage.

**Mr. Marlow:** Would the right hon. Gentleman address his mind to the point made so cogently by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Petersfield (Mr. Mates)? If we had sent a force to the South Atlantic and had said to the Argentines, "You advance at your peril", and then they had advanced, would we have sunk their fleet? What would he have done in those circumstances?

**Dr. Gilbert:** That is a fair point. I shall not evade it. I shall answer it if the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

I wish to turn to a point made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). With respect to the instance of 1977—I have some slight knowledge of this also—he said that the force that was then despatched was done wholly privily. The force was assembled—it was a puny force by comparison with what we are sending to the Atlantic today—and we allowed its existence to be known. That is a crucial difference between my recollection and that of the right hon. Gentleman. Through intelligence methods, we let it be known to some of our allies that the force was being assembled and sent on its way. We also sent a clear message, that so long as no Argentine warships came within 50 miles of the Falkland Islands, no Argentine warship was in danger of attack or being sunk by one of our warships. We know the result. No Argentine warship came within 50 miles of the Falkland Islands. It worked. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) asked me what would have happened if it had not worked. I would have pursued the same policy as have the Government. I would have assembled a task force and sent it down to the Falkland Islands and made it clear beyond any doubt that we were prepared to use force.

**Mr. Marlow rose—**

**Dr. Gilbert:** No, I shall not give way again. I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point.

**Mr. Robert Atkins:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Dr. Gilbert:** No, I have given way already.

I unreservedly congratulate the new Foreign Secretary on his appointment. I regret that he is not present. I must confess that I did not give him prior notice, but I hope that he will acquit me of any discourtesy as I am sure that he expected to be attacked or discussed in almost every speech today.

I wish, however, to give the House some indication of what I regard as a dereliction of duty by the right hon. Gentleman in almost his last action in the House as Lord President of the Council. At 2.34 pm last Friday, 2 April, the Lord President of the Council said:

"With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make a short statement.

There is no confirmation of any change in the position in relation to the Falkland Islands".—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 619.]

As a statement of truth, that was precisely accurate—but only just. It was a classic example of what the lawyers call *suppressio veri suggestio falsi*. One has to read what the right hon. Gentleman said with very great care. He said that there was no confirmation of any change. What he was seeking to imply, of course, was that there had been no change. I happen to know that things were rather different.

At 2.34 pm London time—3.34 pm European time—I was at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe just outside Brussels and I was getting on a bus with four or five colleagues of the defence committee of the parliamentary Labour Party. We were told at that moment by the British military representative that he had received a message from the Ministry of Defence in London that an invasion of the Falkland Islands had taken place but that no confirmation had been received.

If the right hon. Gentleman the new Foreign Secretary had wanted to take the House into his confidence he should have said "We have had a report that an invasion has taken place, but no confirmation has been received". But he did not. He merely said that there had been no confirmation of any change in the position in the Falkland Islands.

There are two possible explanations. Either the right hon. Gentleman sought to mislead the House, or he himself was misled by others in Government. As I have a very high opinion of the right hon. Gentleman, I refer to accept the explanation that he was hoodwinked, but the collective responsibility of the Government in this matter is absolutely clear.

**Mr. Mates:** The right hon. Gentleman was not here on Friday and he has overlooked the fact that that is precisely what the Lord Privy Seal said at 11 o'clock—that there had been reports of an invasion but that they had not been confirmed.

**Dr. Gilbert:** I have to hand precisely what the Lord Privy Seal said at 11 o'clock. He said no such thing. He said:

"There is now a real expectation that an Argentine attack against the Falkland Islands will take place".—[*Official Report*, 2 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 571.]

He did not say that it had already taken place. The case is absolutely clear. In any event, I hope very much that the Foreign Secretary will see to it that he does not inadvertently mislead the House again.

While I am on the subject of the Foreign Office, I take this opportunity to congratulate the new Minister of State, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). I had the great pleasure and honour of serving under his chairmanship in the Select Committee on Defence for

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many months. On behalf of the Opposition side of the Select Committee, I should say that we shall miss him very much and I wish him well in his new responsibilities.

I turn briefly to the conduct of the Secretary of State for Defence. Unlike the former Foreign Secretary, he has not seen fit to insist upon his own resignation. The Prime Minister says that he enjoys her confidence. I submit that that is not the question. The question is whether he enjoys the confidence of the House or of his own Department. We all know that nothing so demoralises a Department as a Secretary of State who has clearly been guilty of gross miscalculations and misjudgments.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester) *rose*—

Dr. Gilbert: No, I have been generous in giving way but I give notice that I do not intend to do so again.

The Secretary of State for Defence should have told the Prime Minister that if the situation was allowed to continue he could not guarantee to hold the line for her in the South Atlantic and that unless his advice was followed he would insist upon resigning. Apparently, he took no such steps.

We heard many remarks from Conservative Members on Saturday and today about the implications of these developments for defence policy. There will be plenty of time to discuss those matters in the debate on the defence White Paper. I must confess in total candour that I had largely endorsed the strategy of the Secretary of State for Defence in the deployment of the limited resources available to him, but I have never supported the acquisition of the Trident missile system. In my judgment, that must now be at risk even with the Conservative Party. Indeed, I give it a less than 50-50 chance of survival.

I do not believe that the particular situation in the Falkland Islands creates a precedent. It is *sui generis*. In the past day or two, there have been a number of references to Gibraltar, Hong Kong and Belize. All those cases can be easily distinguished from the situation in the Falkland Islands. With regard to Gibraltar, we are dealing with a civilised Government who are about to enter the Common Market and NATO, not with a bunch of fascist gangsters. No task force in the world could deter the People's Republic of China if it chose to take over Hong Kong, so we can forget that as an argument for preserving a naval task force of this kind. Belize is now an independent country and benefits from guarantees from other States in Latin America as well as from ourselves. The situation in the Falkland Islands, therefore, gives no safe guide for future naval strategy. Whatever happens there, whoever wins or loses, I believe that there will never again be the need for a permanent military or naval presence down there. There will be a conclusion to the matter one way or the other in the next few weeks.

I emphasise again the good fortune of the Secretary of State for Defence. Not only is he lucky that this has happened now, while he still has HMS "Invincible". He is also very lucky that the Argentinians have not yet taken delivery of all their new Super-Étendard planes. Only 10 ago, I and my colleagues in the Defence Committee at the Dassault factory just outside Bordeaux where they had already been painted in Argentine colours. So they think that the Argentine armed forces are not so skilful or do not have very good kit—and they will have even better kit.

Great difficulties face our forces in this situation. Many references have been made to the lack of air cover. I do not think that the situation is as bad as that faced by the "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" in 1942, but it is not far short of that.

There has been much talk about using submarines, but the waters between the Falkland Islands and the entrance to Buenos Aires are very shallow for the use of nuclear-powered submarines, which would be at a distinct disadvantage in those waters. Moreover there would be great danger from the risk of mining of those waters, against which we could not defend ourselves. Furthermore, on the land side, the enemy already has substantial quantities of armour ashore.

Let us be clear about this. The Prime Minister can win a military victory. She can send the Argentine fleet to the bottom. She can storm the Falkland Islands. She can blockade not only Port Stanley but Buenos Aires as well. The one thing she cannot do is to restore the status quo ante. The options available to Mr. Galtieri are horrible to contemplate. Not only could he remove all the Falkland Islanders to Argentina. He could put troops into their homes so that if we stormed the islands their homes and personal possessions would be ashes and there would be nothing for them to go back to. If he was so minded, he could put Falkland Islanders on each of his ships and hold them as hostages. We must remember that we are dealing with an extremely unpleasant gentleman.

Mr. Ogden: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Gilbert: The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden) need not be so naive as to think that Galtieri needs suggestions from me. That is ridiculous. One of the dangers is that he will not be able to control the passions he has let loose in his country. I fear very much for the safety of British citizens there.

We must make it clear that we have no quarrel with the Argentine people. We must give unstinting support to our service men. In the last resort, we must make it clear that we are prepared to use force. If we are not—I address my remarks to some of my hon. Friends—there is no hope whatever of General Galtieri coming to the negotiating table.

The Prime Minister's only hope lies with President Reagan and the pressure that he can bring to bear on the Argentine Government. The biggest danger for the Prime Minister will be if the Argentines stall, make pacific noises and string the dispute out, thereby giving her no excuse immediately to use force. But there must be no use of force just to save the face of the Government or the Prime Minister. We must offer—not accept an offer—to take a United Nations force in. We must offer a condominium.

One cannot witness the prospect of brave young men taking up arms against one another with anything but great sadness. There are already thousands of anguished mothers, wives and families, not only British mothers, wives and families but Argentine mothers, wives and families. We must all hope that that anguish is not heightened by the shedding of blood, but if it is, the House and the country will take a dreadful revenge on those who are responsible.

7.31 pm

**Mr. Maurice Macmillan** (Farnham): This is a difficult and serious situation. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) on extracting from it the maximum amount of righteous gloom.

With one or two exceptions, all hon. Members agree that the Falkland Islands must be liberated and that this act of wanton aggression against Britain must be successfully resisted by every means. We all agree that if it can be achieved by political and diplomatic activity so much the better. Almost all of us are agreed that force must be used if necessary, and only if necessary.

That is the situation at the moment. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) in his fear that after a time, when things become more uncertain and when it begins to appear that peaceful methods may fail, and delaying tactics are used and the use of force become more clearly necessary, the present unity of purpose and strength of will may begin to crumble in the House and among our friends abroad. This will be more likely if the full implications of the use of force are not realised now. If force becomes necessary, we must be prepared to inflict casualties and risk suffering casualties ourselves. There is no way out of that—it is not agreeable but it is inevitable. We must face that possibility now.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) referred on Saturday to what he called "peaceful military action". Today, he called it "preventative force". He was describing what in boxing terms might be called the tactic of the counterpunch—the interposition of our Fleet with a warning that if it is approached too closely the enemy will be attacked. Even that more limited use of force carries with it the possibility that it is not enough. If we are ready to deploy out forces even in the way the right hon. Gentleman suggested, we must be ready to use it. Without that readiness, its deployment is only an empty bluff and is likely to do more harm than good.

If there were serious doubts about the will of Her Majesty's Government and the willingness of the House to support the Government in the use of force when all else had failed, those doubts would make any peaceful solution even less likely, and the task of those of our friends who are trying to help us through political and diplomatic means to reach such a solution that much the harder. I would go so far as to say that those doubts would damage the whole concept of Western security now and in the future.

Now we must do what we can short of force, and we must hope that those who are working on our behalf will do what they can in the United Nations and elsewhere. We should use the good offices of our friends in the United States. Our friends in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and our European allies could put pressure on the Argentine. And we must accept that recent events are likely to change the attitude of the Argentines and of the Falkland Islanders. But our friends must know that willingness to accept their good offices and to consider negotiations in the future does not mean a willingness to accept a proposition now or in the near future that is tantamount to a sell-out.

I hope that we are more willing to go further once the Argentines withdraw than we are even prepared to consider before the withdrawal. The Argentines must realise—and it is only honourable that we should make it

clear—that to get any sort of settlement that is helpful to them in the future they must be prepared now to withdraw or face the use of force.

After all, in the longer term, there is a great deal of common interest between the United Kingdom and the Argentine. If there is oil in the area, have the Argentines the capital, the know-how or the technique to develop it? No, but they have the need to share in the prosperity that it could bring. This country must be always prepared to negotiate rather than use force. That is both our strength and our weakness. It is our strength because of the reassurance it gives to countries such as the Argentine and others who have become justly nervous of the over-quick use of force. But willingness to talk and negotiate can be a weakness because it may be taken as a lack of will. It may, however unjustly, have been so taken in this dispute. We have shown, wrongly and mistakenly perhaps, attitudes which could be taken as a lack of will. It is all the more necessary to show resolution now.

Therefore, I hope that the Government will not flinch even from a minimum demonstration of force, even before all the other methods are totally exhausted, if they believe that that would mean giving up the need to use greater force at a later stage. Surely our objective must be to achieve what we want with the minimum use of force whenever it may have to be used.

Such an attitude is needed now more than ever before to help deal with problems of longer-term security. We cannot now even seem to have encouraged one dictator and to have let him get away with it without giving comfort and encouragement to other and more powerful tyrannies. I agree that the main threat to British security does not come from the Argentine, but security like liberty is indivisible.

Of course we must not take needless risks. I agree with the right hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Mellish) that it would be helpful if some of our allies were to add their representatives to our Fleet. Undue caution which could look like weakness could not only weaken our activities in this present situation but also our capacity to defend ourselves in the future and our usefulness to NATO, whatever the future size of our defence forces.

Surely this crisis must have taught the Government two lessons, which I confess I had hoped we had all learnt long ago. The first is that those who sup with the devil need a very long spoon. By that I mean not only that appeasement does not work, but that in negotiating with despots reasonableness can easily be mistaken for weakness, and even the smallest hint of weakness is dangerous.

The second lesson is that our defence forces should be capable of defending British interests outside the immediate NATO area. I am not necessarily saying that the procurement policies of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence are wrong. Indeed, the hunter-killer submarine seems of use in this relatively new role as well as in its major role. I merely seek his assurance that the capability that we have just put to sea, steaming towards the South Atlantic, will be retained far into the twenty-first century.

It is important, now and in the future, that neither our friends nor our enemies should have cause to doubt our will. Most of us hate the idea of using force, but nothing is more likely to make the Government's final choice be between using extreme force or facing defeat than the present showing of any weakness or reluctance to go as far as is ultimately necessary.

7.42 pm

**Mr. Frank Allaun** (Salford, East): This Government have got us in a mess by failing to act as the Government in 1977 did; by ignoring the warning signals; and by not acting in time. For that incompetence, those at the top must bear the blame, and they are the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence. It was they who encouraged the fascist generals of the Argentine by selling them arms. It may well be that British lads will lose their lives as a result of arms sold to the Argentine by this Government and British arms manufacturers.

The House may not generally be aware that this afternoon on television there was a film of the last Argentine pilots trained in Britain going home. That means that our lads may be killed by those pilots, and that is a scandal beyond words.

The Government are now faced with two choices. The first is a fight between the two Navies. This is supposed to be a means of defending the Falklanders. On the contrary, many of those 1,800 Falklanders will be wiped out in the cross fire.

**Mr. Michael English** (Nottingham, West): In a naval battle?

**Mr. Allaun**: Certainly. A total of 17,000 British people living in the Argentine will be in obvious risk. Thirdly, and most important, it is wrong that blood should be split in the Navies on either side for no good purpose.

One homing torpedo could sink HMS "Invincible" at a cost of 1,000 lives. That is how this military engagement may result. One does not need to be a military expert to realise the difficulties of fighting a war 8,000 miles away from home. I can see a disastrous outcome to this military adventure, and I want in no way to be associated with it.

Even if the task force won after all the blood had been spilt, what of the future? Will our forces stay there indefinitely? How else will we protect the 1,800 islanders? It will mean colossal expenditure just to keep those ships there indefinitely.

As the point of conflict nears, I believe that fears about the consequences will grow and that the jingoistic spirit I have noticed in certain quarters will rapidly diminish. I, for one, would not give a blank cheque to a task force embarked on an adventure of this kind headed by this Government. In addition, I ask for an assurance—this is not an extravagant demand—that no nuclear or chemical weapons are being carried by that defence force.

That is the first choice. The alternative is to negotiate, and to offer to resettle those Falkland Islanders who wish it in Britain or New Zealand. If offered the choice, rather than be caught in the cross fire, and rather than cause the loss of thousands of other lives, I believe that they would prefer to come to Britain. That is a serious alternative. There are 600 families on the islands. If we offered each £30,000 compensation, which is not a small sum, that would cost £18 million, which is chicken feed compared with the loss in blood and money that might well follow.

**Mr. Ogden**: Disregarding everything else, even if the Falklanders were for sale, which they are not, £30,000 in the Falkland Islands would buy 40,000 acres, 10,000 sheep and independence. What could one buy in Salford, North London or Liverpool for that sum? The souls and the sovereignty of the Falkland Islanders are not for sale.

**Mr. Allaun**: That is for the Falkland Islanders to say—

**Mr. Ogden**: They have said it.

**Mr. Allaun**:—and not for the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden).

In those circumstances, what would be the use of Trident or cruise missiles? The answer is none at all. If such weaponry were used, Britain would rightly never be forgiven.

7.49 pm

**Mr. Antony Buck** (Colchester): The speech of the hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Allaun) was disgraceful. He was suggesting that the Falkland Islanders should be put up for sale or barter. They have a right to live there, which we have guaranteed. We shall do our damndest to ensure that their rights are preserved. I shall leave it to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden) to sort out the hon. Member for Salford, East.

This is not a time for recrimination or for carping party controversy. The debate has not been carping, with the exception of the speech of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn). For him to make such an unpatriotic speech when our Forces are on the high seas and liable to be involved in a hot war was disgraceful. We have learnt to expect it ad nauseam from the hon. Member for Salford, East. I am glad that he is in his place so that I can tell him to his face how disgraceful his speech was.

**Mr. Frank Allaun**: Would the hon. and learned Member prefer the alternative, which is that those 1,800 people, many of whom wish to come to England, should be slaughtered in the cross fire, the loss of 17,000 people in Argentina and the bloodshed of Service men in the British and Argentine Navies?

**Mr. Buck**: I regret having given way to the hon. Gentleman. Of course not. We are concerned to ensure that we do not appease dictators because, in the long run, it can lead to far more bloodshed than if we take a firm line early on. If we have not learnt that lesson by now, we should have.

This is not a time for inter-party rivalry. British subjects have been taken by force and their lands usurped. It is a matter that no British Government can possibly regard with anything but horror. This Parliament, with its traditions—valued by so many Members on both sides of the House—of legality and freedom would not be worthy of its great history if it did not back what the Government are doing in order to restore the rule of law. This has been a monstrous act of illegality, which the dictatorship cannot be allowed to get away with.

We must keep all the options open. I wish to commend what has already happened with the assembly of the force. Because of the life we lead in the House, we do not see much television, but I saw a brief glimpse of the great operation that is now being mounted with enormous skill and with the greatest rapidity by our Armed Forces. One admires their sheer professionalism and expertise. The force is now on the high seas and is dedicated to the preservation of the rule of law.

I wish to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence some specific questions. First, will the Government keep the nation in general and hon. Members fully informed about the progress of events? It is somewhat difficult to do that if we are in recess, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will make special efforts to keep us informed. I should have wished, in accordance with



precedent, that Members of Parliament could have accompanied our Armed Forces but the distances are so vast that that might not be practical. My father served in the First World War, in the 13th battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. He was both surprised and pleased to see Members of Parliament in the trenches. Is there any possibility of some hon. Members, besides the many journalists who are rightly there, visiting the task force to show our total support and commitment to the Armed Forces? I know that there would be considerable logistic difficulties about that.

What steps are being taken to ensure, probably through the Privy Council, that the Opposition are kept in the picture? This is a great national crisis. There are many fervent patriots in the Labour Party. I do not agree that we have any monopoly on patriotism or concern about such matters in the Conservative Party. I sometimes wish that Labour Members would concede that they did not have a monopoly of compassion and concern. Right hon. and hon. Members are vastly concerned about the problem, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will follow the precedent set in the Second World War by the grandfather of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Churchill), who made a point of keeping the Opposition and the rest of the House of Commons fully informed at all times.

I hope that the Secretary of State can tell us something of the pressures that will be put on the Argentines while the force is gathering. All of us wish to avoid the use of force in the Falkland Islands if possible. Like Lord Home of the Hirsell, I am a "matches man", but one realises that there are financial pressures that could bring down a shaky regime with the help of our allies and the power of the City. The Argentines must be made to come to their senses.

When she first came to office, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister quoted Sir Francis Drake:

"When we endeavour any great matter it is not the beginning of the matter but the continuing of the same until it is thoroughly finished which yieldeth great glory."

I do not believe that any great glory save for our Armed Forces will come out of this, but we must ensure the restoration of the rule of law. Conservative Members will support my right hon. Friend and her colleagues in all steady, firm and sensible approaches to the matter and in the use of force, if necessary, in the last resort.

7.57 pm

**Mr. S. C. Silkin (Dulwich):** There will be no lack of support on the Opposition Benches for upholding the rule of law, if necessary by force. If hon. Members have detected, as I have, a certain difference between the tone of the debate today and the tone on Saturday, it is not in any sense due to a feeling of weakness having crept in. On Saturday, in the immediate aftermath of an act of vicious aggression and duplicity by a brutal dictator, perhaps we were more inclined to stress our virility than to consider the realities of the matter. Today, speakers on both sides of the House have taken a much more realistic and necessarily, therefore, much more cautious line. It is right that we should do so.

In the interval many of us have had the opportunity to discuss the matter with our friends, constituents and colleagues and we have learned the anxieties which, quite naturally, are in many people's hearts.

In saying all that, I emphasise again that there is no lack of will to use force if necessary. It is right that we should consider the direction in which we might be taken. It is right that we should consider how necessary it is likely to be to use force in the end. I am shocked and disappointed when I hear the Prime Minister or other senior Ministers say that negotiation is impossible until these islands have been evacuated and restored to our control. If there is any possibility of negotiation that will produce a satisfactory result, backed up, of course, by the force that we have set in motion through sending a Fleet towards the South Atlantic and backed up by the knowledge of the Argentines that the force, if necessary, will be able to inflict casualties upon its ships and its men, we should lose no opportunity of negotiating, through Mr. Reagan or any other person, or body, willing to intercede.

The fears that are expressed about what can happen are not all on our side. They are fears that must certainly be in the hearts and minds of Argentines. I do not want to assume that negotiation will not necessarily be a fruitless exercise. It is, however, necessary to ask a few questions about the direction in which we are going. In doing so, I say straight away that I am not necessarily expecting answers to those questions. I put them in the interrogative form because they are questions that people are asking. In my experience, they are thinking seriously about them.

The first question I wish to ask is whether we are contemplating a land invasion, an invasion from the sea, of the Falkland Islands themselves. I hope, I am bound to say, that we are not. I do not want to obtain the liberation of the Falkland Islanders through their liquidation. That seems to me the last possible option of any. Next the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) suggested on Saturday that our Fleet might blockade the Falkland Islands rather than the coast of the Argentine. I have to ask this question. For how long would we be able to sustain such a blockade 8,000 miles from our bases and within 400 miles of the coast of Argentina? I do not know. I am not an expert in these matters. This is, however, a question that people must be asking. It is relevant to what I have been saying about the need to neglect no opportunity to negotiate if we are able to do so.

My next question is to ask whether we are seriously contemplating a naval attack upon the Argentine Fleet. If that is contemplated, are we satisfied that, in the place where the naval engagement might occur, we would have the necessary air cover to protect our ships against the Argentine air fleets? Another question that has been asked has already been put by hon. Members. Let us suppose that we were to win a victory in a naval battle. Let us suppose that this were to lead to a re-occupation of the Falkland Islands and that we were able to say to the islanders that they could stay there. How long could we guarantee that they would be able to stay there in peace before some other attempt was made to expropriate their land? It is right that those questions should be asked.

We have, as I see it, a dual interest and a dual purpose. As British citizens in a British Parliament, we are concerned to rescue our fellow British subjects from the domination of a cruel dictator. Secondly, as a nation that subscribes to international law, we are the representative of the international community in upholding the international rule of law as declared by the Security Council. I believe that our task in pursuing both those objectives would be that much eased if we were certain that we have that which I believe we have every right to

[Mr. S. C. Silkin]

expect—not only the moral but also the material support of peaceful nations throughout the world, especially our NATO allies and our partners in the European Community. It must surely be a test of the strength of the NATO alliance as to whether our allies are prepared to give us their help and support. I know that, strictly speaking this incident is not within the area covered by the North Atlantic treaty. It is in the South Atlantic. I also know, however, that every British ship that is sunk and every British marine who is killed means a diminution of our strength and support for the NATO alliance.

When we come to the European Community, I speak as one whose views are not wholly popular with some of my colleagues. I have always supported our membership of the Community. I remain of that view. I believe, however, that it is a supreme test of the political reality of the Community and the political reality that made many of us pro-Marketeers as to whether we are to have the help and material support from our partners in the Community that we have a right to expect. To me that will be a very important test. I believe and hope that we shall get that support. I believe and hope that with it we shall be able eventually to reach a settlement of this problem, not necessarily by victory in battle, but by sufficient concession to what we are seeking to enable us to have peace with honour.

8.10 pm

**Mr. Keith Speed** (Ashford): I very much agree with the last point made by the right hon. and learned Member for Dulwich (Mr. Silkin). It is inconceivable that our friends in the EEC or in NATO can be neutral on this matter. In most parts of the House—with one or two notable exceptions—there is a general feeling that we should now support our forces. We hope that there will be the minimum amount of casualties, whether they involve Argentines, Falkland Islanders or British troops and sailors. Ultimately, a solution will have to be reached by diplomacy. We shall have to regain our sovereignty. I certainly do not flinch from that word.

If force has to be used in one operation or another, we should not flinch from it. It would be wrong and we should fail the task force sailing down the Atlantic if there were any hint that the vast majority of hon. Members were not prepared, in extremis to use that force and to stand behind it.

Our first priority must be the 1,800 people on the Falkland Islands with whom we have such a close affinity. They wish to live in freedom under British law. However, I should not wish the debate to pass before we have considered several other aspects of the Falkland Islands. It is sad that over the years Governments of all political persuasions have made little attempt to assess the mineral wealth of the Falkland Islands, in the Antarctic and in the dependent territories. I almost feel that we might be ashamed to find the untold treasures that may lie beneath those sometimes inhospitable shores. There are strong indications that there is considerable wealth both in and under the seas. The fishing industry has not been properly developed, although it could have considerably assisted those living on the Falkland Islands.

I turn to a sensitive but important point. Both world wars have shown the strategic importance of the Falkland Islands. I need hardly mention the battle of the Falkland

Islands in the First World War or the battle of the river Plate in the Second World War. Given the instability of the Argentine Government, it is not impossible that if events move in a certain way and we do not regain our sovereignty and control over the Falkland Islands, they could become naval bases for a power that is by no means friendly towards us. Indeed, the Falkland Islands could become Soviet naval bases. That should concern our friends and allies in NATO.

As regards operations on the spot, a great deal will depend on events during the next fortnight, on the diplomatic moves made by our various friends and on internal pressures within the Argentine. During the past few days I have been persuaded that to provide for the minimum loss of life and the maximum pressure, there should probably be a blockade, in the fullest sense of the word, of the Falkland Islands. That might put some worthwhile cards in the hands of our diplomats, because they do not have too many now.

There should be a blockade by sea, a blockade of airborne supplies to the islands and an electronic warfare blockade. If we can make those islands, and particularly the occupying powers, incommunicado with the outside world, we may bring pressure to bear. That has the added advantage that Argentines who try to run the blockade will be seen as the aggressors. However, we must face the fact that we may then be forced to take military action against Argentine surface ships, submarines or aircraft. Again, we cannot flinch from that harsh decision.

The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) mentioned a war zone. I agree with him. I should welcome some comment from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. At this very minute, there are no doubt a considerable number of Soviet submarines in the area, which will be doing their best to gather what intelligence they can. They may well reap a harvest by watching our operating tactics and by listening to the things that submarines are interested in. I have no doubt that the ubiquitous AGI intelligence gatherers will be there. We do not want the Soviets, or anyone else, becoming involved in an incident that is at present limited between the Argentine and us and that might then flare up into something else.

**Mr. George Cunningham:** How do we stop it?

**Mr. Speed:** If a war zone is declared the situation will be made clear to any submarine in the area. I call the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Whisky submarine that was stranded just outside Stockholm. If they remain there they do so at their peril, not ours. That point should be made clear and those involved would take it. If a satisfactory solution were reached, the future position would very much depend on the nature of that solution. I am not one of those who believes that we should rely entirely on guarantees. Some naval presence—certainly a thicker and more substantial tripwire than HMS "Endurance" and 80 or 40 Royal Marines—is required. That need not be too expensive. We are talking about three destroyers and the occasional visit of a nuclear submarine. By definition, one would never know when that submarine was in those waters. We should have to have an oiler to provide the essential logistic support. Such a force would cost about £20 million to £25 million per year, based on the current cost of the Gulf of Oman patrol. It costs about half that amount to maintain two destroyers and an oiler in the

straits of Hormuz now. I make no apology for drawing the attention of the House to the wider implications of the issue. The Fleet is steaming to the South Atlantic and will soon be far away from the Eastern Atlantic and NATO. That will leave the Supreme Allied Command Atlantic with an enormous hole in the East Atlantic. The North Atlantic could be full of Soviet submarines. I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that we are committed to providing virtually 70 per cent. of the ready-use forces in the Eastern Atlantic. I hope that the frigates that can quickly be brought to operational readiness in the standby squadron, are being made ready. Yesterday, I was in Chatham and there was a deathly hush over the standby squadron and everything associated with it. However, it is important. The operation in the Falkland Islands—particularly if there is a blockade—will not be solved in weeks. It will take much longer than that. In fairness to our NATO force levels and capabilities, we should use the standby squadron for the purpose for which it is designed.

The whole question of our maritime defence policy must be back in the melting pot again. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Comment has been made to the effect that some of the sailors sailing south may be under the threat of voluntary redundancy. Within the next two or three years some of the ships will have left the Royal Navy. They will have been sold, scrapped or placed in the standby squadron. Portsmouth dockyard—from which the fleet sailed—will be closed and many of the civilian support staff—to whom I pay tribute for having worked jolly hard—are under notice of compulsory redundancy. It is unacceptable for such uncertainty to continue when the Falkland Islands issue has demonstrated—if nothing else—that maritime power is still essential if Britain intends to discharge its obligations to itself as well as to the Alliance.

**Mr. Marlow:** Is not my hon. Friend aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said that in 1990—even with the plans that are visualised—we would be able to put into effect exactly the same forces as we are putting into effect now?

**Mr. Speed:** That is very interesting, but if that is true, my right hon. Friend also knows that by 1990 many of the frigates will have gone. The destroyers and frigates—the Type 22 and Type 42—will not have been modernised, and therefore their weapons systems and sensors will not be capable of meeting the threat of the late 1980s and early 1990s. That will result from the closure of the dockyards. There is no gainsaying that. In addition, we will not have the manpower or the ships to mount such an operation or to meet our NATO and other essential requirements. I should be delighted to hear that I am wrong, but I believe that I am right and that comments about modernisation, re-fitting our nuclear submarines and modernising our destroyers are relevant and pertinent.

We have all cheered and wished god-speed to the force sailing to the Falkland Islands, but the bigger boost that the officers, men and Royal Marines in that force could be given would be for the House and, in particular, the Government to say that we have got our maritime defence policy wrong and will not cut the Navy further, but will have a long fresh look at it.

Time is not on our side. We are losing skilled officers, chief petty officers and petty officers, as well as civilian staff in the dockyards. We cannot wait months for a review, because it may be too late.

I make no apology for repeating the words that I quoted in my first speech after resigning as Navy Minister. They are the words of Admiral Gorshkov, the Soviet commander-in-chief, and they encapsulate the Falkland Islands problem and the action of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in sending a force to the islands. Admiral Gorshkov said:

"In many cases a show of Naval strength without taking armed action may achieve political ends merely by exerting pressures through its latent power or by threatening to take military action."

Could there be a clearer or simpler definition of what the Argentines have done, what we used to do, what we must do now and what we must have the capability to do in future?

8.21 pm

**Mr. Frank Hooley (Sheffield, Heeley):** In the past 15 years I have argued in the House and outside that it was unwise for the United Kingdom to hold on to colonial possessions that we had acquired, usually by force, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which could only be dangerous and embarrassing to us and were of no national advantage. My arguments were always met by jeers and derision from those who seemed to think that we have a divine right to govern various parts of the world. The more cogent argument to which I had to address myself was that, whatever one thinks of the control of the territories, one must have regard to the interests of the people in them.

It seems to me that we must have regard to certain considerations. The first is the nationality of the people concerned. It is supremely ironic that the Government, who claim to be so concerned about the interests of the Falkland Islanders, have devalued their nationality, made them second-class British citizens and denied them the right to come back to the United Kingdom if they wish.

The second consideration is the security of the people involved. That is a responsibility which we retain for as long as we govern those territories. I have in mind particularly Hong Kong, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. It is dishonest and dishonourable to accept an obligation for security which we cannot discharge.

The Falkland Islands fracas, crisis, disaster—call it what one will—has demonstrated that with our present economic and military powers we are not able to discharge our security obligation, certainly not for the Falkland Islands—we have failed there—obviously not for Hong Kong and, I believe, though the situation is unlikely to arise, not for the people of Gibraltar.

We have been wrong and misguided to give the impression to the Falkland Islanders and others that we were prepared to uphold obligations when we could not do so. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs examined the problem last year when it studied the situation in Gibraltar. We received an interesting memorandum from Professor Allen of the university of East Anglia who said:

"In the last resort we have to face the dilemma that the Gibraltarians"—

in this case we may substitute Falkland Islanders—  
"demand to remain indefinitely in exactly their present status, especially at very considerable cost to the United Kingdom taxpayer, may be unjustifiable, if not impossible, to grant. The

[Mr. Frank Hooley]

heart of the matter is the indissoluble tie in the minority's mind between citizenship and territory; it is in the end for the majority of United Kingdom citizens, as represented by the British Government and parliament of the day, to decide what is and shall remain British territory."

That expresses the dilemma extremely well. We have been wrong to give the Falkland Islanders the impression over the past 10 or 15 years that there was an absolute commitment, whatever their desires, which it has become impossible for us to discharge.

Some hon. Members say that we may be able to discharge that commitment by a bloody war in which we destroy the fleet of another country and everything goes back to where it was. However, the tenor of the debate has been that a return to the old status quo is not on. In that sense, we cannot offer the Falkland Islanders what they had before. Hon. Members who say that the Government's policy is in danger of offering the Falkland Islanders not what they had before, but death and destruction, have made a powerful point.

Hon. Members have referred to the United Nations and the important Security Council resolution, which demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities, an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands and called on

"the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences and to respect fully the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations." The Government put that resolution to the Security Council. It was not dictated by anyone else. However, there is nothing in that resolution which talks about sending a battle fleet to the South Atlantic. There is nothing in that resolution to justify or encourage this country to go to war. On the contrary, it says explicitly, and I repeat,

"Calls on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences". I find it odd, to put it mildly, that in presenting that resolution to the Security Council, and in using all their diplomatic skill to get it passed, the Government should simultaneously scabble together a massive naval force, the only purpose of which can be to wage war.

A wide range of possibilities is open to this Government, through the machinery of the United Nations under article 41 of the charter, which I quote:

"The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations".

In my view, we should build a worldwide coalition to apply those sort of sanctions to the Argentine to compel or induce it to relinquish its hold on the Falkland Islands.

We should do well to watch what is happening in the power line-up in this dispute. Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Panama and Paraguay have expressed themselves as being on the side of the Argentine. China and the USSR are, at best, indifferent, and are probably mildly hostile. It is true that we have some support from the white Commonwealth—Canada, Australia and New Zealand—and we have support from the EEC. However, the view of the United States, as has been said by many hon. Members, is highly ambiguous, and we still do not know on which side of the argument it will come down.

If we pursued a policy of war and became involved in hostilities—even assuming that we sank the Argentine ships and dominated the islands by force—I believe that a vast coalition in the world would be against us. There would be no applause, no cheers, no rejoicing about the future of the Falkland Islands. There would be a general feeling throughout the Third world that, again, a powerful northern industrial, militarised power had exercised its superior strength against a Third world country. I accept that the crime of aggression has been committed by the Argentine. I do not dispute that. That is beyond dispute, and the Security Council has said so. However, as of now, we are four square within the law within the United Nations, and we have its support, backing and judgment.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge) rose—

Mr. Hooley: I suggest that we should be wiser to pursue and exploit that judgment and pursue some of the ideas put forward by other hon. Members about a United Nations peacekeeping force, United Nations trusteeship, United Nations mediation, or United States mediation, if necessary. Those are the methods that we should pursue. The dispatch of a major naval armada with all the unforeseeable consequences that arise from it will not promote the interests of the Falkland Islanders, nor will it promote the interests of this country. [Interruption.] I should have thought that the right to life was about the most important human right. I am concerned about the right to life of the people who are living in the Falkland Islands. I am concerned about their genuine rights—not the vanity and the national pride of some Government or Prime Minister. That is why I argue in these terms.

I want to make one final point. The last time that this country went to war alone was just over 80 years ago. It turned out to be a long, disreputable and bloody conflict. I have no desire to see Argentine people killing British people and the British people killing Argentine people over the possession of a few windswept islands in the South Atlantic. The machinery of international co-operation is there. We have the judgment of the international community in our favour. We should exploit and use that and not resort to the unilateral use of armed force.

8.35 pm

Mr. Churchill (Stretford): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Hooley) tells us that Britain should confine her response to cobbling together such support as she is able to get in the United Nations, and that in no circumstances should we meet force—which has been used against our citizens and our territory—with force.

I am bound to tell the hon. Gentleman that the record of the United Nations—and before it, of its predecessor, the League of Nations—in bringing to heel Fascist dictators is not an encouraging one: it is for this reason that the House today is, in my view, massively endorsing the action undertaken by the Government thus far.

On Saturday, the mood of the House was, understandably, one of passion and of anger. Today it has been characterised by a more sober and more reflective mood, but I venture to believe that the House remains as united as ever in its condemnation of the brazen violation of the rights of the Falkland Islanders, of British sovereignty and of the charter of the United Nations—and united, too, in its determination to see British sovereignty re-established.

**Mr. Percy Grieve (Solihull):** My hon. Friend has—I am sure inadvertently—used a phrase that has been used before in the debate and is wholly inaccurate. We still have the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. The Queen is still Queen and Sovereign of the Falkland Islands. All we have to establish is our administration.

**Mr. Churchill:** I take my hon. and learned Friend's point. We have not yielded our sovereignty but our sovereignty has been violated. We are not in position, as of this instant, to exercise that sovereignty in the Falkland Islands, and it is our duty to re-establish that sovereignty.

Today, with the Fleet on the high seas, sailing towards the South Atlantic, is neither the time for recriminations nor for indulging in party political points. With a few unfortunate exceptions, that has been recognised by most hon. Members who have taken part in the debate today. There will be time enough for such recriminations and inquiries at a future date when the Fleet has returned.

It is important for the men of the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines—who will, no doubt, in due course be joined by elements of the Army and the Royal Air Force—to know that they have the backing of a united Parliament and nation. They know the formidable difficulties and dangers that lie ahead of them. They will have a far shrewder appreciation than we in this House of the fact that in the next few weeks ships and aircraft may well be lost, and that some of those who have sailed may not return. Therefore, let there be no weasel words uttered today in this House that would give any comfort to the Argentine dictator or make our men's task more hazardous than it is already.

I believe that the objective of our policy is clear. First and foremost, it is to liberate the Falkland Islanders from fascist dictatorship; and, secondly, to restore British sovereignty and administration to the Falkland Islands and their dependencies. What we do beyond then is open to negotiation, and I think we would certainly be willing to be very generous in such arrangements for the dependencies in the event that this episode were to be peacefully resolved.

The failure to achieve these objectives would have repercussions far beyond the fate of the Falkland Islanders and the Falkland Islands themselves. Britain's standing and credibility in the world, in the eyes of both her adversaries and her allies, will be judged by the resolution and determination with which we meet this challenge.

Let it be said at the outset that until last Friday Britain had no quarrel with the people or the Government of the Argentine. Until that moment Argentina was a friendly nation with which we enjoyed close trading links. Argentina's treatment of its own people may leave much to be desired, but Argentina was a friendly nation until the events of last Friday. Evidence of those friendly ties is to be found in the fact that the Argentine navy has two type 42 destroyers. Those ships were, I believe delivered under a Socialist Administration. The Argentine aircraft carrier was formerly HMS "Colossus". Argentina has the largest British community, outside the Commonwealth, of any foreign nation. For all those reasons it is clear that Britain has an interest in seeing that the matter is resolved without resort to military force if at all possible, but most of all because of the British lives that would be at stake in such military action.

The people of Argentina should know that we who traditionally regard them as our friends have no wish to

sink their proud—over-proud—navy, let alone to kill thousands of the finest of their young men. Nor should they be in any doubt as to our resolve as a nation to restore British sovereignty and rule to the Falkland Islands and liberate our people who live there.

Effectively that means that the Argentine has only a short time to withdraw its forces of occupation from the Falkland Islands, and that our friends the United States, and other countries that are friendly to both sides, have only a short time span in which to secure that withdrawal.

I take issue with the right hon. and learned Member for Dulwich (Mr. Silkin), the former Attorney-General, who suggested that we should negotiate first and secure the withdrawal of the invasion forces later. That would be unacceptable, and the Government should guard most strongly against any solution that left Argentine military forces in occupation of the islands pending the outcome of peace talks.

Now that the Argentine has achieved all its objectives by force of arms it will be doing everything in its power to see the matter resolved peacefully. It will do everything short of military withdrawal to achieve a peacefully negotiated settlement. I trust that it will be made clear today that Argentina can expect no allies in this House for such a solution.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserves the full support of Parliament for the firm line that she has taken, that no negotiations can take place while invasion forces remain in occupation of British territory. The Argentine Government must be made aware that if, by the time the naval task force arrives in the South Atlantic, those forces have not removed themselves, bag and baggage, from our territory, war is inevitable. Should it come to that, which I earnestly hope it will not, and military action is unavoidable, I feel sure that the House can have every confidence in the ability of the Royal Navy to acquit itself with honour and distinction.

The Royal Navy remains the third most powerful naval force in the world, but man for man and ship for ship it is the finest navy in the world. That will be recognised by everyone who has seen the Navy at sea. What other navy, friend or foe, could within four days have completed the transformation from peace to war and have half of its strength at sea, on its way and ready for action with a full complement of war stocks, equipment and spare parts?

Let there be no finching or faltering in our resolve as the moment for decisive action draws near. There must be no doubt in Buenos Aires and in Washington about the determination of the British Parliament and nation to free our people from Fascist rule. Let the word go out from this House today that the nation stands united behind the Government, and above all behind the Forces of the Crown, in that resolve. We wish all those who sail with the Fleet god-speed, a victorious outcome and a safe return.

8.47 pm

**Mr. Michael English (Nottingham, West):** I am sure that every hon. Member realises, although no one seems yet to have mentioned it, that no debate of this character could take place in Argentina. That is because there is no elected legislature in Argentina. It is a country that is ruled by rebel generals. I hope that people will stop calling it a junta. In Spanish history a junta was a very honourable thing. It comprised those who resisted Napoleon's takeover of Spain. The present regime in Argentina, which

[Mr. Michael English]

calls itself a military junta, arrogates that title to itself and dignifies its own criminality with an honourable Spanish tradition. I hope that that will not be recognised by us.

It is almost inconceivable to us that there can be circumstances in which crooks rule. I think that that is the fault that the Government fell into. They fell into the problem of being honest, decent English gentlemen.

**Mr. Hal Miller** (Bromsgrove and Redditch): Hear, hear.

**Mr. English:** They did not realise that they were dealing with the sort of officer—not a gentleman—who literally is capable in some cases of putting an electric soldering iron up the anus of a fellow citizen and switching it on to extract information. That is the sort of person we are dealing with, and that sort of person cannot be dealt with by applying the standards of an English officer and gentleman. Even in the last war, the German officer corps rather skilfully divorced itself from some of the cruder activities of the Nazis. We should remember that we are not dealing with law-abiding people. It is a pity that we are not.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Peyton) had a point when he said that we should set out the true history. There is a reasonable Argentine case.

**Mr. John Browne:** Nonsense.

**Mr. English:** Yes, there is a reasonable case and I shall explain what it is. It is not the Argentine case that is being advanced now. It is not Argentina's claim to South Georgia, which was in the Portuguese sphere of influence and was never claimed by Spain. Argentina claims to inherit from Spain. It shows its ill faith and its bad faith by claiming places such as South Georgia. It forgets the settlement that was once reached between Spain and the United Kingdom, whereby the East Falklands, which happen to be where Port Stanley is, were Spanish and the West Falklands were ours.

There is a Spanish claim and there was a Spanish claim and there is therefore an Argentine claim. However, Argentina illustrates its bad faith by claiming far more. It wants all of the South Atlantic. It wants the Chilean South Atlantic, the Argentine South Atlantic, the British South Atlantic and a chunk of Antarctica as well, the latter being 10 per cent. of the earth's surface.

It would be useful to put the true legalities before the world. As I have said, the right hon. Member for Yeovil had a point.

I congratulate the new Foreign Secretary on what he said at the beginning of his speech about the BBC's external services. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House are extremely concerned about the simple question whether people will lose their lives as a result of what may happen next. Whatever view one takes, it is an understandable concern. I do not happen to share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Allaun), but I understand why he is concerned.

The answer that we got on Friday from the gentleman who has now gone, from the Lord Privy Seal who is now no longer the Lord Privy Seal, was this. My right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moyle) asked him whether the Government intended to extend the external Spanish language broadcasts of the BBC. He received the extraordinary answer:

"We have no immediate plans to change the BBC's external services."—[Official Report, 2 April 1982; Vol. 91, c. 576.]

I am glad that the new Foreign Secretary has reversed that policy almost within the day, because there can be no possible doubt, I should have thought, that if we are spending millions of money on sending a massive fleet to the South Atlantic we can spend a few hundred thousands of pounds on broadcasting in Spanish, and not only to Argentina, but in Portuguese to Brazil and in Spanish to the whole of South America. The order of priorities that that answer illustrated showed why the former Lord Privy Seal has taken the honourable course of resigning.

I think that the Foreign Secretary ought not—perhaps he is ill advised, as some of his predecessors may have been—to play with words. He ought not to put words like "formal" before "state of war." In international law there are only two states—peace and war. That is also true in British law, incidentally. There is no such thing as an informal state of war. There is either a state of war or a state of peace. At the moment, it happens to be a state of war.

To verify that, I quote from a legal case:

"What is a state of war is described in Hall on International Law, 4th edition, page 63"—

and this is a quotation from the learned Mr. Justice Mathew:

"When differences between states reach a point at which both parties resort to force"—

and that has not happened here—

"or one of them does an act of violence, which the other chooses to look upon as a breach of the peace, the relation of war is set up".

That was said in the case of *Driefontein Consolidated Gold Mines v Janson*, 1900 Queen's Bench, page 339.

In this case, it was more objective. It was not merely we who chose to look upon this as a breach of the peace. In the text of the United Nations Security Council resolution it says that the Security Council is

"Deeply disturbed at reports of an invasion on 2 April 1982 by armed forces of Argentina".

In

"determining that there exists a breach of the peace"

it acted under that section of the charter which gives it considerable powers.

Therefore it is rather silly if the Prime Minister's press secretary tries to persuade the press that there is not a state of war, and it is rather silly if the Foreign Secretary, who knows perfectly well that there is, avoids it by saying that a formal state of war does not exist. He knows perfectly well that Argentina, like Japan in the 1940s, did not declare war. That merely shows, to paraphrase President Roosevelt, that there is a greater degree of infamy on their part.

Of course there is not a formal state of war—Argentina did not declare it—but there is a state of war. The most important thing in all this is what we actually are defending. There is talk of defending the Falkland Islands, there is talk of defending perhaps non-existing oil. Lord Shackleton says that the oil is not there; Shell Oil say that it may be. I do not know. I could not care less, and I think that most hon. Members could not care less either because that is not what we are defending.

We are not defending the Falkland Islands and we are not, oddly enough—even though, like every other hon. Member, I hope there are no casualties among them—we are not defending 1,800 Falkland Islanders. That is not

what we are defending. That is why—I hate to say it to my right hon. and hon. Friends—if some of them are killed, that is not necessarily the most important thing.

**Mr. David Ennals** (Norwich, North): Nonsense.

**Mr. English:** It is not the most important thing.

**Mr. John Maxton** (Glasgow, Cathcart): I cannot think of anything more important.

**Mr. English:** The most important thing is that what we are defending is the rule of law in the world.

We are defending, amongst other things, the Argentine people themselves. I gather that *The Times* got it wrong and that the Lieutenant-General Menendez, who is the governor of the Falkland Islands, is not the same Lieutenant-General Menendez who, up to 1979 was in charge not merely of the garrison of Cordoba in the Argentine but also of its death squads, where he had people executed privately without resort to the law. He executed them on his own individual authority, not as an officer or a gentleman, but merely as a murderer. He executed anyone who joined a trade union and anyone who disagreed with him. More people are supposed to have died at his hands than are living now in the Falkland Islands.

The lives of the Falkland Islanders are already at stake because they are under the rule of a military dictator. It is as simple as that. As honest democratic citizens of what I believe to be a civilised world, can we disagree with the genuine representatives of that world, poor and not always efficient though they may be in the Security Council of the United Nations? Can we not stand up and defend democracy? A couple of years ago we gave the Falkland Islanders the right to elect the majority of their legislative council, a right which millions of people in Argentina do not now possess. May we not say what we are defending? May we not say that we are defending democracy and law? We are defending civilisation against barbarians as our ancestors did centuries ago elsewhere. That is what we are doing. That is what I hope we shall continue to do for the sake of the world.

8.56 pm

**Mr. Michael Ancram** (Edinburgh, South): I hope that the hon. Member for Nottingham, West (Mr. English) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the road that he took, except to say that I and most Conservative Members agreed with him when he said that we were defending the rule of law in the world and the civilisation that is based on it.

At this stage of the debate, when much has been said, I would not wish to cover the ground that has been covered already, but I feel that one question has come out of the debate. Everyone who has spoken has said rightly that Her Majesty's Government should, first of all, pursue a diplomatic solution. If a solution can be achieved through diplomacy, everyone in the House would welcome it. However, the question that we must ask ourselves is: if that solution is not forthcoming, does that justify the use of force?

I must admit that when I left the House on Saturday I was troubled at the idea that for the first time in my adult life the country was sending a military and naval force to another part of the world where lives could be lost as a result of that decision. Over the past three days I have thought hard and long about that and I have listened carefully to what has been said. It is only now that I have

become convinced that we would be justified in those circumstances in using that force and if necessary sacrificing lives. The reasons for coming to that view are simple. Some of them, such as sovereignty, have been mentioned. I wish to deal not with that reason, but merely with two other reasons.

The first is this. The people of the Falkland Islands are not foreign to us. They are of us I have had the privilege of meeting many of them when they have come to London. Over this weekend I was struck by the number of telephone calls that I received from people all over Scotland who had relations in the Falkland Islands and who reminded me of the origins of the Falklanders who, by and large, were sheep farmers from Scotland. I realised that those people were part of our family. Their land has been taken over by military force. They are prisoners in their own houses and their property and land have been raped. I asked myself: if that was my family, would I stand back from using whatever means were necessary to try to protect them? I came to the conclusion that I would not. Those people are our family. We should take that view.

The second reason was a different one. It concerned the question of deterrence, which was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Churchill). He spoke about Britain's credibility. Deterrence depends upon the state of mind of the potential aggressor. The potential aggressor must believe sufficiently that if he makes an aggressive move against this country there will be retaliation. To that extent, deterrence is indivisible. If we are faced with aggression in a small set of islands at the far side of the world and we are not prepared to retaliate with the necessary force, the credibility of our deterrent is questioned from top to bottom by our lack of confidence in ourselves. If we find that force is necessary and we back away from using it, we undermine the whole defence strategy on which the security of the nation is based.

That is not war mongering or sabre rattling. It goes to the heart of our credibility as a nation and a people and to the heart of our role as an influence for stability, freedom and peace in a turbulent world. Our fervent hope must be that, before the task force arrives, Argentina will see sense and realise that its position is untenable in every respect—morally, legally and strategically. Every effort must be made to persuade it to face that reality. If it does not, we cannot afford to falter in our determination, however painful may be the consequences. We must openly face the fact that there will be pain and loss if that decision has to be taken.

The alternative is to back down and turn neatly away, not just from those in the Falkland Islands who look at us through a welter of semantic but empty declarations, but from here on out. That is not what is expected of the House, the Government or the country.

We have a duty to give to those who follow us that legacy of self-respect and integrity which is today being challenged. I trust that the Government will have the wisdom and courage to defend it.

9.2 pm

**Mr. David Ennals** (Norwich, North): My claim to a few minutes of the time of the House is that when I was Minister of State at the Foreign Office under my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) who was then Foreign Secretary, I had special responsibility for the Falkland Islands and our relationship with Argentina.

[Mr. David Ennals]

Inevitably, therefore, I felt close to the 1,800 individuals on the Falkland Islands—quiet people wanting to do no other than live on the islands on which they and their parents before them had lived—who trusted in us. They trusted that we would stand by them and that what has happened would not happen.

It may be that it was extremely difficult to give any absolute assurance that nothing would happen, but the Falkland Islanders trusted in us. Throughout the entire period of the Labour Government—my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil (Mr. Rowlands) took over my responsibilities—the trust that the islanders placed in us was never betrayed. They came over to Britain and talked to Members of Parliament. They believed that they were, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) said, part of the family.

Perhaps my approach to the matter is much influenced by that period and that relationship with those people. I fear that we may lose sight of what this is all about. It is a little too much to hear from the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Churchill) that there should be no recriminations. That is not good enough. I feel very hot indeed about what I believe is the Government's failure to stand by the assurances repeated by Minister after Minister to those 1,800 people that they were part of our family.

Of course it was right in 1977, when the writing was on the wall, to send the forces that we did to act as a deterrent. It is no use seeking diplomacy if one has no forces behind one. That is why I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Heeley. That is why I believe that there must be some show of force at this stage. Otherwise, I fear that the prospect of negotiations is very slight indeed.

In any event, the prospect is slight. I still do not know—and perhaps no Minister can tell us—what the instructions to the Navy are. I am very frightened about what will happen to the real people for whom the whole conflict is taking place. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, West (Mr. English) came in and made a speech in which he fought a great battle for international law, and then disappeared. I, too, believe in international law. I am glad that the United Nations came down strongly, by a majority of 10 to one, against this act of aggression by a militaristic and brutal dictatorship—the kind of dictatorship with which the Conservatives seem to have been very friendly in the past few years, selling them arms and equipment which I fear will now be used against our own men who are setting off perhaps to do battle.

Are those forces setting off to do battle? If so, what kind of battle will it be? What will be the instructions? Perhaps the object is to establish a blockade between the Argentine and the Falkland Islands. If so, how long are we prepared for that blockade to remain? If our ships are shot at, naturally we shall shoot back at Argentine ships. If Argentine ships come closer than the line that we determine, we shall shoot at them, anyhow. But when all this has happened, if it happens, what will happen to the 1,800 Falkland Islanders? I am not worried about the sheep for the moment. I am worried about the people. Some of them have said that they realise that life for them will never be the same again. They are now living under the boot of a brutal dictatorship. Their rights are being taken away every day. My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert) suggested that some of them

may be put on Argentine ships. I would not put it past the Argentine junta to use the islanders in any way that suits their own immoral interests. Even if that does not happen, if we tell the Argentines that unless they withdraw we shall launch an invasion of the Falkland islands and throw them off by battle, how many Falkland Islanders will be left at the end of that kind of battle?

I do not speak as a pacifist. I was storming up the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. [Interruption.] I do not know why hon. Members laugh, because that is what I did. My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, East said that it was all very well for ageing, grey-haired figures such as ourselves to say that our chaps should go into battle and give the Argentines a bloody nose. I know that a mood of jingoism is being developed by some Conservative Members, but we must think very coolly indeed.

By that, I mean that the Government must think coolly. It is almost unbelievable that they embarked upon this major operation without consulting the Leader of the Opposition. That was almost as unbelievable as failing to read any of the signs that should have been obvious to the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Prime Minister about what was likely to happen. The Government cannot expect us to give them a blank cheque unless they take us into their confidence. That does not mean taking each of us individually into their confidence, but it does mean taking the Opposition Front Bench and the Leader of the Opposition into their confidence, if they expect everyone in the House to stand together.

I have made my position clear. The invasion was an immoral act. It was right to condemn it. It was right for the Government to decide to respond, but the response came too late. Nevertheless, if we are to have negotiations, we must have force behind us. The Government must do some rapid thinking about what those troops are going to do, and about what will happen to the young men who are now on our ships, to the Argentines and to the Falkland Islanders.

This dispute is not about land. There may be oil on the outskirts of the islands—I do not know. There are certainly fish. The dispute is about people. One hon. Member asked about human rights. The human rights of the Falkland Islanders are the most important issue of all. Things will never be the same again. Many of the islanders will say that they would rather settle in Scotland, or in Australia or New Zealand. They do not want to see a bloody war in their country. We must listen carefully to what the Falkland Islanders are saying to us, in order that the Government can decide at the right moment—they may have a fortnight to decide—what is best in the interests of the people concerned. That is what this great national emergency is about.

9.11 pm

**Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings):** On Monday morning I saw the Fleet sailing proudly down the Solent, the ships lined with young men who, in serving their country, will probably experience the fear which none of us of an earlier generation would wish on any young men of today—the fear and experience of battle. The House is with them in heart, and we wish them well. We are confident that they can carry out the duties for which they have volunteered and that they will carry them out in the best fashion and the traditions of the forces in which they serve.



The sadness of seeing that departure gave me a sense of how much we need to find the diplomatic solution that has evaded us for decades. Now we are seeking to find a solution not in decades but in days. In our determination to find an alternative to the war that is swarming over those young men, we look towards the United States. I wish to ask our new Foreign Secretary—whom I wish well—how clear he is about the part that the United States thinks it is to play in the broking process.

I am concerned that the United States should make a clear declaration that it is only promoting and participating in the diplomatic solution because it wants an unqualified return of the Falkland Islands to British Government control. I am wary of the Mr. Nice-Guy process that one sees so often from the United States, particularly in its ventures in South America, where for sincere, clear and well known reasons it inevitably puts its own interests first. I hope that the British and United States Governments will clear up this nagging fear which I sense I am not alone in feeling.

In particular, I refer to the issues I raised on Monday—the supply of military equipment from the United States to the Argentine. What response has been received from the United States that it will stop supplying the Argentine with any form of product support for the military equipment which the Argentine must have in order for its navy and air force to operate against us? Canada was quick to respond without being asked. I think that the United States should be required to make a speedy declaration.

I am concerned about the new wave of gobbledegook that is becoming part of *Hansard* vocabulary—words such as “lease back” and “condominium”. I do not know exactly what they mean, and I very much doubt whether many other hon. Members know what they mean. It is not only a question of definition, but how we in this House and other people will interpret those words. Most important, what will be the result of those definitions and interpretations?

I hope that the Foreign Secretary will make it absolutely clear that in any diplomatic negotiations British sovereignty is unaffected by the invasion, as it is unaffected in legal terms, and that British sovereignty itself is not up for discussion. I should like an assurance—the Falkland Islanders may find this of help—that no nationality problems could beset them in terms of their relationship with this country.

I understand that this morning on the BBC my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said that in negotiations seeking a diplomatic solution, once again the Foreign Office was in the middle between the British Government and a foreign Government. With great respect to my hon. Friend's long experience in the diplomatic service, that epitomises the problem we have encountered in trying to achieve a diplomatic solution.

**Mr. Raymond Whitney (Wycombe):** If my hon. Friend heard the broadcast, he most certainly misheard me. I said that the Foreign Office as an arm of the British Government was placed in the problem of facing the justified demand from this country, as personified in this House, to protect the wishes of the Falkland Islanders against what the Argentine sees as its right, however much we reject its claim to the territory. That is where the pressure lies, and that is what the Foreign Office, as an instrument of policy of both Governments, has had to cope

with. As the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) pointed out, for 20 years this was a high risk policy.

**Mr. Warren:** I thank my hon. Friend, but I do not think that he would disagree that he said that the Foreign Office was in the middle, and that is the problem. The Foreign Office must be more clearly identified with the interests of the British Government. There should be no difference between the Foreign Office and the British Government.

I turn to the problems that obviously arose over the availability of intelligence data to our forces, not in terms of the inquest which in some form or another we shall eventually have to hold, but in terms of the future use of intelligence data available to us, particularly from the United States. I hope that the Government will carefully examine the routes by which data is available to ensure that in no way is raw data held up from arriving on the desks of Ministers who have the responsibility of promoting the interests of the task force as well as the interests of the diplomatic solution.

It would be helpful if it could be made known that we have the kind of data that our task force requires to carry out its task in the South Atlantic. It would also be helpful to know that good communications are available and that they are not in doubt. As part of our deterrent process, we should make it clear to the Argentine Navy and Air Force that the task force commander not only has the right but the freedom to destroy Argentine military forces as he requires and when he desires it.

At some later date we must examine how, after successive Governments have spent so much money on armaments, we appear to have ended up with inadequate defence.

9.20 pm

**Mr. Eric Ogden (Liverpool, West Derby):** Thank you for calling me, Mr. Speaker. Some hon. Members will know that I have been closely involved in the affairs of the Falkland Islands, very much so since last September and never more than during the past week. Some hon. Members might excuse me if I say that I have listened to this debate feeling rather like a casualty in a hospital, immobilised and helpless, and hearing friends and relatives wrangling over my temporarily helpless body without asking me what I think.

This is a bold claim, but my purpose is to speak for the British people of the British Falkland Islands. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) can tell the House with equal claim and clarity what the Falkland Islanders, who have lost their freedom under military occupation of a foreign Power, cannot say for themselves. I ask the House, the Government and the British people, to regain and restore to the Falkland Islanders their rightful freedom, security, sovereignty and British administration. I ask them to commit every resource at our command, every asset at our disposal, every endeavour and device of peace or war, without reserve or qualification and with courage, thought, quiet determination and conviction to restore to the people of the Falkland Islands what they have lost through no fault of their own.

The first duty of every Member, every Government is the defence of the Realm; to maintain and secure the freedom of British citizens in every part of British sovereign territory. That is what I said from these Benches

(Mr. Eric Ogden)

late on Thursday night in the Adjournment debate, only hours before the invasion took place. That is what the hon. Member for Uxbridge and I said to the people of the Falkland Islands when we had the privilege to visit them as an official Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation, with the full support of the British Government last September.

Some hon. Members asked what the islanders think about the present position and what value they place on their sovereignty, security and freedom. I remind them that on 31 September 1981 the free Falkland Islanders elected, by free adult suffrage, the Members of their Legislative Council. Every elected member of that council, which is less than six months old, had campaigned on the strong principle, platform and conviction of the continuing British sovereignty and security of the islands and the rejection of any sort of lease-back, sell-out or bribery by Argentina. That is their latest declaration and one we should not forget.

The Falkland Islanders are strong, independent and inter-dependent. They have the best of British qualities and characteristics. They took us into their islands which, let us not forget, is a land almost the size of Wales with a proud history and the same proud independence. They took us into their settlements, homes, hospitals, schools, churches, shops and pubs and before we had been there for many days they took us into their confidence and their hearts. They are bright, intelligent people who are well aware of the facts of economic life in Britain in the 1980s. They are well aware of the political realities of the world and their relationship with the other countries in the South-West Atlantic and on the mainland of South America. They do not live in the past. They are more aware of the world in which they live than are many people in Liverpool, Llandudno or many other places in Britain.

As they are good neighbours to each other, so they would be good neighbours to the other people of the South Atlantic. Neither they nor we have any quarrel with the people of the Argentine, only that Government. No Minister, new or old, of this Government, past or future, should be under any doubt that these people are British. We should not expect that they will accept anything less for themselves than we would accept for any British citizen of the Isle of Wight, Anglesey, the Western Isles, Orkney, Jersey or Alderney, the Isle of Man or for any part of the British territories and islands of the United Kingdom. They have considered over the years every promise, every constitutional option, every pressure from Britain—and these have been strong—to go for one intermediate stage or another and every bribe from the Argentine that they could be "the most pampered and richest part of the Argentine."

On our return we reported, time and again, to Ministers their strong, clear and calm conviction that they are British, that they want to remain British and that neither their sovereignty nor their soul is for sale.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge and I gave detailed reports, including our impressions of the quality of British representation in Buenos Aires, to the Secretary of State for Defence and to the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on our return. We have made detailed recommendations to Ministers on a number of occasions in the past months and weeks. We have been much involved with Lord Shackleton and his friends in the

South-West Atlantic Group concerning HMS "Endurance" and Britain's wider and longer term interests in the area. We have practically lived at the Falkland Islands Office in London. Yesterday and again today, we were talking with Mr. John Cheek the only elected member of the Legislative Council of the Falkland Islands, who is still free, and here in London. Anything that I say tonight has his approval. The hon. Member for Uxbridge and I would want to report our conclusions and the recommendations we made to any Select Committee of the House that might wish, at the right and proper time, to inquire into the events of the last months.

From these Benches last Thursday night, I made the sadly prophetic forecast that the dangers were likely to become greater before becoming less. They did. The invasion took place less than 12 hours later. The Falkland Islanders had only a small number of brave marines, a smaller number of no less brave local defence volunteers, a dedicated and courageous governor and his staff and their own courage and determination against overwhelming odds, with the inevitable result that we have all seen. Someone might perhaps have to ask sometime what happened to the contingency plans that were supposed to be available to enable a British Communication base to exist, perhaps for only two days out in Camp. That would nevertheless have been important.

I am grateful that the Foreign Secretary is in his place. I ask him to consider a small and important action that he might take to help the islanders now. I wish the right hon. Gentleman well in his new responsibilities although I believe that the Prime Minister's motives in appointing him were not entirely altruistic. British citizens are now under military occupation and authority. The only lawful Government of the Falkland Islands is here in London in the persons of the governor and the Legislative Council Member to whom I have referred.

There has to be some contact between the occupying forces and the civilian population. The Falkland Islanders are brave people but we want no dead heroes among them. Life of some kind has to go on. Peat has to be dug and gathered, food obtained, services maintained, schools, medical and social services conducted. Farming and the feeding of sheep and cattle has to continue. Will the Foreign Secretary advise the islanders in Stanley and in Camp and authorise them to choose from among their numbers spokesmen to conduct minimum negotiations with the military authorities for the maintenance of basic human needs. This will probably mean in Stanley that the Legislative Council Members will choose someone from among their numbers as an official spokesman for the islanders in the town areas. In the Camp settlements, this spokesman would probably be the owner of the farm or the manager, who is a combined squire, and guardian. In blunt terms, we must talk about collaboration between the civilian population and the occupying Powers. When the islands have been freed, we do not want any recriminations, divisions or difficulties. The Foreign Secretary could send a message by radio or any other means, authorising the islanders to select spokesmen or spokeswomen—as is probably known, there are some very determined ladies out there—to conduct the minimal formal discussions for the maintenance of basic human and animal life until their freedoms and security can be restored. When that has been done, the British people will judge the Government's actions.

Our present duty is to support the Government and the forces that are moving to free the Falklands. I have no doubt about their ability to do so. There must be no doubt that the British Government, Parliament and people intend them to do that. Any schoolboy with a 50p atlas and a copy of the Sunday newspaper supplement could quickly learn the basics of resources and logistics and about the alternative tactics that might be available. The Royal Navy will not be short of advisers, whether expert or amateur. I suggest only that the Royal Navy should go where it is least expected and do what it is not expected to do.

At the beginning of winter the waters of the South-West Atlantic are not the waters of the Mediterranean in spring. We know the qualities of the Argentine naval, marine, air and land forces that await us there and the risk to any civilian population in time of conflict. The safety of 1,800 Falkland Islanders is of great importance to them, to the British Government and to each and every one of us. However, there are ways of obtaining our objectives without putting them at risk.

The Argentine Government and people also know the strength and quality of the forces that we have sent. I expect that force to be strengthened and encouraged by units from the Commonwealth Navies. If we convince the Argentine junta that we are determined to fight to free the Falkland Islands in battles that the junta cannot and will not win, a peaceful solution will be found. However, should the junta misread any expressions of concern as signs of weakness, there will be war. Should the Argentine junta, for any reason, believe that our fleet is not to be taken seriously, that the greatest armada in the world is simply going there to play footsie with the penguins, we shall put our forces at risk.

If the aggressors are persuaded that we shall defend only the Isle of Wight, and not the Falkland Islands there will be death and destruction. With the proper use of the resources available, there is a way in which we can prevent a war. However, we can do so only if the junta is convinced that we are determined to use every means to free the islanders. The Foreign Secretary must have the right to negotiate to remove the occupying Power from the islands. However, future negotiations about the long-term security of the islands should not be undertaken when the Falkland Islanders are occupied by a foreign Power, or immediately afterwards, when they are still in a state of shock.

I smell the smoke of appeasement. I smell a sell-out. These are words that have to be used. Part of the difficulty may be that two different sets of advice are being given to Ministers. The Prime Minister says that we shall keep our word, restore faith and regain our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. However, someone else says that the Falkland Islanders might not be as anxious to insist on something that they insisted on before they were invaded and that the Fleet is going there only to restore British administration. If that is so, by the time the Fleet has reached the Falkland Islands, the Argentine Government will have offered a 25-year package deal of administration and of a lease-back in return for sovereignty. I sense a new Pym/Haig pact that will have too much in common with that of Hoare and Laval. That is not the way forward.

The duty of the Foreign Secretary is to free the islands and to bring them back under British sovereignty and control. We can then give the people of the islands a little time to say what they want and, as we have always done, let them decide. We shall have to watch the Foreign

Secretary's actions carefully. The motto of the Falkland Islands is "Desire the right". If the Government follow that, we shall be on safe ground and the Falkland Islanders will be safe in trusting us. If we do any less we shall have betrayed them a second time. We desire the right.

#### Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is hoped that the wind-up speeches will begin at 10.10 pm.

9.35 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): We went to bed on Thursday in 1982 and woke up on Friday in 1882. It was because of that, politically speaking, that so much on Saturday was reminiscent of punctured pride, which is not a good basis for long-term successful strategy.

The present situation has arisen out of our inability as a country to come to terms with the new world and our post-imperial phase and our inability to make with dependencies a proper settlement that is recognised not only by the old and new Commonwealth, but by many nations throughout the world, particularly Third world countries and members of the United Nations.

In October, I was privileged to sit behind the British representative in the de-colonisation committee of the United Nations. The Government must take into account the long-term discussions that have been taking place on the issue. If we are to recruit world support for our position, as the Foreign Secretary says is necessary, it is vital to take account of the discussions at the United Nations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Hooley) pointed out that the Security Council resolution does not give carte blanche for our Fleet. It calls for negotiations, but most hon. Members would accept that successful negotiations may require some back-up.

The question that disturbs the House and the country is the extent to which the back-up is regarded as the first or only option and the extent to which it is one of the necessary reserves in the background. The only reason why the Fleet is on its way is that there has been some misunderstanding and miscalculation in Government. We all know that.

The Fleet is really that of HMS Government, whose purpose is not only to right the wrongs over the Falkland Islands but to retrieve the reputation of the Government. The claimed and actual objectives are a dangerous and explosive mixture.

Part of the problem has been solved by some of the resignations, but in the past few days the Prime Minister has emphasised a solution by the use of the Fleet alone. Indeed, she said at one time that negotiation had failed. I do not believe that she would still take that view, because many hon. Members on both sides have pointed out that we shall have to choose at some time between what is negotiated at the United Nations and going on into the unknown, with all the risks and consequences associated with that.

The Prime Minister seems to have forgotten that, although force may be necessary, it should not necessarily be the first priority. She has given this country Victorian economics. Earlier this week, she quoted Queen Victoria. Perhaps she has forgotten the Victorian poet of Empire, Kipling, who, in his famous poem, the Recessional,

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

written after the naval review at Spithead after Queen Victoria's Jubilee, intimated that if force is put at first there is danger.

Even tonight, we have heard many boasting words, Although

"reeking tube and iron shard"

may be necessary, we do not necessarily want to put our first trust in them because, as our Commonwealth has shown, there are things which are more permanent and things, which in the end, are more powerful than armed force, useful though it is at times.

In the past few days, the Prime Minister has not only put force at the top of the agenda, but she has put it as the only item on the agenda. She has made it her top line, when it should have been the bottom line. That is why, if the Fleet is not to carry with it the two elements that I described but only the one that the whole House can support, the Prime Minister should consider whether, for the good of the nation and the good of solving this problem, she should remain where she is.

9.40 pm

**Mr. David Crouch** (Canterbury): I had a green card sent in at the beginning of this debate for two of my constituents, who wanted to hear this debate. They had travelled 8,000 miles from the Falkland Islands, and they were the last two to leave before the Argentines landed. They are sheep farmers, and I hope that they are listening now.

On Monday, a constituent rang me at home to say that he, too, had left the Falkland Islands, but a year before. He was the former head of the hospital in Port Talbot, Dr. Summers. He spoke to me for half an hour, and told me about the conditions and the type of people that the 1,800 islanders are. He told me that they are today, and were in his day, a sad and angry people, who felt that the British Government did not take them seriously and did not support them sufficiently. These were the people, he said, who had saved money during the last war to provide 10 Spitfires for the defence of freedom and the defence of our country. They are a small community but, as he told me, they are an ideal community where there is no unemployment, no poverty and no crime.

I am concerned about those people. They are British and they are extremely loyal. They have expressed no wish to be linked to the Argentine, and they have been invaded against their will. They are now under the rule of a dictator. No longer have they the guaranteed freedom of a British citizen. They lost that overnight. They have seen the governor driven out and the marines overrun.

How do the islanders feel now? They were sad and angry before. What can be their feelings about us now? I wonder whether they have even heard that a mighty British naval task force is on the way to rescue them from their captivity? I wonder whether they are thinking about how it will be done, and whether it will be dangerous for them? They are hostages in their own land. We are sending in the Navy, perhaps, the Marines and the other troops, and the islanders could be caught up in this war of liberation.

I have no doubt that our commanders will bear all these thoughts in mind, and devise their plans to liberate the islands and their people without harming them in the process. However, it will not be easy. We must hope that the Argentines will respond to the strong diplomatic

activity and be influenced by the firm resolve of the Government to recapture the islands by force, if necessary. Now is the time for us to show resolve and to encourage our sailors, Marines and other troops. Now is the time for us to show resolve and to encourage all the efforts by our country, by the United States and other countries, in the diplomatic activity which must equally produce the result that we want.

We do not want to lose face in these matters, but nor must we lose our heads. When we have achieved our aims and liberated the islands, as I am confident we shall, by all these means—and I hope by peaceful means—what will the islanders think then? Will they want to stay and get on with their sheep farming? Will they have the same enthusiasm, and the confidence that Britain, 8,000 miles away, will safeguard them from another attack?

I believe that when the Argentine has suffered a major reverse and withdrawal, or has been driven out of the islands, it would not be credible for it to attempt to defy us or world opinion a second time, but shall we have to keep a protective naval force there in future, and a rather more effective military presence than a detachment of Royal Marines?

We have embarked on a major military operation to regain our territory and to save 1,800 British subjects. We are right to do so. We would be wrong not to. A great principle in the defence of freedom is at stake. But I cannot help thinking of the sad and angry people.

I went into Singapore days after the Japanese surrendered. The British had returned, and the local people had not forgotten that we had collapsed disastrously in 1942 without much of a fight. To this day they have never looked at us again with quite the respect that we thought we deserved. The Falkland islanders, too, will have had their minds concentrated by what has happened to them. We may find that they want to call it a day and come home. We cannot know this now, but at least we have to give it a thought.

9.47 pm

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (West Lothian): Will the Foreign Secretary answer the question that I put to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who did not answer it, as to how long he thinks we can sustain a force in the Antarctic? It is one thing to put a force into the Antarctic; it is quite another matter to get it out. [Interruption.] I am afraid that we are dealing with the Antarctic as a whole, and I am entitled to ask this question. What, in the Government's view, is the answer?

Secondly, what is the position of the British Antarctic survey? Although some of the headquarters' staff have left the Falkland Islands, the survey is dependent on South Georgia, and it is certainly dependent on the goodwill of the Argentine. The scientists have done long-term work in geophysics, oceanography and seismology. It would be a very great pity if that work were to be interrupted, or if the long-term work were in some cases to be destroyed by relatively short-term considerations.

My third question concerns the resignation of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington. I am puzzled about it. There has been a great deal of schadenfreude and possibly humbug about it. Ever since I was the late Dick Crossman's parliamentary private secretary, I have known Peter Carrington, and by nature he is not the kind of man who flinches from a hard task. I refuse to believe that he resigned simply because of the formidable task in front of

the Government. Those who know him will realise that he did not leave because the task was hard. Either he was let down or deceived by colleagues, and possibly double-crossed, or he simply did not believe in Government policy.

I ask his successor to say which of those two explanations is correct. Those of us who have an admiration for Peter Carrington have the right to ask for an honest explanation of precisely why he left the Government at this stage.

**Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark** (Birmingham, Selly Oak): If he had not left, the hon. Gentleman would have asked for his resignation.

**Mr. Dalyell**: I am an admirer of Peter Carrington in a number of spheres. I am entitled to ask why the best Cabinet Minister in the Government resigned, and I am entitled to a truthful explanation. We have not had that.

What advice was given to the Government by the Chiefs of Staff. I take it on my responsibility—every hon. Member is responsible for his statements—to say that some Chiefs of Staff advised that the task force was not a feasible operation. The House is entitled to know what the Chiefs of Staff said to the Government on this issue. Some of us believe that the Fleet should turn round and come back to Portsmouth and Rosyth as soon as possible.

9.52 pm

**Mr. Alan Clark** (Plymouth, Sutton): There is much that I should have liked to draw to the attention of the House, but I am grateful for being allowed a few minutes and I shall try to compress what I have to say into a few sentences.

First I say this. The accusation of jingoism is a sneer that falls readily from some lips, not so much in this place but in the media and those charged with commenting on these affairs. In defence of that charge, I remind the House that British Governments have in the past 35 years betrayed minorities, allegedly for reasons of State and expediency. Sudeten Czechs were forced to sign away their rights at Munich, Ukrainian Cossacks were returned to the gallows, Rhodesians, white and black, were placed in jeopardy. Ulster Protestants, for all I know, may follow them. But in this case the people we are talking about are, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) reminded us, our own family. They are our own family with an absolute right to their homesteads and their land. We know in this House that there were reasons of State for those other betrayals, as they were seen at the time. That could be excused or argued away, but these people inhabit an area of tremendous riches and potential for future generations of our own people. Is it not extraordinary, and fortunate, that the moral and material imperatives co-exist? What possible reason can there be, either moral or material, for abandoning them?

Many of my hon. Friends will have seen the scenes on television when the Fleet set sail, with sailors standing on the deck in lines, each individual bluejacket joined by an invisible cord to his family on the quayside who were waving him God-speed. Surely I cannot have been alone among my hon. Friends in recognising that they showed a simple faith and pride in our country, which they showed naturally and spontaneously. That is something that in the last resort I entered politics to protect. When they cheered

I believe that they did so in the knowledge—it was surer than ours in this place because it came from their hearts—that everything was at stake.

The Foreign Office has taken much criticism and I have played my part in that, but I shall quote a judgment from a distinguished member of the Foreign Office, Sir Geoffrey Jackson, who was formerly our ambassador in Montevideo. He wrote in *The Standard* today:

"It is at such moments that national will is tested and observed. Ultimate national survival is at stake behind the apparently minor challenge, and whatever immediate results it may have. We must have no doubt that eyes around the world—friendly and, especially unfriendly, were on that decision".

I believe that this is the last chance, the very last chance, for us to redeem much of our history over the past 25 years, of which we may be ashamed, and from which we may have averted our gaze.

9.56 pm

**Mr. David Lambie** (Central Ayrshire): Throughout the debate right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House have said that we cannot let down the people of the Falkland Islands. Those who have said that have forgotten that we have let them down. The Falkland Islanders were British subjects in a British colony who had a right to the protection of British forces. They did not get that protection because of the Government's actions. Therefore we have let the Falkland Islanders down.

Like the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden), I have visited the Falkland Islands. I did so in the latter part of 1978, with the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who is now the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. We visited the islands to try to get the islanders to agree to a proposal made by the then Labour Government that representatives of the Falkland Islands should take part in negotiations between the Argentine and British Governments. The Falkland Islanders have always refused to take part in such negotiations.

The islanders have had no faith in Foreign Office officials nor in successive Ministers. I wish that the Prime Minister would obtain a recording of the broadcast that her PPS and I made before we left the islands. She would then be able to hear the assurances and guarantees that her hon. Friend gave the people of the Falkland Islands on behalf of the then Conservative Opposition. If she had heard his words, she would not have allowed the defence of the islands to go by the way in her overall defence policy.

During our journey we visited the British embassy at Buenos Aires. From the ambassador down—perhaps this is why Lord Carrington resigned—the people in the British embassy were pro-Argentina and anti-Falkland Islands. The English-speaking descendants of those who had left Wales and Scotland and the English-speaking Argentines were there to brainwash us so that we would tell the people of the Falkland Islands that they should capitulate, should forget about sovereignty and become part of Argentina. I am making the point now that the Minister who replies should answer this point. What advice did the British Foreign Secretary receive from our embassy in Buenos Aires before this decision by the Argentina junta?

**Sir Anthony Royle** (Richmond, Surrey): Over the past four days there have been constant attacks on the British—

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

[Sir Anthony Royle]

*Ordered.*

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Eleven o'clock.—[Mr. Boscawen.]

*Motion made, and Question proposed.* That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Boscawen.]

**Sir Anthony Royle:** Over the past four days there have been constant attacks on the British foreign service for the advice that it has been giving to Ministers. The diplomatic service has of course been giving advice to Ministers in the Foreign Office. Three of them resigned their offices on Monday because of the events of the past two or three months. In due course no doubt there may be inquiries into the events over the past months in the Falkland Islands and Argentina. Might it not be better if people, like the hon. Member, ceased attacking members of the diplomatic service who at this time are trying to carry out diplomatic negotiations overseas to ensure that our forces who are now en route to the Falklands will have a chance of dealing peacefully with that problem when they arrive there?

**Mr. Lambie:** I am not attacking the members of the diplomatic service. All I am doing is, from my own experience of meeting them and getting advice from them, asking the Minister to give the answers to my question.

I am one of the Opposition Members who believe that it was the wrong decision to send a task force to the South Atlantic. I accept the case put by my right hon. and hon. Friends that that force was going down to the South Atlantic to show the flag and to make a show of strength to get the Argentine Government to a negotiating table to get a negotiated settlement. I have to accept that.

However, after watching "Weekend World" on Sunday, hearing the Secretary of State for Defence, listening to the various broadcasts and the news on Monday and Tuesday with the Prime Minister I realised that the task force was going not merely to show our strength, but to take part in a naval battle to defeat the Argentine navy, to invade the Falkland Islands, and if necessary, to invade the mainland of the Argentine. In that case I am not sure that we are following the correct line.

If we are to have the support of the United Nations then we have to cease the show of strength in the South Atlantic and we must use the power that we have to get the United Nations and all our friends in the United Nations to come in on our side.

**Mr. Buck:** What if they do not?

**Mr. Lambie:** It has been said continuously today that the United Nations is on our side. The Security Council is on our side, but we are not so sure that if a debate took place in the United Nations we should have the majority vote in support of the British Government's position.

The Falkland Islanders themselves would never allow a debate to take place on the future of the Falkland Islands in the United Nations because they recognised that the former colonies, which constitute the majority of the members of the United Nations, would always come down against Britain as a colonial power. Therefore, if we go to the United Nations, and especially if we do so after having taken part in a battle with the Argentines, we shall not get world support, and we shall be out on a limb.

What is the position of the United States? That question has been asked many times during the debate. When

Russia invaded Afghanistan, President Reagan made an immediate decision to take economic sanctions against Russia. In view of the special relationship that the Prime Minister has with the United States and with President Reagan, why has not President Reagan adopted the same policy against the Argentine as he adopted against the Russians on Afghanistan? We are entitled to ask that.

Can we allow the Americans to act as the honest broker and to say that the military junta in the Argentine is their friend and the British Government are their friends? We know what will happen. The Americans will sell this country down the river in the same way as the British Government have sold the people of the Falkland Islands down the river. That is so, no matter how one looks at it.

The Prime Minister must take full responsibility for the present situation. I say this to anyone who has never been to the Falkland Islands. It is impossible in winter in the area of the "Roaring Forties" to carry out an invasion of the Falkland Islands without massacring the 1,800 Falkland Islanders who live there. The attack can take place only at Port Stanley. The rest of the Falkland Islands is desolate and is composed of marshland and bog. Heavy equipment could not travel in those areas. The only area in the Falkland Islands that has roads that can be used by heavy equipment is Port Stanley, where 900 of the 1,800 people live.

The force is now moving down to the South Atlantic. We are showing the flag. We are giving a show of strength, but let us use that show of strength to get back to the negotiating table. Let us go to the United Nations and use our special relationship with the United States. Let us use it to allow the United States to intervene and take the part that it should play. If the Americans intervened in this dispute, there would be only one result. The Argentine forces would withdraw from the Falkland Islands and there would be a return to normality so that we would be given the opportunity to reconsider the situation.

10.7 pm

**Mr. John Silkin (Deptford):** On Monday I asked the then Lord President of the Council whether the new Foreign Secretary would make a statement to the House of the Government's policy. I send to the new Foreign Secretary, whom I shadowed as Leader of the House for 15 months, my personal good wishes.

We have heard a great deal from hon. Members and in the media about the jingoist mood in the House last Saturday. I do not believe that it was a jingoist mood. I did not get the impression from my hon. Friends that there was a "jingo" feeling. I did not get that impression from Conservative Members. What I did get was a gigantic sense of outrage that a small, democratic group of people, Britons every one of them, had been overrun by a Fascist dictatorship. The Foreign Secretary called it a brutal dictatorship today. We shall not quarrel about the words. It is the same thing. The House was ashamed that we had allowed that invasion to take place. We had a sense of deep horror that it had taken place at all. That was the mood of the House. It was a sombre mood, not a jingoist mood.

If today the mood has changed somewhat, perhaps it is right that it should. It is not as emotional as it was on Saturday. It is now much more introspective. That is right, too. We are doing our best to try to work out a solution. Nevertheless, that sense of outrage is still with us. If President Galtieri and his bunch of hangmen think that the differences of approach to the matter by hon. Members

represents approval or acquiescence of what he has done, let the message go from the House that that is not so. President Galtieri does not know what a free parliament means.

Let us examine what should be the objectives of the Opposition now. They should not coincide with everything that the Government believe. There is every reason why we should divide, except on the fundamental basis that I have just outlined. First, we go with the Government on the matter of the United Nations resolution. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Hooley) pointed out, that the Security Council resolution was drafted by an official of the British Government. I understand that to be correct. That resolution demands the immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands. I hope and trust that that will be the view of every hon. Member. How that may be done is a matter to which I shall come in a moment. There will be differences of opinion on that matter, but on the fundamental point of the resolution there should be no difference between any of us.

The second point of that resolution, passed by the Security Council by 10 votes to one, with five abstentions, calls on:

"The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences and to respect fully the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations." There should be no difference of opinion on that.

The clause means that we must say to the Argentine "Yes, we are willing to negotiate". That is right. But the clause also calls for the immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces. Therefore, the negotiations should not be under threat. We should all be aiming for that—for the withdrawal of the Argentine forces and then negotiations. That is the clear position that the Opposition and, I hope, all right hon. and hon. Members hold.

The second objective for the Opposition is to support, respect, sympathise with, comfort and do everything else that we can for our fellow British citizens of the Falkland Islands. That means looking after their best interests as they would wish. That has emerged strongly both in this debate and last Saturday. That desire is common to all hon. Members.

The Opposition believe fundamentally and passionately—this will be agreed by everyone—that we should support our forces. I come, however, to a matter where some differences may arise. It is a well known, historic and right basis that if an Opposition does not trust the political leaders of the forces, it has a national duty to say so. That has nothing to do with our support for the forces. That remains. But our support for the politicians who created the situation—

**Mr. James Hill** (Southampton, Test): Be statesmanlike.

**Mr. Silkin:** That is being statesmanlike. The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) should look to his history. That position has always been held. It was so when the Tories were in Opposition, when the Liberals were in Opposition and when the Labour party was in Opposition. And, thank God that was the Labour Opposition's view of Mr. Chamberlain and his Government in 1939-40. Let us be under no illusion. We do not have to give our trust to those who allowed the house to burn down, and we certainly do not have to applaud them being made chief of the fire brigade.

We made our warnings clear time and again, and not long ago. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan), the former Prime Minister, made it absolutely clear when he rightly quoted his own question to the Prime Minister on 9 February, and asked why HMS "Endurance" was being scrapped for a mere £3 million out of a budget of £14½ billion. The Prime Minister replied that it was the Secretary of State's cash limit. That is the priority that she gives it. That is what she thinks of it. The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence are therefore, if I may use the expression, in exactly the same boat. My right hon. Friend was quite right to draw attention to that today and at that time.

**Mr. John Browne** rose—

**Mr. Silkin:** I shall not give way. There is not enough time. The hon. Gentleman has his chance before.

The duty of the Opposition is to act for the people of this country.

**Mr. Browne** rose—

**Mr. Silkin:** We are not in charge of the prosecution of a war, but of looking after the interests of our people, articulating the questions that worry them and to which they need answers.

On Saturday, I asked the Secretary of State for Defence three sets of questions. I should not have minded if the Prime Minister had answered them. Perhaps the Secretary of State did not know the answers, as some were Foreign Office matters, although others were defence matters. To this day, those questions have not been answered. Instead, we have heard from the Secretary of State for Defence evasions, half-truths and a sneer. Let us consider what he had to say.

The right hon. Gentleman, calling his terms terms of national unity, said that the Labour Party should give him unqualified support. We do not. He said, with a sneer on Saturday:

"I do not believe the claim that the new Labour Party, with its well-known and well-advertised anti-defence bias and lack of commitment to defence spending, would have done any better."—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 668.] Those are the words of the man who was trying to get our support.

We pointed out in our questions that it was he who had been giving signals to the Argentines that we did not mind so much, that "Endurance" could go, the whole South Atlantic could go, and the Falkland Islands could go, and we rightly called for his resignation. He then said on Sunday—

**Mr. Browne** rose—

**Hon. Members:** Sit down!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. It is clear that the right hon. Gentleman is not giving way. He must be allowed to continue.

**Mr. Silkin:** If the hon. Gentleman tries to take time from me again, I shall take it from his right hon. Friend. I have to say what I need to say. The House can accept it or not, but it will hear it.

The Secretary of State for Defence said on television on Sunday:

"For me to quit my post at this moment would be very damaging indeed for the Government, and my job is not just a political job—it is also, as chairman of the Defence Council, an operational post."

[Mr. Silkin]

For that reason, we are entitled to ask once again the questions to which the people of this country want an answer. If, as the right hon. Gentleman maintains, he is in charge of an operational post, let him answer these questions. This is the last question that I shall ask tonight about the past—but it is relevant to where we are at the moment. This is not raking the embers—bits of fire still exist.

Is it a fact—the Secretary of State must know—that 10 days before the invasion the Argentine Government agent in London asked for 01 priority spares for military equipment? Is it true that the right hon. Gentleman was advised against providing them? Who overruled that advice? The right hon. Gentleman must answer, and we expect that answer tonight.

I turn to the short term question. Admiral Woodward is sailing with his fleet to the South Atlantic. He is an able officer and we wish him well, but what are the objectives of the expedition? We have a right to know. Of course we do not have a right to know the detailed instructions that he has been given. We would not ask for that. We fully accept that. But we have a right to know the expedition's objectives and we have not been told. All that we have been told—in an interview with Mr. Brian Walden—is that the Secretary of State is keeping certain options open. That is not the way that this issue should be dealt with. The country wants to know the fleet's objectives. What objective has been given to the admiral so that he may know what he has to do? I am not asking about detailed instructions.

How many ships—and what is their state of readiness—of the standby squadron that are coming out of reserve to cover the hole made in the NATO services. We have heard a great deal about the need for readiness in NATO. We are entitled, therefore, to ask the right hon. Gentleman for details on the availability of standby squadron ships.

I turn to the longer term. There will be longer term, and sooner or later—one hopes sooner rather than later—there will be other questions to be asked and other answers to be given. We must start, however, with the most important issue—the Falkland Islanders. They are the reason for all this. It is about them that every hon. Member is or ought to be concerned. It is right that we should talk about fulfilling the wishes of the islanders, but what are those wishes and what means will be used in order to see what those wishes are, and how they may be fulfilled? Successive Governments have said that the wishes of the islanders should be paramount. It has been repeated today. The Foreign Secretary said it, and I was glad to hear him do so. But we must test what those wishes are. Will the Secretary of State tell us the way in which those wishes are to be tested? How will they be found out? That brings me to the Ridley plan of December 1980.

The Ridley plan was rejected by the Falkland Islanders. The House did not like it much either, but it was a plan. Let us not discuss it in terms of sovereignty and administration. Such terms seem to muddle people, and no one seems to know what they mean. We must talk about them in terms that the islanders can understand. Is it the Government's policy that the freehold of the Falkland Islands must be returned to the islanders or is the

Government's policy that it would be sufficient if the leasehold were to be given to the islanders and the freehold retained by Argentina?

There is a difference. Whether the lease is 25 years, 99 years or 125 years is not of great importance. There is a great difference in status. That difference can be seen in Hong Kong, which is a leasehold property. The leasehold belongs to the Crown but the seas around Hong Kong belong to China. If such a lease arrangement were applied to the Falkland Islands, the seas around them for 200 miles would belong to the Argentine. Therefore, there is a considerable legal difference between freehold or leasehold, sovereignty or administration. Which of those two options do the Government intend to pursue? In other words, has the Ridley plan returned to the negotiating table or is that not the case in any event?

The next point has already been stated clearly by the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). He generously said "Let us only touch on it today, there will be plenty of time to look at it again". I do not think that there will be. I refer to the question of what our defence should be. It is tied up with Trident, a sufficiency of conventional forces and with the sort of defence policy and Navy we are to have. I firmly believe that those who underestimate sea power are making a great mistake, and I have always thought that to be so.

Mr. Neville Sandelson (Hayes and Harlington): What is Labour Party policy?

Mr. Silkin: Labour Party policy is to get rid of Trident and to have a strong conventional force. Government policy is now in tatters. Let us imagine what that policy would be had the Falkland Islands dispute taken place a year from now, after the White Paper had begun to take effect. By then, the dockyard at Gibraltar would be closed, Chatham would be deserted, Pompey would be run down, "Invincible" would have sold to Australia and "Hermes" would be on the way to the scrapheap. That is precisely what would have happened. As we know, 500 sailors with redundancy notices in their pockets are at present travelling on ships that have either been sold or are due for the scrapheap, to return to dockyards that are to be closed down. That is the reality of the Government's defence White Paper. Will they change it?

If Conservative Members are saying that they will not, how do we protect the Falkland Islands next time? We can protect them only if we have a strong sea power. If we do not have "Invincible", "Hermes" or "Fearless" how on earth do we protect the Falkland Islands? The truth is that the defence White Paper of last July is in tatters. Will the Secretary of State for Defence guarantee to keep open the Naval dockyard? Will he guarantee to stop the scrapping of the Navy and, above all, will he guarantee to put aside Trident, because it is upon Trident that this unfortunate naval policy is based?

The future of the Falkland Islands is shared and worried about by all of us. We sympathise with the islanders and we shall do our best to help them. In that, we can be united. I hope that the fact that we remain a free Parliament and that we shall not have any truck with the fascist dictatorship in Argentina will unite us. But we can never tolerate the incompetence, the bungling and the blundering of a Government that did for the Falkland Islands in the first place.



10.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. John Nott): On Friday 2 April, Argentina seized the Falkland Islands by force of arms, in flagrant disregard of international law and, subsequently, of resolution 502 of the Security Council. Her Majesty's Government have made it absolutely clear that we do not, and will not, accept this position. The Falkland Islands are sovereign British territory. The Falkland Islanders wish to remain under British administration.

We are now deploying to the South Atlantic a powerful task group and other naval units capable of a range of operations. Should it become necessary, we shall use force to achieve our objective. We hope that it will not come to that. We hope that diplomacy will succeed. Nevertheless, the Argentines were the first to use force of arms in order to establish their present control of the Falklands. The islands are now subject to an illegal and alien military rule. That is a position which must not endure for one day longer than is necessary.

Our first naval action will therefore be intended to deny the Argentine forces on the Falklands the means of reinforcement and re-supply from the mainland. To this end, I must tell the House that through appropriate channels the following notice is being promulgated to all shipping forthwith:

"From 0400 Greenwich Mean time on Monday 12 April 1982, a maritime exclusion zone will be established around the Falkland Islands. The outer limit of this zone is a circle of 200 nautical mile radius from Latitude 51 degrees 40 minutes South, 59 degrees 30 minutes West, which is approximately the centre of the Falkland Islands. From the time indicated, any Argentine warships and Argentine naval auxiliaries found within this zone will be treated as hostile and are liable to be attacked by British forces. This measure is without prejudice to the right of the United Kingdom to take whatever additional measures may be needed in exercise of its right of self-defence, under article 51 of the United Nations Charter."

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester (Mr. Buck) referred to the need to keep the House informed of developments. I undertake to do that while the House is in recess.

I wish to clear up one point before I go any further. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East (Mr. Callaghan) asked whether our goal was the return of British administration or of British sovereignty. Let me make it clear to the House that the illegal occupation of the Falkland Islands and their dependencies by the Argentine Armed Forces in no way affects the fact of British sovereignty over all these territories. Sovereignty cannot be taken away by force. It is the administration which has been usurped, and it is the administration which we shall be making every effort to restore.

Hon. Members have referred to a variety of options for ending the sovereignty dispute. It is not my task to discuss them here tonight. I would only say that we have always made clear our wish to resolve the dispute with Argentina. That has been the wish of previous Governments, too. We have made continuous and constructive efforts to achieve that goal. But it has throughout been the keystone of our policy—here I pay tribute to the moving speech made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce)—that it does not matter what we want or what the Argentines want. What matters is what the islanders want. It is their rights that have been taken away by naked aggression. It is their rights that we shall restore.

The House will no doubt wish to hold an inquest on what went wrong. I understand that there is a question on the Order Paper on this subject. I believe, however, that the time for an inquest will arise when we have returned the Falkland Islands to British administration and not while our task force is at sea. This point was, I believe, echoed on both sides of the House. This is a moment, I believe, when we should look forward to the means of restoring freedom of self-determination to the British people of the Falkland Islands. That view is, I believe, shared by almost every right hon. and hon. Member who has spoken in the debate.

I have stated my intention not to spend long on the events of the recent past. I should perhaps refer to the matter that I think has caused the greatest concern, namely, the fear that our intelligence let us down—or that we totally ignored it. That was another charge made in the debate. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) also said that the United States was reported as having known last January—I think that he stated it was January—of an impending attack on the Falkland Islands. On the contrary, the United States authorities were in touch with us throughout February and March and shared our assessments of the situation.

At Question Time yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear that it was not until 31 March that we received information that a large number of Argentine ships were heading for Port Stanley. On 1 April, further evidence made clear that the Argentine force was preparing for the assault of the Falkland Islands I believe, in fact, given the considerable knowledge that we possessed over the previous weeks and months, that others, had they been in our position, would have drawn the same conclusions as ourselves. But clearly we were wrong. We are not disputing that.

My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Carrington, whose tremendous services to the nation we shall all miss deeply, in speaking on this subject publicly last Monday, accepted that we had misread the signs. In the light of subsequent events, we should have recognised that the bellicose and aggressive statements which had both accompanied and followed the diplomatic talks between this country and the Argentine were of a different nature from those that had existed on and off for 20 years or more.

If, however, I may be permitted to hazard a personal opinion—I emphasise that it is a personal opinion and the interpretation of the evidence that we received—I do not in fact believe that a firm intention had been made to invade the Falkland Islands until the last week in March. I would like, in this connection, emphatically to deny the report contained in some newspapers yesterday that intelligence reports had been received in this country several weeks ago indicating that an Argentine invasion on the Falklands had already been agreed.

The second aspect of preparedness and one for which I bear direct responsibility is the readiness of our Armed Forces to go to war.

To have assembled a task force of the present size and to have despatched it ready to fight a battle 8,000 miles from home should be convincing proof of our preparedness. We were in fact able to assemble such a task force—in such a short time—only because our plans were prepared, both in terms of our fighting units and of their essential logistic support.

In the days preceding the sailing of the main elements of the task force there was a great deal of preparatory work

[Mr. John Nott]

of every kind. It included the checking in each ship of the task force of all essential systems to ensure sea worthiness and operational readiness for a prolonged operation in the harsh weather conditions of the South Atlantic, with long lines of communication. At the Royal dockyards and naval stores depots and establishments there was a splendid response from the civilians of the Ministry of Defence who worked long hours, often throughout the night, to get the Fleet to sea. We are immensely grateful to them. I would also like to express my thanks to the shipping industry for its co-operation and support.

There is one other acknowledgement that I must make. It goes to the Royal Marine contingents that defended the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. The 75-strong detachment put up a splendid fight against overwhelming odds. The initial assault on Government House by a large company of troops was repulsed. On being thrown back, the Argentines showed no stomach to press their attack until the arrival of the marine battalion, some 600 strong equipped with armoured personnel carriers armed with cannon, one hour later. The Royal Marines succeeded in bringing this convoy to a halt by knocking out the leading vehicle. They were still defending the residence several hours later when the governor, in his capacity as commander-in-chief, decided that it would be wrong to continue in view of the risk of bloodshed and injury to the immediate population living nearby.

With similar gallantry, the Royal Marine contingent of 22 men in South Georgia inflicted many casualties, including several killed. They damaged an Argentine corvette and destroyed a large Argentine helicopter. I should like to add one small point, which is indicative of the spirit of the Royal Marines. Major Norman, who commanded the incoming Royal Marine detachment on the Falklands, and his men will be forming up at Poole after a short break over Easter, and will then be prepared and ready to return to their duties in the Falklands. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."] Major Noote, who commanded the detachment that had completed its tour of duty on the islands, and volunteers from his detachment, who were there during the battle and all of whom took part in the fighting last Friday will be deploying with the amphibious force now at sea.

Several hon. Members were interested in the command arrangements for the task force. Indeed, the former Prime Minister the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South-East, raised this point. I am wholly in agreement with him that our naval forces must have the clearest information and knowledge and very specific rules of engagement. We cannot command ships from Whitehall. I am determined to follow the clear procedure that he set out.

The Commander in Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, is in overall command of all forces allocated to the operation. This he exercises from his operational headquarters at Northwood where he controls all communications and has access to all available intelligence. Similar arrangements would apply for any operations both out of area and in the Atlantic.

Operational command of our surface ships and embarked forces is vested in Rear Admiral Woodward, the Flag Officer First Flotilla. He is an officer of very wide experience, including sea commands. Brigadier Thompson, the officer commanding 3 Commando Brigade, will command the landing force. I mention that

only to show that I am satisfied that this normal and well-tried command and control structure for maritime and amphibious operations works well and I see no reason to depart from it at this time.

The force now on the high seas heading for the South Atlantic is a formidable one. The House knows most of the contingent, but I shall briefly go through it. The carriers HMS "Invincible" and "Hermes" with augmented complements of Sea Harriers and Seaking helicopters; the Type 42 destroyers "Sheffield", "Glasgow" and "Coventry", armed with Sea Dart; the County class destroyers "Antrim" and "Glamorgan", fitted with Seaslug; the Type 21 frigates "Arrow", "Alacrity" and "Antelope" with their Exocet surface-to-surface missiles; the Type 22s "Brilliant" and "Broadsword", with Exocet and Sea Wolf; and finally the Type 12 frigates "Plymouth" and "Yarmouth", with their sonar and helicopters.

The force is capable of taking on any maritime threat, be it airborne, surface or sub-surface, and it contains a sizeable amphibious lift capability in the assault ship HMS "Fearless" and the five landing ships. Arrangements are in hand to supplement the force as necessary, either for reinforcement or replacement.

I should say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) and the right hon. Member for Deptford (Mr. Silkin) that there are no ships in the stand-by squadron.

So far, I have concentrated on the warships which make up the striking edge of the Fleet. Of course, the deployment and maintenance of the force will pose great logistic problems, but not problems that are insuperable. The Fleet auxiliaries "Appleleaf", "Tidespring", "Pearleaf" and "Olmeda" will provide tanker support; and the "Fort Austin", which was already well on her way to the Falklands when the Argentines invaded last Friday, "Resource" and "Stromness" provide stores support.

Those vessels are manned by members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, who, like their Service counterparts, are professionals in their specialist field, with long experience of operating with the Royal Navy.

It would not be right for me to give precise details of the Royal Marines and soldiers who will be sailing with the task force, but I can tell the House that they include Royal Marine Commandos and soldiers of the Parachute Regiment, together with signals, artillery and supporting arms. Other Army units are on standby.

I should also add that, as the House knows, we have requisitioned several ships from trade. The list is long and we shall add to it as the need arises, to provide the logistics for what we could expect to be a long operation at the furthest distance at which any Navy could be asked to perform the sort of difficult task that faces us.

The right hon. Member for Deptford asked a number of questions. I tell him that the task force is well equipped, balanced, powerful and, above all, flexible. Its flexibility is important. The advice of the Chiefs of Staff will be tendered directly to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and we will select the right military option as the situation demands and as it develops.

I recognise that simply saying that there is a range of options does not say much, but I am sure that the House understands that it would be wrong to divulge what is in our minds for the coming period. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Security must be uppermost in our minds.

I urge the House to say nothing in public that gives comfort or assistance to Argentina. Great caution and restraint is needed over the coming weeks in what is

broadcast on radio and television or published in the press. A military operation is under way and lives are at stake. I know that the press and media will take that fully into account in their reporting.

**Mr. Dalyell:** What is the cost of all this? Will it come from Departments or from the public sector borrowing requirement? Is there any estimate of the cost?

**Mr. Nott:** We have made no estimate of costs. We are concerned with the success of the operation.

I was heartened by the support shown during the debate by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I hope that they will forgive me for not mentioning each of them in turn. I was also particularly heartened by the speeches of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden) and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

However, it was reported to me that the House heard the voices of some who doubt the wisdom of preparing to use force should our present intense efforts to find a solution fail. I cannot share that view. When one stops a dictator, there are always risks and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said the other day, there are greater risks in not stopping a dictator—a lesson which this nation has learnt before.

There are also those who doubt our military capability to mount or sustain the level of operations that may conceivably be needed in the last resort. In this connection, I shall answer some of the remarks made about the naval programme and the defence changes that I have made. In particular, I shall respond to what the leader of the Liberal Party said. Our defence programme is shaped round the response to the Soviet threat. That remains our overriding defence priority. In terms of the sea-air battle, the plans give emphasis to our submarine and maritime air effort, and it is right that they should. Indeed, the lesson that this incident, too, makes very clear is that we are right to increase the number of our force of SSNs—our hunter-killer submarines. In my review, I have endorsed the full plans which we inherited.

Nevertheless, as we said in the defence White Paper last June, a wide range of tasks in peace and war will remain for which the surface fleet is vital. Nothing in our recent review will prevent us from retaining such a capability in future years. A ship construction programme of £2,000 million is now in progress, and £400 million worth of orders was placed last year. Many aspects of the Fleet's fighting capability are being greatly improved, and the torpedo programme alone amounts to more than £2,000 million. I give the torpedo programme, costing around £2,000 million, as but one example of my determination to put more of our defence resources into weapons rather than into the platforms that carry them.

In this financial year we shall be spending  $\frac{1}{2}$  billion more in real terms on the Royal Navy's conventional forces than was spent by the Labour Government. It is not true to say that we have reduced spending on the conventional fleet. We have increased it. Indeed, spending on the conventional Navy, disregarding modernisation of the nuclear deterrent, is considerably higher today in real terms even than it was in 1950, at the end of the last war. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East suggested that half the ships in the task force would be scrapped. In 1985, there will be more major ships operational in the Fleet than there are today, not fewer. There will be fewer

frigates—that is the matter on which attention in the House has concentrated—but there will be considerably more submarines, and exactly the same number of carriers.

In the future, we shall still be spending more on the conventional Navy, even when expenditure on modernising the strategic deterrent is at its peak, than was spent on the conventional Navy when the Labour Party was in office. I have not sought to make a particularly partisan speech, but we cannot be criticised for cutting back the conventional Navy, when it is far larger today than it was when we took office, and so it will be in the late 1980s.

**Mr. Speed:** Will my right hon. Friend explain two matters? First, the Government have ordered only two frigates and no destroyers, and the next frigates to be ordered will be Type 23s, which will not be with us until the end of the decade. Secondly, there is to be no modernisation, as he knows.

**Mr. Nott:** I know that my hon. Friend is concerned, and rightly so, about the number of the escort force. I am equally concerned that as soon as a Type 23 design is agreed—and it must be the right design—we must place orders for it to keep the numbers up in the 1990s, as he and I both wish. But it is simply not possible to devote the resources that we have been putting into new weapons for the Royal Navy as well as extra resources for platforms at the same time.

Our capability for out-of-area emergencies will be performed in the late 1980s by the new carriers—HMS "Illustrious", now on sea trials, and HMS "Ark Royal", now building. We shall have two carriers in the late 1980s—the most modern carriers and better carriers than we have now. We have two carriers at present. I make no apology for saying to the House once again that, after the two super powers, our conventional naval capability remains the most powerful in the world, and so it will remain.

**Mr. Stanley Cohen (Leeds, South-East):** Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House what will be the effect on our NATO commitments of our naval deployment to the Falklands?

**Mr. Nott:** While the task force is deployed, clearly others of our friends must fill the gap which will be left by our activities elsewhere.

I want to answer a controversial point which has been raised by hon. Members about HMS "Endurance". It has been suggested that the Argentines were encouraged to invade the Falkland Islands by the news of last year's decision to withdraw HMS "Endurance" from service. With the wisdom of hindsight, I accept that it could have provided the wrong signal to the Argentines, but, as I think most hon. Members would agree, for all the useful work that she has carried out over the years, HMS "Endurance" does not pose an appreciable military capability and would not in herself have constituted a deterrent to an invasion. Indeed, if "Endurance" had been seen by the Argentines as a deterrent, they would surely have waited until she had left the area.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked about the implications under the terms of the United Nations charter if we were obliged to use force to restore British administration. I can assure him that we are fully entitled to take whatever measures may be necessary—I announced one tonight—including the use of force in the

[Mr. Nott]

last resort, to secure the withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Falklands Islands in the exercise of our inherent right of self-defence under article 51.

I conclude by echoing the spirit of the debate, as evidenced by many hon. Members—that we are determined to resist aggression and return full rights to the British people of the Falkland Islands. The British people are to be protected wherever they may choose to live, even 8,000 miles away from the Houses of Parliament, and if we have to fight to restore to the people of the Falkland Islands their right to self-determination, we shall do so. If these dictators can get away with this today, as has been said already, it will be someone else's turn tomorrow.

I agree with the sentiments expressed repeatedly throughout the debate—that, however firm our resolve, it is still a time for cool heads, for realism and for calm. The deployment of a formidable task force does not mean that the Government have abandoned diplomacy in seeking to recover the Falkland Islands from Argentine military

occupation. Yesterday's communiqué, for example, by the European Commission is another indication of the growing international revulsion at Argentine's actions. But if diplomatic efforts fail, and the economic measures outlined by my right hon. Friend the foreign Secretary—some of them were also mentioned by the former Secretary of State for trade in a statement two days ago—then a forceful solution will be necessary.

We have no wish to shed blood, but we shall not acquiesce in an act of unprovoked aggression—undertaken, presumably, in the false belief that we lacked the courage and the will to respond. Let the world be under no illusion. These people are British and we mean to defend them. We are in earnest, and no one should doubt our resolve.

*If being Eleven o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to Order of this day.*

[Continued in column 1053]