

NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

HAIG'S STATEMENT OF 14 APRIL

ON THE RECORD

1. The British Government has no comment on this statement.
2. In his speech to the House of Commons on 14 April, the Secretary of State pointed out that the Americans had supported the Security Council Resolution demanding Argentine withdrawal from the Falkland Islands, and had banned arms exports to Argentina. Mr Pym went on that Mr Haig is now playing a crucial role in negotiations for a peaceful settlement. He expressed understanding of the American position.
We welcome the renewal of ~~his mission~~. Mr Haig's mission.
3. In his interview with ITN the same evening, Mr Pym made similar points, adding that 'The spirit of the United States is in favour of democracy' as opposed to dictatorship (transcript attached).
4. Mr Haig's reference to 'customary patterns of cooperation' is of course to the customary patterns of cooperation between allies.
5. You will not expect me to comment on operational or intelligence matters. [Similarly, decline comment on all specific points of cooperation over intelligence, re-fuelling, communications and weather forecasting.]
6. Telephone contacts today? The two Governments were in touch in the course of the day. I cannot confirm at what level.

NF

14 April 1982

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Following the Debate in the House of Commons on 14 April, the Secretary of State gave a series of short interviews to BBC TV News, ITN, COI, BBC Radio 4, BBC Overseas Service and IRN. Following is edited transcript of his interview with Glynn Methias of ITN

Q: You said in your speech in the House of Commons that pressure was now mounting on Argentina, the vice is tightening. But a speech by General Galtieri tonight gives the indication that he is not backing down on the sovereignty issue over the Falkland Islands.

A: I havent seen that speech so I dont know what he has said. But I think what I said is true, because we have had this remarkable response all round the world from the European Community, who of course have banned all exports of arms, they have banned imports from the Argentine. We have had a very good response from the Commonwealth. All our friends all round the world are behind us. They supported us in the Resolution passed by the United Nations, saying that hostilities must cease and Argentinian forces must withdraw, and also required us, - rightly, to seek a diplomatic solution, which of course is exactly what we have been doing, very vigorously with Mr Haig - and thats what his mission is all about. But it doesnt alter the fact that the pressure is mounting on the Argentine, the restriction on the currency facilities available to them, the European Community will reduce their trade by over a quarter, which is really quite dramatic - It takes some time for these measures to apply, but nonetheless progressively the grip will tighten.

Q: If the grip then is tightening, if the pressure is mounting, how confident are you there will be a diplomatic solution?

A: I have always made it quite clear that thats going to be very difficult. I hope desperately that we can achieve it. I will leave no stone unturned, and nor will Mrs Thatcher or any of us,

to try and achieve it, and we are in very close touch with Mr Haig, But I dont want anybody to believe that its going to be easy. ~~Some want to be optimistic about it~~, but I certainly think that we have got to strive with every endeavour to achieve it, because that of course is what people all round the world would prefer.

Q: Mr Haig has been talking about new ideas. Are these new ideas much more promising than the ones already discussed?

A: Some are more promising, ~~to~~ ^to tell you the truth, and some are rather depressing. We have had a series of suggestions out of Buenos Aires, which of course have been passed to us. One or two we have put in ourselves, but a number have come from them. Some are quite contrary to the principles which we believe are vital to a settlement, but others are more hopeful. So it is a mixture, ~~and what we have to do~~, and what we are trying to do, is to arrive at an arrangement that both sides believe to be reasonable. Now whether that can be done I cannot say.

Q: Can you give any indication at all about where the hope lies?

A: No, its just whether both sides ~~can agree on what they believe to be important to them.~~

Q: How crucial is the meeting Mr Haig is having in Buenos Aires in the next couple of days. Is it the final chance?

A: No, I certainly wouldnt say its the final chance. I think it is extremely important. ~~I certainly dont think~~. But you can never tell with negotiations of this kind. They are inevitably ~~lengthy or liable to be lengthy.~~

~~It might drag on for quite several days. One just doesnt know. But so long as there are possibilities, so long as there are new ideas, so long as there are options that we all ought to consider, it seems to me to be hopeful.~~

Q: There are already reports however of Argentinian ships sailing through the 200 mile zone. I am not quite sure whether they are true or they are not. Is it realistic to expect them to continue to stay out?

A: We believe that they are not true, that quite a lot of disinformation ~~is being spread~~ ~~is being spread~~, quite a lot of propaganda - and although we cannot be absolutely sure - to the best of our knowledge that has not actually happened. If it were to happen of course, that would be an indication that the Argentinians dont really want a peaceful settlement. But we hope very much that the zone will be respected. We gave masses of notice - four or five days notice - of what it was going to be. So we hope that that will remain a peaceful area.

Q: So much rests ultimately on the United States. Mr Healey said in the Commons it was not enough for American to be even-handed, to be an honest broker. He demanded much more from them. Are you confident that the United States will come out 100% behind Britain at the end of the day?

A: Remember first of all that they supported ~~xxxxxxx~~ us in the United Nations Resolution and they have banned the export of arms to Argentina. ~~And I know that last evening~~ ~~that it is one of the things we are now eating~~
Mr Haig has cast himself in the role of negotiator, to put it that way. Can he bridge the gap between the two sides? And it seems to me quite reasonable that in that context he should try and maintain an even handed position. But I have no doubt that the spirit of the United States is in favour of democracy, which their country has always been, as has ours; as opposed to the Argentinian regime, which is not a democratic country, with rather a bad record on human rights. Their spirit will all be there, and of course we are ~~old standing~~ long standing partners. ~~But the point is~~ He is genuinely negotiating with both sides and we will do everything we can to help. ~~We~~ We must hope he will bring the whole business to a satisfactory conclusion, but that is not by any means certain.

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News Dept - copy all
Private Secretary
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Mr Gillard
Mr Clark
Mr Fuller (Cabinet Office)

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14/11

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 April 1982

The House met at half-past Two o'clock, notice having been given by MR. SPEAKER, pursuant to Standing Order No. 122 (Earlier meeting of the House in certain circumstances).

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn till Monday 19 April; and that, at this day's sitting, Mr. Speaker do adjourn the House at half-past Seven o'clock without putting any Question.—[Mr. Jopling.]

Falkland Islands

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

2.35 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): It is right at this time of grave concern over the Falkland Islands and their people, that Parliament should be recalled so that the Government may report and the House may discuss the latest developments.

Our objective, endorsed by all sides of the House in recent debates, is that the people of the Falkland Islands shall be free to determine their own way of life and their own future. The wishes of the islanders must be paramount. But they cannot be freely expressed, let alone implemented, while the present illegal Argentine occupation continues.

That is why our immediate goal in recent days has been to secure the withdrawal of all Argentine forces in accordance with resolution 502 of the United Nations Security Council and to secure the restoration of British Administration. Our strategy has been based on a combination of diplomatic, military and economic pressures and I would like to deal with each of these in turn.

First of all, we seek a peaceful solution by diplomatic effort. This, too, is in accordance with the Security Council resolution. In this approach we have been helped by the widespread disapproval of the use of force which the Argentine aggression has aroused across the world, and also by the tireless efforts of Secretary of State Haig who has now paid two visits to this country and one to Buenos Aires.

On his first visit last Thursday we impressed upon him the great depth of feeling on this issue, not only of Parliament but of the British people as a whole. We may not express our views in the same way as the masses gathered in Buenos Aires, but we feel them every bit as strongly—indeed, even more profoundly, because Britons are involved. We made clear to Mr. Haig that withdrawal of the invaders' troops must come first; that the sovereignty of the islands is not affected by the act of invasion; and that when it comes to future negotiations what matters most is what the Falkland Islanders themselves wish.

On his second visit on Easter Monday and yesterday, Mr. Haig put forward certain ideas as a basis for discussion—ideas concerning the withdrawal of troops and its supervision, and an interim period during which negotiations on the future of the islands would be conducted. Our talks were long and detailed, as the House would expect. Some things we could not consider because they flouted our basic principles. Others we had to examine carefully and suggest alternatives. The talks were constructive and some progress was made. At the end of Monday, Mr. Haig was prepared to return to Buenos Aires in pursuit of a peaceful solution.

Late that night, however, Argentina put forward to him other proposals which we could not possibly have accepted, but yesterday, the position appeared to have eased. Further ideas are now being considered and Secretary Haig has returned to Washington before proceeding, he hopes shortly, to Buenos Aires. That meeting, in our view, will be crucial.

[The Prime Minister]

These discussions are complex, changing and difficult, the more so because they are taking place between a military junta and a democratic Government of a free people—one which is not prepared to compromise that democracy and that liberty which the British Falkland Islanders regard as their birthright.

We seek, and shall continue to seek, a diplomatic solution, and the House will realise that it would jeopardise that aim were I to give further details at this stage. Indeed, Secretary Haig has been scrupulous in his adherence to confidentiality in pursuit of the larger objective. We shall continue genuinely to negotiate through the good offices of Mr. Haig, to whose skill and perseverance I pay warm tribute.

Diplomatic efforts are more likely to succeed if they are backed by military strength. At 5 am London time on Monday 12 April, the maritime exclusion zone of 200 miles around the Falkland Islands came into effect. From that time any Argentine warships and Argentine Naval Auxiliaries found within this zone are treated as hostile and are liable to be attacked by British forces.

We see this measure as the first step towards achieving the withdrawal of Argentine forces. It appears to have exerted influence on Argentina, whose navy has been concentrated outside the zone. If the zone is challenged, we shall take that as the clearest evidence that the search for a peaceful solution has been abandoned. We shall then take the necessary action. Let no-one doubt that.

The naval task force is proceeding with all speed towards the South Atlantic. It is a formidable force, comprising two aircraft carriers, five guided missile destroyers, seven frigates, an assault ship with five landing ships, together with supporting vessels. The composition of the force and the speed with which it was assembled and put to sea clearly demonstrate our determination.

Morale on board the ships in the task force is very high. The ships and aircraft are carrying out exercises on passage, and by the time the force arrives off the Falklands, it will be at a very high state of fighting efficiency.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (West Lothian): Am I right in thinking that if the task force arrives off the Falklands there will be sufficient air cover against a land-based air force from the Argentine?

The Prime Minister: I shall have something to say about air cover in a moment. I have every confidence in all aspects of this task force.

A number of civilian ships have now been chartered or requisitioned. These include the "Canberra" for use as a troop ship, and the "Uganda", which will be available as a hospital ship. Recourse to the merchant marine is traditional in time of naval emergency and its response has been wholehearted on this occasion as in the past.

Men and equipment continue to be flown out to Ascension Island to meet up with the task force. These additional elements will enhance the fighting capability of the force and the range of operations which can be undertaken. Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft are now patrolling the South Atlantic in support of our fleet.

Sustaining a substantial force 8,000 miles from the United Kingdom is a considerable undertaking. As the Ministry of Defence announced this morning, additional measures are now in hand to provide extra capability for

the force over an extended period. In particular, the second assault ship, HMS "Intrepid", is being recommissioned for operational service. She will significantly add to the amphibious capability of the task force now entering the South Atlantic, which already contains her sister ship HMS "Fearless".

Arrangements are in hand to adapt a large cargo ship for the sea lift of additional Harriers. This will nearly double the size of the Harrier force in the South Atlantic. All these aircraft have a formidable air combat and ground attack capability.

Our diplomacy is backed by strength, and we have the resolve to use that strength if necessary.

The third aspect of our pressure against Argentina has been economic. We have been urging our friends and allies to take action parallel to our own, and we have achieved a heartening degree of success. The most significant measure has been the decision of our nine partners in the European Community to join us not just in an arms embargo but also in stopping all imports from Argentina.

This is a very important step, unprecedented in its scope and the rapidity of the decision. Last year about a quarter of all Argentina's exports went to the European Community. The effect on Argentina's economy of this measure will therefore be considerable, and cannot be without influence on her leaders in the present crisis. I should like warmly to thank our European partners for rallying to our support. It was an effective demonstration of Community solidarity.

The decision cannot have been easy for our partners, given the commercial interests at stake, but they were the first to realise that if aggression were allowed to succeed in the Falkland Islands, it would be encouraged the world over.

Other friends too have been quick to help, and I should like to thank Australia, New Zealand and Canada for their sturdy and swift action. They have decided to ban imports from Argentina, to stop export credits and to halt all sales of military equipment. New Zealand has also banned exports to Argentina. We are grateful also to many other countries in the Commonwealth which have supported us by condemning the Argentine invasion.

What have the Argentines been able to produce to balance this solidarity in support of our cause? Some Latin American countries have, of course, repeated their support for the Argentine claim to sovereignty. We always knew they would. But only one of them has supported the Argentine invasion, and nearly all have made clear their distaste and disapproval that Argentina should have resorted to aggression.

Almost the only country whose position has been shifting towards Argentina is the Soviet Union. We can only guess at the cynical calculations which lie behind this move. But Soviet support for Argentina is hardly likely to shake the world's confidence in the justice of our cause and it will not alter our determination to achieve our objectives.

One of our first concerns has been and remains the safety of the British subjects who have been caught up in the consequences of the crisis. They include, apart from the Falkland Islanders themselves, the marines and the British Antarctic survey scientists on South Georgia and the British community in Argentina. In spite of all our efforts, we have not been able to secure reliable information about the 22 marines who were on South

Georgia and the 13 British Antarctic survey personnel who are expected to have been evacuated from Grytviken at the same time.

According to Argentine reports these people are on a ship heading for the mainland. There are also reports that the six marines and the one member of the crew of "Endurance" who were captured on the Falkland Islands are now in Argentina.

Finally, there are 13 members of the British Antarctic survey team and two other British subjects who remain on South Georgia. The survey team's most recent contacts, on 12 April, with their headquarters in this country indicate that they are safe and well.

On 5 April, we asked the Swiss Government, as the protecting power, to pursue all these cases urgently with the Argentine Government. We trust that their efforts will soon produce the information which we and their families so anxiously seek.

On the same day we also sought the assistance of the International Red Cross with regard to the position of the population in the Falkland Islands. So far the Argentine Government have not responded to its request to visit the islands.

Last night, a party of 35 people from the islands, including the Chief Secretary, arrived in Montevideo and a report from the Chief Secretary on conditions in the islands is expected at any moment.

Recently the Government received a message from the British Community Council in Argentina urging a peaceful solution to the present conflict and asking that due consideration be given to the strong British presence in Argentina and the size of the British community there. We have replied, recognising the contribution which the British community has made to the development of Argentina—but making it plain that we have a duty to respond to the unprovoked aggression against the Falkland Islands and insisting that Argentina should comply with the mandatory resolution of the Security Council calling upon it to withdraw its troops.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the right hon. Lady comes to the end of her speech, I wish to repeat my question about air power. Does the right hon. Lady not remember what happened to "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse"? Does she not know that there are at least 68 Skyhawks as well as the Mirages and R5-30s in the Argentine Air Force? That is a formidable force, if the task force is to go near the Falkland Islands. Will the right hon. Lady answer my question?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated to the hon. Member for West Lothian (Mr. Dalyell) and to the House that we have taken steps to double the provision of the Harriers. We believe that that will provide the air cover that the hon. Gentleman and the House seek. I trust that he and the House will express confidence in our naval, marine and air forces. That is what they are at least entitled to have from the House.

We are also being urged in some quarters to avoid armed confrontation at all costs, and to seek conciliation. Of course, we too want a peaceful solution, but it was not Britain who broke the peace. If the argument of no force at any price were to be adopted at this stage it would serve only to perpetuate the occupation of those very territories which have themselves been seized by force.

In any negotiations over the coming days we shall be guided by the following principles. We shall continue to

insist on Argentine withdrawal from the Falkland Islands and dependencies. We shall remain ready to exercise our right to resort to force in self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations charter until the occupying forces leave the islands. Our naval task force sails on towards its destination. We remain fully confident of its ability to take whatever measures may be necessary. Meanwhile, its very existence and its progress towards the Falkland Islands reinforce the efforts we are making for a diplomatic solution.

That solution must safeguard the principle that the wishes of the islanders shall remain paramount. There is no reason to believe that they would prefer any alternative to the resumption of the administration which they enjoyed before Argentina committed aggression. It may be that their recent experiences will have caused their views on the future to change, but until they have had the chance freely to express their views, the British Government will not assume that the islanders' wishes are different from what they were before.

We have a long and proud history of recognising the right of others to determine their own destiny. Indeed, in that respect, we have an experience unrivalled by any other nation in the world. But that right must be upheld universally, and not least where it is challenged by those who are hardly conspicuous for their own devotion to democracy and liberty.

The eyes of the world are now focused on the Falkland Islands. Others are watching anxiously to see whether brute force or the rule of law will triumph. Wherever naked aggression occurs it must be overcome. The cost now, however, high, must be set against the cost we would one day have to pay if this principle went by default. That is why, through diplomatic, economic and, if necessary, through military means, we shall persevere until freedom and democracy are restored to the people of the Falkland Islands.

2.54 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Ebbw Vale): I thank the Prime Minister for responding to our request that Parliament should be recalled today. It was a wise decision and I thank the right hon. Lady for taking it.

I wish to make one matter clear at the beginning. I do not say this with any sense of grievance, but there have been no private discussions between the right hon. Lady and I or between my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and the Foreign Secretary on these questions. That is a perfectly reasonable way for us to proceed but I mention it now because it underlines the fact that we are free to make our judgments on matters as they arise. That is what we intend to do. We shall continue to do what we have done ever since the difficulties and the crisis in the Falkland Islands arose. We shall continue to act and respond in what we conceive to be the best interests of our country. Included high among those interests in this dispute is that the matter should be settled by peaceable means. The right hon. Lady has also declared her interest in that procedure. I believe that that is the overwhelming desire of the British people. The more that is understood throughout the world the better for us all.

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness): This is an important point. If the Prime Minister invited the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot) to have the discussions to which he referred, would he agree to do so?

Mr. Foot: I would wish to see the circumstances. That has been the position in the House for a long time. That has been the position of Opposition parties in previous circumstances. We have to make up our minds but I repeat and underline, and anyone who has seen what we have sought to do over the past weeks will understand, that we shall make our response in the best interests of what we consider to be serving the country and enabling us to achieve the purposes that have been commonly described.

Before I turn to some of the aspects of the Prime Minister's report to the House, I should like to underline some aspects of the matter, since it is absolutely necessary to do so. The aggression occurred some time ago but that does not make the aggression any better. It does not mean that we should in any sense forget the origin of the crisis. It was an unprovoked aggression. That is why the problem has arisen and until that is dealt with properly it will remain a major factor in the situation. We certainly do not wish anyone to disguise that fact.

Another pre-eminent aspect is the threat to the United Nations charter and the influence that that charter may have throughout the world. It is that charter that is attacked. It is a resolution of the United Nations that calls upon the Argentine to withdraw its assault. It is that charter, and the United Nations as an institution, which are under threat. That is a matter of major importance in the crisis but it is not only the United Nations charter that is involved.

There is also an Organisation of American States, which has a definition of what aggression is or can be. I should like to quote it to the House because in a sense it might be said that on the other side of the Atlantic they have what might be regarded as a stricter definition of aggression even than we under the United Nations charter. It might be described as a more fastidious definition. Article 17 stipulates:

"The territory of a state is inviolable; it may not be the object, even temporarily, of military occupation or of other measures of force taken by another state. No territorial acquisitions or special advantages obtained either by force or other means of coercion shall be recognised."

The signatories to that declaration include both the Government of the Argentine and the Government of the United States of America. Indeed, the Secretary-General of the Organisation of American States resides in Buenos Aires, whereas the organisation and the secretariat operate from Washington. The definition, which applies exactly to what has happened in the Falkland Islands, is one that should be recognised both in the Argentine and in Washington. In both places, it is essential, I believe, that the real meaning of aggression and the real requirements of the charter and of the Organisation of American States itself should be upheld. There is no part of the world where a recrudescence of international anarchy in the sense of aggression being allowed to be undertaken with impunity would cause such dangerous results as in central and south America.

The United Nations itself has a strong interest in ensuring that there is no departure from those doctrines. A letter appeared in *The Guardian* yesterday from some citizens of Guyana. They described what they considered to be a possible threat to their country. They compared it to the situation in the Falklands. They have some right to make the comparison. I remember that, at the time of the Commonwealth Conference, the Prime Minister of

Guyana came to see me about the matter. I am sure that he also visited the Foreign Office to describe his anxieties about what might be done by neighbouring Venezuela.

If the excuses for the Falklands invasion were to be proved valid, then, indeed, Guyana would have every reason to be afraid. There is all the more reason for fear when the people of Guyana read the same day of the special arrangements now being made by the United States Government for the sale of jets to Venezuela. According to an account from Washington in the *New York Herald Tribune* yesterday more sophisticated jets are being sold to Venezuela, a country next door to Guyana—which is threatened with possible invasion—than to any other American State. I hope that one of the longer term outcomes of this crisis, once it is satisfactorily settled, is that the British Government, the United States Government and all the Governments concerned will look into the whole question of the supply of arms to these different States to see how the unrestrained, or scarcely restrained, supply of arms to these States has contributed to the crisis.

I know that the right hon. Lady may say that these matters are subject to close supervision. The supervision over recent arms supplies to the Argentine, and the supervision at this moment, has not been sufficiently close to prevent sophisticated weapons being sold to Venezuela. There is no part of the world where there is a greater danger from unprovoked aggression being allowed to proceed with impunity than in central and south America. I believe that the Government are right and the British people are right to act on that principle.

It is partly because I subscribe to that principle that I support the dispatch of the task force. I support it because I believe that it can have strong diplomatic results. The right hon. Lady has also stressed this factor, as she is entitled to do. If there were no task force, I do not believe that there would have been any prospect of negotiations with the junta in the Argentine. If any of my hon. Friends, or anyone else, were to say that this is not the case, I would say that I think they put too great a store on General Galtieri's good nature. I have no great faith in that. I believe that there has to be a combination of pressures. If, at the time of the dispatch of the task force or subsequently, there were to be strong opposition in this country represented by the Labour Party to the dispatch of that force my fear is that one of the consequences would have been to injure at least the world-wide support that we have received. It was of absolutely major importance, in the interests of the peaceable settlement of this dispute, that we should sustain in the highest degree the support that we have received from so many countries.

I welcome what the right hon. Lady has had to say about the countries of the European Community. Many other countries have come forward to support us from the very first day of the aggression. Many of them have taken economic measures. Some of these measures will take a considerable time to have their effect. If anyone were to say that those measures should be pushed aside or impaired, I would say that this would only increase the dangers of a military clash. All those measures are a part of the means whereby we may secure what we all want—a peaceable settlement of this dispute. All those measures are designed to assist that objective. I hope that the right hon. Lady will consider some others.

I acknowledge fully the tribute that the Prime Minister has paid to General Haig. All hon. Members must

understand the appalling personal pressures under which he must have been placed by the service that he has done. We must, however, say to General Haig and to his Government that we believe that the case about aggression is clear. We believe that the vote of the United States at the United Nations was clear, as indeed was the vote of many other nations. Those votes, we believe, must be carried into effect. I am not seeking to detract from the efforts that General Haig has made and is still making to secure a settlement. I am not seeking to diminish them. That would be foolish. They are, however, not the only propositions for trying to secure a peaceable settlement. There was the proposal from the Peruvian Government for a "holdfire" or whatever the term was used. At any rate, there was a proposal that I presume was made in good faith for trying to ensure more time for solving the matter. Even if the latest proposals from the American Administration do not succeed—I am not hoping that this will happen—it will not be the final failure. We must go on again, and again seeking the peaceable method of settling this dispute. The other forms that are not exhausted include the United Nations itself. It has means whereby we can look afresh at the matter.

I was eager at the beginning that this matter should be taken to the United Nations. It was proved to be right that we should have done so. It was right for the way in which the matter was presented. I congratulate the spokesman of this country who put his case there so effectively. It was the case itself, I believe, that enabled him to succeed. But we can go back at some stage—I do not say immediately—to the United Nations. We can prove to the whole world the simple truth that this country is not only determined to protect the rights of its people against aggression but that we seek to deal with these grave matters by the most peaceable means that are available to us. Anyone in the world who puts a different construction on what is happening misconstrues the real nature of what this country wishes to secure from the dispute.

The Opposition will examine with care the course of discussions. I can understand that today the Prime Minister did not wish to go into full detail. I am not sure when we shall have a chance to see the report of the debate in the Parliament in Buenos Aires on these matters. These might reveal to us the Argentine negotiating position, but that would be a different question. However, it is right that the right hon. Lady and the Government should come back and report to the House frequently. They will not risk weakness from such a course. They will secure strength from it. That is what has happened on previous occasions. I am sure that the right hon. Lady will come and report to us. It would be extremely foolish, or worse, if, in the midst of such a state of affairs as she has described and we can describe, if any provocative action were taken by us that would disturb it. I do not believe that that is the right hon. Lady's intention nor the intention of the British Government, because I believe that we wish to secure that peaceable settlement. It may take a little time to achieve. In some respects there are difficulties because from our point of view some aspects might weaken over a period of time. Other factors, such as the economic pressures coming from many different parts of the world, might favour us.

The right hon. Lady has referred to the crucial meeting that might take place when Mr. Haig goes to Buenos Aires. It may well be crucial, but that does not mean final, and I repeat that there are still other possibilities in the

search for peace and in the attempt to re-establish the rights that the right hon. Lady fairly described at the beginning of her speech.

I hope that out of this tragic and peculiar affair there may come a fresh vindication of the United Nations charter and a fresh vindication of the idea that no nation should resort to force or seek to establish its way through aggression against other nations. We can all live in a safer world if that principle is established. We can all live in a safer world if we uphold the doctrine that it is better for the people of the world to know that Britain keeps its word. The peace of the world has been assisted by that doctrine in the past, and I believe that it can be assisted by it in the present circumstances. I do not think that we need any further history lessons in that regard.

We can play our best part in the dispute by the firmness with which we oppose the aggression and by the intelligence, the skill and determination with which we pursue peaceful methods of solution. By that combination we can live up to the highest ideals of Britain and make a contribution, not merely to the safety, the security and well-being of the Falkland Islanders, but to that of many other peoples, and in particular many small nations throughout the world.

Several Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am under considerable pressure from hon. Members who wish to catch my eye. I hope that they will not come to the Chair to advance their cause.

3.13 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The House has just listened to a speech from the Leader of the official Opposition with which I do not disagree in any particular. I pay tribute to what the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot) has said, because I think that he has spoken for the whole House. He has not sought in his speech in any way to embarrass the Government in their negotiating position.

We all recognise that it is very difficult for either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary to reveal to the House the full nature of their negotiating position, and I do not wish to press them on that issue. It is also true to say that the House can sustain a democratic Government, and I believe that is what the debate will do.

I believe that two messages will go out from the House as a result of the debate. There will be a reaffirmation—if it needs to be made—that we are resolute in our resistance to any form of armed aggression, and that we are persistent and steady in our pursuit of peace. I believe that it is right that the Government—not yet able to come forward with a proposition for a peaceful and negotiated settlement—should continue with the deployment of the naval and marine forces. No one should weaken our negotiating position by casting doubt as to the length of time or as to our intention to see the issue through.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that the refusal of the Argentine Government for the past 50 years to take its case to an international court only demonstrates its weakness?

Dr. Owen: I think that there is no issue in the International Court concerning British sovereignty, and the Argentine Government know that. The question that has always been faced by British Governments is that we wish to give security to the Falkland Islanders, and,

[Dr. Owen]

because of distance and geography, it has been necessary for us to talk to Argentine Governments in order to give security to the Falkland Islanders. That is why successive Governments have felt it necessary to discuss the question—giving, as the Prime Minister said, the utmost importance, the highest priority and the greatest attention to the wishes of the Falkland Islanders. That is the issue lying behind our position.

We have made it very clear on many occasions that our retention of the administration and sovereignty of the Falkland Islands does not relate to the possibility of there being gas or oil in the region. We are not there for a commercial purpose. We are not balancing up whether there is a positive or a negative trade. We are there because the islanders, successively through their Legislative Council, have made it clear that they wish us to be there. That is the issue which I, with the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale, believe will be upheld within the United Nations.

One of the sacred principles of the United Nations is the right to self-determination, and it is on the right to self-determination that we have been prepared to trust the United Nations, and should still be prepared to trust the United Nations, to uphold the rights of the Falkland Islanders. It would be a very sad day for the United Nations if it were to desert from the principle of self-determination and to take account of force or of might.

The United Nations must be the protector of the small countries. There are now—often as a result of British decolonisation—many very small independent States. They are watching with great anxiety what is happening in the Falkland Islands. If the interests of the Falkland Islands were to be ridden over roughshod, it would be extremely damaging to world security.

Mr. Dalyell: If what the right hon. Gentleman says about the United Nations is true, why is it not a United Nations task force but a British task force that is on its way to the Falklands?

Dr. Owen: The day may come when the United Nations will seek the power to enforce peace around the world. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the original charter envisaged a much more active role for the United Nations than it has been able to play. At the time of the formation of the military committee in 1945, it was envisaged that the United Nations would not only be able to dispatch peacekeeping forces after the event, but that it would be able to take action prior to an aggression.

I believe that what has happened in recent years—and in particular what is now happening in the Falklands—may result in authority beginning to come back to the United Nations as more and more in an interrelated world it is realised that national Governments are not capable of ensuring international security. But it is at this stage a fact of life that a United Nations peacekeeping force could not be mobilised, and the charter envisages the right of an independent nation to use all peaceful means to defend its interests. It is purely and rightly within the context of the United Nations charter that the British peacekeeping force has been dispatched. We are upholding a democratic right in so doing.

The response of our allies and friends has given us great comfort. I pay tribute to the work that has been done by Secretary of State Haig. The United States is in a crucial

position. We understand that, as it is helping to achieve a peaceful settlement, there are limits to what it can say. Obviously, it does not wish to be provocative to one side, but it has to be said—I believe that it is well understood by Secretary of State Haig and, I hope, by the entire United States Administration—that the United States cannot be neutral on the question of aggression. One cannot be neutral as between a fire and a fire brigade.

I believe that it is extremely important that the United States—and most of its newspapers well understand this—is categoric with Argentina in private at this stage on the issue of the necessity of the withdrawal of Argentine forces to fulfil the Security Council resolution. There may come a time when the United States will have to wield that influence that it, and probably it alone, has on the Argentine.

The other factor that has been of great comfort to the House has been the response of the member States of the European Community. We expected a firm response from Canada, Australia and New Zealand and we have not been let down. However, in recent months the ability of the European Community to respond unanimously in terms of sanctions when facing international outrages has not been, to put it at its most mild, the most dramatic demonstration of Community resolution.

In this case—and perhaps it is appropriate when one of its member States is threatened and asking for support—the support has been unequivocal and very powerful. No one should underestimate the effect of the Community of Ten, with considerable imports from Argentina, imposing these economic sanctions. I gather that the Community is now examining the whole question of export credits. I would only say to the member States of the Community that they have to be ready to continue those sanctions for a long time.

The overall support that we have had internationally is very important. I do not need to emphasise to the Prime Minister that the spirit behind the debate today is one for peaceful settlement without a shot being fired. Not one right hon. or hon. Member wishes to see any loss of life. However, there is a resolution and a firmness on the country when faced by this form of aggression.

We have learnt lessons in this House from past history. No one can draw too many parallels, but one thing that we do know is that weakness in the face of aggression only increases the appetite. There are serious problems in South America that will haunt the world over the years ahead. There are at least two countries, one of which is likely to be Argentina, that are drawing close to becoming nuclear weapon States. It will be incredibly important that international order is accepted not just in the rest of the world but in South America as well. There are grave troubles ahead for those economies, for those undemocratic military juntas and for the people who live, often in the starkest areas of poverty in the world.

Therefore, we are upholding not some minor issue 7,000 miles away from our shores but a fundamental issue, and we are showing, perhaps above all, the readiness of a major nation to negotiate for peace. I suspect that some compromises will be necessary from every hon. Member before a peaceful solution is achieved. It would be wrong to go to the international community with an image that we are so resolute that we are not prepared to look at any concessions or at any necessary face-saving arrangements. It was to the great credit of President Kennedy in his diplomacy in the Cuban missile crisis that he was prepared

to see some face-saving gestures. On the fundamental principles there is no shift in our position. We are with the Government.

3.25 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am glad to follow the Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) in the tributes that they have paid to Secretary of State Haig. As he flies from capital to capital at considerable risk to his political and physical health, it is only natural that one should think back to the machinations of John Foster Dulles during the Suez crisis. For reasons that still seem inexplicable to me 25 years after the event, every move that John Foster Dulles made seemed to be designed to weaken this country's bargaining position. However, I believe that Mr. Haig's interventions have been helpful and are meant to be helpful.

It would be wrong, however, to think that British and American interests in this dispute are identical. The Americans have a general interest in seeing that aggression is stopped. As the Leader of the Opposition reminded us in his forthright speech, no part of the world is more important than Central and South America. We have a specific interest in ensuring that an attack on British territory does not go unpunished. Our legal interest is the greater, but paradoxically the strategic interests of the United States in the area is infinitely greater than our own.

In normal times, under successive Governments, we have hardly been able to summon up enough energy to maintain a marginal naval presence in the area. Cape Horn can be vital to the Americans, for if anything should go wrong with the Panama canal—and canals have a habit of going wrong at times of crisis—then the only way of going by sea from one coast to another of the United States is around Cape Horn. The only way that the Atlantic or Pacific fleets of America can be mutually reinforced is around Cape Horn.

This is no new problem. For many years, as a member of the North Atlantic Assembly, I have visited NATO commanders in Norfolk, Virginia, and they have bewailed the fact that NATO has no plans and no facilities for protecting shipping in the South Atlantic. The complete lack of secure facilities in the South Atlantic has become obvious to everyone in the last fortnight. When the present crisis has been resolved I do not think that this country should be committed indefinitely to keeping a major naval presence close to the Falkland Islands, but it is now quite plain that the Western Alliance must have some secure naval and air facilities in the South Atlantic. It is plain that NATO as a whole will never agree to an out-of-area presence. Facilities can be provided only by ourselves, with, I would hope, the assistance of the United States and Canada—and, conceivably, eventually, Argentina. After all, we have no quarrel with the Argentine people.

There are Churchillian precedents for such a venture. More than 40 years ago this country gave America eight base sites in the British possessions in the Western hemisphere, in return for 50 old American destroyers from its reserve fleet. I should welcome the transfer of a site in the Falklands to America. In these austere times it is more likely to construct adequate naval and air facilities than we are. I suspect that such a move would not be unwelcome to the Argentines. Nor would I disapprove of the idea that

has been floated in the last couple of days that America might be associated with the administration of the islands in the post-invasion phase.

But the invasion of the Falkland Islands has also drawn attention to the wider problems of the Antarctic, and these are likely to become more pressing as the term of the main treaty draws to a close.

Again, I doubt whether we need to think in terms of a large British specialist defence force, but we should think in terms of a joint force with our Australian and New Zealand friends. I regret the way in which the ties between our own defence forces and those of Australia and New Zealand have tended to loosen. I believe that the time has come to reverse this regrettable trend.

I join in the congratulations given to those who have been responsible for organising the task force. As *The Times* rightly said, it was an astonishing achievement. The more that one knows about the problem of mobilisation, the more astonishing it seems. I also salute the Royal Navy's firm policy of requisitioning. That has been implemented with imagination and determination. It has implications for the other Services that we can discuss in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, the speed with which the fleet has set sail has had important diplomatic repercussions. As the Leader of the Opposition said, if the task force had not sailed, it is doubtful whether those in Buenos Aires would be willing to talk. If we had been as dilatory as we were at Suez, other Governments would have been given the opportunity to forget that there is only one reason for this crisis, which is that there has been aggression. All concerned in the Royal Navy deserve our congratulations, and the Government deserve our continued support.

3.32 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (Down, South): Given the initial failure, which we do not yet fully understand, to anticipate and therefore to frustrate the invasion of the Falkland Islands, it is difficult to fault the military and especially the naval measures which the Government have taken. We have invested the islands, which have been the object of an unprovoked aggression; and within a measurable space of days, there will be a naval force in the area which, without bravado or braggadocio, we are justified in considering ought to be the equal at least of any challenge that can be offered to it.

It would be deluding ourselves if we imagined that, the islands being thus invested and a substantial fleet being present in those waters, matters could then continue indefinitely without change. There would come a point at which further action became necessary to repossess the islands. But, at any rate for a matter of days, I do not think that that is the event that we need envisage. There are, however, imminent and present dangers, dangers other than of a military character—dangers of a political character—which are with us now. I refer to two of them.

We are in some danger of resting our position too exclusively upon the existence, the nature and the wishes of the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands. Quite obviously, if the population of the Falkland Islands did not desire to be British, the principle that the Queen wishes no unwilling subjects would long ago have prevailed; but we should create great difficulties for ourselves in other contexts, as well as in this context, if we rested our action purely and exclusively on the notion of restoring tolerable, acceptable conditions and self-determination to our fellow

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

Britons on the Falkland Islands. Logically, this would mean that, had the Falkland Islands perchance been uninhabited, we would not have been justified in resenting and repelling armed aggression against our territory. It would mean, presumably, that if another flag were flown from Rockall, that would be a matter of indifference to us. Coming nearer to the Falkland Islands, it would mean that, since South Georgia is not permanently inhabited and since British Antarctica, for which provision was made recently in an Act of this Parliament, is inhabited principally by penguins, we would stand idly by when a similar unprovoked and unjustified act of piracy was committed upon those territories.

I do not think that we need be too nice about saying that we defend our territory as well as our people. There is nothing irrational, nothing to be ashamed of, in doing that. Indeed, it is impossible in the last resort to distinguish between the defence of territory and the defence of people.

The second danger which is upon us is an ambiguity in interpreting the second portion of the Security Council resolution. If a peaceful solution means that the invasion of the Falkland Islands is to be reversed without bloodshed and without more casualties, a peaceful solution must be the desire of the House, the country and everyone. But the various synonyms and restatements of "peaceful solution" which we are reading and hearing carry quite a different meaning. The notion seems to be of a negotiated settlement or compromise between two incompatible positions—between the position which exists in international law, that the Falkland Islands and their dependencies are British sovereign territory and some other position altogether. The notion seems to be of a kind of compromise or middle position between those alternatives which not merely might be sought but which we might be thought to seek.

That cannot be the meaning of the resolution of the Security Council. It cannot be meant that one country has only to seize the territory of another country for the nations of the world to say that some middle position must be found between the two parties, that some compromise must be the object of diplomacy, some formula that takes account of the objects and interests of the aggressor as well as of those of the aggrieved.

If that were the meaning of the resolution of the Security Council, the charter of the United Nations would not be a charter of peace; it would be a pirates' charter. It would mean that any claim anywhere in the world had only to be pursued by force, and points would immediately be gained and a bargaining position established by the aggressor.

We must, it seems to me, be quite clear what we mean by a peaceful resolution of the problem that was created by the aggression. That problem has nothing to do with the pre-existing circumstances. It has nothing to do with the fact that the Argentine has from time to time urged a claim to our territory. There has been ample opportunity for a lawful and peaceful resolution of that claim, if there were such a resolution to be had. That no such resolution exists, the Argentine itself has now proved by resorting to aggression. We are under no obligation to try to find a middle position between what the Falkland Islanders and we have the right to and what might be found tolerable by an aggressor, who has admitted by his aggression that he has no case.

When we say therefore—I hope that the Government will be able to confirm this tonight—that we seek a peaceful solution, I hope it will be made clear that what we seek is the reversal by peaceful means, by diplomatic and other pressures, if that can be brought about, of the aggression upon our territory, but that we seek no compromise, no diminution of our undoubted rights. By maintaining that position we shall do no harm to all those interests, which the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition so eloquently displayed, not only of this country but of the world at large. We should rather injure them if it were thought that aggression in itself could put some new complexion upon our rights and upon our duties.

3.42 pm

Dame Judith Hart (Lanark): I appreciate a number of the points made by the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) and should like to refer to one or two of them a little later in my speech.

I have listened with the keenest interest to the Prime Minister and to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, than whom, in the whole of his history and in the history of this House, there has been no greater man of peace. I shall go on to express a point of disagreement, but I should first like to express where I am in no disagreement whatever with anything so far said in the debate by the Prime Minister or by my right hon. Friend.

First, we are all agreed, I think, that there has been an act of intolerable aggression by Argentina against the Falkland Islands; Secondly, we are all agreed that the Argentine Government are a particularly brutal and nasty Fascist regime—and I am sure that Conservative Members will forgive me if I say that some of us on the Opposition side have been rather more involved in the protection of human rights in Argentina than many of those who have newly discovered the nastiness of the regime. Indeed, there is one factor which illustrates that and to which I shall return.

Thirdly, we are all agreed, I think—although I think that the right hon. Member for Down, South is not quite so sure about it—that the interests of the Falkland Islanders must be at the very front of our minds. The Prime Minister talked about their need to have freedom to express their views, and she was absolutely right to say so. Fourthly, we are all agreed that we must all observe the United Nations' resolution calling for an immediate withdrawal of all Argentine forces from the territory, for an immediate cessation of hostilities in the region of the Falkland Islands—that is a very significant phrase of which we need to take very careful note—and for Argentina and the United Kingdom to seek a diplomatic solution to their differences. We are all agreed, I think, that these must therefore be our objectives. Those are the objectives which appear in the resolution of the Security Council.

I think that we are also agreed that no one in this House wants a war. If I have now stated the points upon which we are all in agreement, let us look at the problems that stand in the way. The right hon. Lady referred to discussions which were changing and difficult.

I turn to the background to this issue—and this is where, if I may say so to the right hon. Member for Down, South, it is not only a question of rights but also a question of responsibility. It is not very well known to the House, because it was not fully reported in the press, that on 30 March in Argentina there was the biggest anti-Junta

demonstration that had been held for many years, and that 2,000 people on that day were arrested. They included trade union leaders, the leaders of the human rights movement, the mothers of the "disappeared" people, and the son of the Nobel prize winner Perez Esquivel. That was on 30 March, which is highly relevant in terms of the date when Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands.

There is, in my view, a crucial difference between ourselves and the *modus vivendi*, nasty as it is, of the Argentine regime—and that is that they needed that invasion in order to consolidate their position against the explosion of democratic demands in their country. That is not our position. Therefore, when I talk about the difference between rights and responsibilities, I believe that in pursuing one's rights one has a responsibility towards peace that we here in Britain should be able to exercise with the deepest care.

Then one comes to how to avoid a war. We know that the problem of the Falkland Islands has been with us for 20 years. In my terms of office at the Commonwealth Office and at the Ministry for Overseas Development, I have been on the periphery of the problem for many years, if not as directly involved as some of my colleagues and former colleagues. We recall the United Nations resolution of 1965. We know that there are implications, and they are very serious, for other territories that are part of the British Commonwealth, to whose people and to whose territory we owe very grave responsibilities.

Gibraltar is one such, and I point out just one small but regrettable side effect of what has happened. I was in telephone conversation yesterday with one of my friends in Gibraltar. One small consequence of this situation to people in Gibraltar is that, because the opening of the frontier with Spain has been postponed, for the first time, as some of them see it, there is now United Kingdom acquiescence in the closing of that frontier.

We have always said that it was the Spanish closing of the frontier, and now there is a degree of concern in Gibraltar in that we have agreed with Spain to postpone its opening. We are now seen by some of our friends in Gibraltar as having acquiesced for the first time in the closing of the frontier.

Mr. George Cunningham (Islington, South and Finsbury): It would be very unfortunate if the idea were to get about that the continued closure of that frontier were, as it were, a joint action. The British frontier between Gibraltar and Spain is open, as it has always been. It is the Spanish frontier which is closed.

Dame Judith Hart: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but certainly in the eyes of the people in Gibraltar with whom I am in contact—[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members who have not been in the House so long as I have may not be aware that during my time at the Commonwealth Office I and my colleagues carried out the referendum in Gibraltar. My record on Gibraltar is second to none. The problems of the small territories must cause us deep concern, and they must form the background of all our thinking and our actions at this time.

The negotiations undertaken by Secretary of State Haig and the proposals made by members of the United Nations, from Peru and other sources, have not yielded any diplomatic solution that at this moment could prevent a war. More time is needed for the first stage, for clearly, there are two stages. The first is the establishment of

peaceful negotiation to prevent a war. The second is the negotiation of a longer-term solution that will meet the needs of the Falkland Islanders. As the Prime Minister said, the people of the Falkland Islands must have freedom to express their choice. There may be ways of discovering what their varying choices might be.

The crucial need is therefore for a pause for peace, so that there may be more breathing space for negotiations. That means, in my view, that at this stage we should not retreat but halt the task force and allow time for negotiations. I am well aware that I express a minority view in the House, but that will not prevent me, as it has not prevented a number of hon. Members in years past, from expressing a personal view. I believe that we should now halt the task force and suspend the "shoot first" maxim of the Secretary of State for Defence so that there is time to negotiate a settlement that will prevent war.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Dame Judith Hart: No, I shall not give way at this point.

I believe that we should consider that view, in which we are not entirely alone. The *Daily Mirror*—not a favourite newspaper among Conservative Members—says this morning:

"Before any shooting starts off the Falklands, we should be clear about why we might be about to embark on a war.

It is to free the islanders from an invading force. It is not to get our own back or to sink the Argentine navy.

It is to give the islanders a choice about their future. It is not to strike a blow against the dictators of this world.

We have supplied too many of them with arms—including Argentina's—for a policy like that to be sincere."

Before any hon. Member dares to criticise my minority view, let him ask himself what support he has given in past years for the supply of arms to Argentina.

The consequences of a shooting war would not serve the interests of our people or of the Falkland Islanders, who should be our prime concern. Nor would they serve the long-term interests of the United Nations in ensuring that, wherever possible, peaceful solutions are found to international disputes and international aggression.

We need a pause for peace—and it should start now. 3.55pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): First, I warmly welcome the statement made today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It was a very clear statement of Britain's position in relation to the Falkland Islands. I also welcome the decision of our partners in the European Community to back us by imposing trade sanctions on the Argentines. I pay tribute to the sterling work of Secretary Haig.

I speak today on behalf of many Falkland Islanders whom I had the privilege to meet last September, when, with the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Ogden), I spent two weeks in the Falkland Islands meeting a large number of the inhabitants. We were there as a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation visiting the Falkland Island branch. Our job was to talk to the islanders and to ascertain their views about the constitutional dispute with the Argentine, and at the same time to reassure them that this Parliament cared about them and that we would support them if difficulties arose in the future.

I should like to say on behalf of those wonderful people who live in the Falkland Islands that, by one means or

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

another, they will be listening to every word spoken in this debate. They are resolute people who are second to none in their radio communications with this country, and I am confident that whatever sanctions may have been imposed on them by the Argentine aggressors will not prevent them hearing these words from Britain.

In Port Stanley, I met not only residents of the town, but all the officials of the islands' public administration. Everyone, whether working for the public administration or simply living in the islands, without exception, told me that they wished the Falkland Islands to remain British, and that they hoped and expected that Britain would do its duty in ensuring that that was possible.

During our two-week visit to the islands, we met people who lived in the Camp, or the countryside as we would know it. We visited them in Darwin, in Green Patch, Salvador, Hill Cove and Port Howard. I shall try to convey to the House what it is like to live in those isolated settlements where perhaps 25 people live together, farming their pastures and keeping their sheep. We were able to talk to 25 people in one room of one house. There is no better way to get people's views than to sit with them.

The hon. Member for West Derby and I were left in no doubt as to what the people wanted. They wanted to continue their peaceful life as loyal subjects of the Crown. They were deeply concerned about the future and the discussions about Britain and the Argentine that have been taking place for many years and involve the possibility of ceding sovereignty to Argentina and the possibility of a condominium. From those discussions and from my personal experience in the islands just a few months ago, I offer the House one or two ideas about the kind of diplomatic solution that might be possible. It will obviously be much more difficult to achieve now than it might have been a few weeks ago. Nevertheless, we all hope and pray that armed confrontation can be avoided and that diplomatic solutions can be found.

The solution that has been discussed between Britain and the Falkland Islanders for many months, if not years, has been the possibility of what is called "lease-back"—that is to say the ceding of titular sovereignty to the Argentine with an immediate lease-back to Britain for up to 100 years, so that the British way of life can continue under a British governor with British laws and customs.

The vast majority of the Falkland Islanders whom we talked to rejected that solution for one reason above all others. They did not trust the Argentine to keep to any agreement into which it might enter. They feared that an invasion would take place once sovereignty had been ceded. Unfortunately, their fears have proved to be only too correct.

Had we tried a little harder a little earlier, perhaps with international guarantees from three or four powerful countries, it might have been possible to put at rest the Falkland Islanders' minds and to have achieved a lease-back solution. That would have had the advantage of ensuring that British rule continued along with the British way of life and that our people would have felt safe under the British Crown. For the Argentine, it would have meant that its long-held views, and tremendously strong emotive feeling, that the Falkland Islands are part of its territory, would have been met by the ceding of titular sovereignty. Such an agreement would have offered both the Argentine people and the Falkland Islanders considerable oppor-

tunities for economic development, oil exploration trade and tourism. However, guarantees would have been needed to the effect that under no possible circumstances could an invasion have taken place. That would have meant that HMS "Endurance", and undoubtedly some other tangible evidence of Britain's intention to protect her people, would have had to remain off the Falkland Islands and in the South Atlantic for the foreseeable future.

What solution is there to this tragic situation? I believe—I am sure in my heart that the hon. Member for West Derby will agree with me—that Argentina must withdraw in accordance with United Nations resolution No. 502. I am in no doubt that British administration must be restored, even if it is only for a limited period of time. When I say "limited period of time", I do not mean a few days or a few months; I mean for years. During that time this difficult situation can cool down and friendly relations can, perhaps, once again be restored with the South American continent.

All hon. Members present today must recognise that the Falkland Islands are 8,500 miles from Britain. The only method of air communication with them is through the South American continent—through Argentina or perhaps Chile. In the long term we must try to restore the relations that have become strained by this tragic situation.

I back the policy of Her Majesty's Government 100 per cent. as it was expressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon. Argentina must withdraw from the Falkland Islands. The authority of the United Nations must be seen to run in those Islands, as anywhere else in the world. If we do not see British administration restored to the Falkland Islands, the future for our people there and for other territories round the world in a similar position is indeed bleak.

Many of those brave people in the Falkland Islands are sixth generation British subjects. They believe that Britain will do its duty. I know that they will take heart from what they hear from the House this afternoon. It will bring them great comfort in their hour of trial. They will know that we shall never abandon them.

4.4 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): The whole affair over the last fortnight remains a salutary lesson in the nature of power in the modern world. It is easy to shrink—as I perceive that some hon. Members do—from the logic of our possession of that power and to call for a halt to the exercise of such power. It is much more difficult to close one's mind and eyes, after nearly a fortnight, to the obvious lesson of last Friday week's invasion. In the end, one cannot negotiate successfully from a position of weakness, especially when dealing with the present rulers in Buenos Aires, who are, after all, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition reminded us, the scourge of democrats and trade unionists and of the peace of mind of their neighbours.

Another unpalatable lesson for some hon. Members is that the Argentine Government undoubtedly believed that if they had achieved a fait accompli. The logic of that situation is that if the Argentines knew that nothing could happen to them, they were hardly likely to entertain the idea of compromise. We can all see now that on the surface in Buenos Aires words may be as resolute as ever. There has certainly been movement behind the scenes. That undoubtedly justifies the sailing of the task force.

Given our responsibilities to the Falkland Islanders, as well as to the United Nations and to the international rule of law—as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition argued so powerfully a few minutes ago—somehow, some time, the Argentine forces must be induced or forced to leave the Falklands. I say that in those terms because I do not believe that it is just our responsibility. As my right hon. Friend reminded us, it is the responsibility of all those who care for the rule of law and who are aware of the risks that we run in its disregard and of the penalties that we have paid in times gone by.

I believe that the House is united in its belief that diplomacy must be given the first chance. The friends of Britain and the Argentine must exhaust every opportunity of organising negotiations, of giving constructive advice, of cajoling and of warning by turn to propagate the cause of peace.

We must distinguish—as my right hon. Friend implied—for as long as we can between the bulk of the people of the Argentine and their rulers. There can be few of us who do not know of someone in the Argentine who is of first or second generation British descent. Just as many of us know people from New Zealand and Australia, as well as Rhodesia and like countries under the Commonwealth, who rallied to Britain in 1939 and 1940, some of us also know that young men from the Argentine rallied to Britain. We must distinguish between what I suspect is the overwhelming bulk of the people in Argentina and the rulers with whom they are presently accused. There may be war-like talk in the Argentine, but so there is in Britain. No one who looks at the whole range of the international press at the moment can believe other than that there is a consensus for a peaceful settlement. That throws a great responsibility on to the Prime Minister and her advisers.

Happily, ours has been a just cause, so far. We cannot repeat too often that the Falklands issue is not Suez. The fleet now sails in restitution. This time, the cause is just. We have the full authority of a Security Council resolution. We are on the soundest moral ground, but we must stay there. The United Nations is a forum for both sides and obviously it must continue to be used in full.

We are fortunate in having the EEC's backing, but I suspect that it wants not only to provide us with support but to act as a restraining force on any over-adventurousness on our part. The Prime Minister is a student of Kipling and will be aware of the warning against overweening pride. What is our final objective? That question must be uppermost in the minds of many of us when we see the Prime Minister and recall her remarks. Indeed, we shall want to look carefully at the text of her speech.

We are entitled to maintain our present military posture. That view is shared by my hon. Friends and by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. However, I go further. I concede the case for a blockade. I cannot understand how we can win time unless we are prepared to take at least that step. Where we can win time, we must do so in order to find a diplomatic solution.

Mr. Dalyell: For how long can we maintain a blockade 8,000 miles away from base, in the Roaring Forties, at the beginning of an Antarctic winter? How feasible is that?

Mr. Duffy: Other hon. Members are better placed to answer that question than I. Indeed, there are others,

outside the House, who have always been better placed to answer that question. However, I know that the Royal Navy is capable of such a commitment.

For as long as I can remember, it has been the Royal Navy's practice to deploy one task force globally each year. In one year a task force would sail through the Mediterranean and the Suez canal into the Indian Ocean and as far as Australasia. On route, it would carry out exercises with other navies. In the next year the Royal Navy would sail across the Atlantic, through the Panama canal and up the west coast of America. Sometimes, the task force would be away for eight or nine months. In addition, individual units would deploy in northern climes, in an environment similar to that which might now await the fleet.

The Royal Navy's afloat support is probably equalled by only two other navies in the world. Indeed, it is not surpassed even by those two navies. With its present afloat facilities, the Royal Navy cannot only deploy far away from base but can continue to do so. Of course, the quality of leadership is equally important. However, I am arguing for time so that we can find a diplomatic solution. We are unlikely to gain that time unless we are prepared to face up to the possibility of a blockade.

At the same time, the Argentines must be given some inducement to withdraw. I have great sympathy with the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). We must all begin to consider two conditions. Indeed, I imagine that some hon. Members have already entertained them. We cannot look for a peaceful settlement or expect the Argentines to withdraw—even in the face of force—unless we offer them some inducement. Therefore, the first condition is that we all accept, in our hearts, that there is an Argentine dimension to the Falkland Islands. We must, therefore, give an early indication that we are prepared actively to explore its implications. As soon as circumstances permit, we must urgently seek agreement. Options that have already been mentioned will then be open to us. Any such proposals should involve, as a condition, a commitment to sound out the Falkland Islanders about the future that they would wish.

That does not mean that the task is easy or that there will be no risks. Of course, there will be. However, they must be faced. Things can go wrong and they usually do. If the situation remains unchanged we may have to face up to some hard decisions. From Britain's point of view everything that could be wrong about this confrontation, is wrong. I refer not only to the place and the time and to the fact that winter is only six weeks away, but to the assessment of intelligence—about which much has been said—to the adversary, to muscle power and to diplomacy. However, there are two exceptions. I refer to the Royal Navy and to our cause.

In this crisis, the Royal Navy must know that it has the fullest support of the House and of the British people. On the Saturday before last that support rang out loud and clear. I hope that it will continue to ring out loud and clear.

Thousands of young men are sailing with the task force. There cannot be an hon. Member who has not, in recent days, seen a photograph in his evening newspaper of one of his constituents. There cannot be an hon. Member who has not heard the parent of one of his constituents being interviewed on the local radio. How young are they? Half of them may be as young as 21. Indeed, they may be younger. One-quarter of them may be teenagers. Many of them are only boys. They are entitled to our support. Not

[Mr. Duffy]

only because of their age, but because that task force was assembled and despatched with extraordinary speed and efficiency.

Mr. Alexander W. Lyon (York): I take the point that those who go into battle on our behalf are entitled to our support. However, they are also entitled to our judgment. Those in the trenches who went over the top on the Somme and at Passchendaele often went to their deaths because we did not exercise our judgment. Surely we are entitled to question whether these young men should spill their blood.

Mr. Duffy: I enter only two caveats. First, I was careful not to mention battle. Secondly, if we form a judgment, we should be careful about to whom it is addressed. I suggest that it should be addressed to the Government Benches and not to the Royal Navy. It should certainly not be directed to the Royal Navy's personnel.

The task force was assembled and despatched with extraordinary speed and efficiency. We take that for granted. No other country in the world could have done it. With its usual self-effacing modesty and low profile, the Royal Navy say that the credit lies with the workers and trade unionists in industry who provided the Fleet with its hulls, equipment, weapon systems and other provisions and with the workers in the dock yards, many of whom had redundancy notices in their pockets but who helped to prepare the ships for sea. I know sailors, and I say that much of the credit must also go to them and to the Naval airmen, and Royal Marines, who are responsible for operating and maintaining ever more complex equipment and who are ready to deploy in any operational environment. In an increasingly materialistic society, I never cease to marvel at the commitment, the motivation, the education and training and, above all, the self discipline of the men and women who man our Armed Services today. The quality of leadership from admiral to leading seaman has never been higher.

Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, Commander-in-Chief Fleet, who operates from Northwood, was right to declare publicly that the fleet will perform competently and efficiently any task that it is asked to perform and that lies within its capabilities. No doubt all hon. Members saw him on television two days ago. I know that the fleet is worthy of our support. I hope that we shall stay worthy of the fleet.

4.19 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): First, may I praise the resolution of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her speech today? I also wish to express my personal gratitude to her for the selfless way in which she has conducted negotiations with Mr. Haig during the past few days.

We all recognise that force will be the counsel of last resort in solving this crisis, but because at least I hold that view, following the mandatory resolution of the Security Council, which tries to persuade the Argentines to withdraw from the Falkland Islands, it also follows that that mandatory resolution must be backed up by further action from the Security Council. Although I welcome all statements of unilateral sanctions being imposed against Argentina, I cannot help but feel that that is not as impressive or as likely to be persuasive to the Argentine Government as sanctions imposed by the Security

Council. To that extent, the concept of mandatory sanctions passed by that body should be the next step in New York.

I did not intend to speak in this debate until yesterday evening, when one of my constituents telephoned me and asked to see me urgently. As a result of that visit, I realise now that the largest private owner of land in the Falkland Islands lives in my constituency. His name is Mr. John Matthews and his family has had holdings in the Falkland Islands since 1867. Currently they possess 200,000 acres.

Mr. Matthews came to see me because he was sufficiently exercised by the problem to feel that he must talk to his Member of Parliament in the hope that I could pass on his views to the Prime Minister or to whomever would listen to me. In effect, he said that everyone is trying to tell the Falkland Islanders what their final choice should be, but the islanders have not been consulted in the way that most of us perhaps imagined. He argued—it is a personal view but his family has been there for a long time—that the elected council, which comprises five elected representatives, does not represent the views of the 1,800 islanders. Yet, too often during the past 15 years Ministers have listened to the council as if it was the parliament of the Falkland Islands, when it is not—at least not in the sense that we understand such concepts.

My constituent said that perhaps the time had come for every one of the 1,800 islanders to be able to express a view about where their future lies. He concluded from that that if such an opportunity was provided, the answer that might be received from all 1,800 would be rather different from the answer as we now understand it.

Mr. Matthews made it clear that his statement in no way gave any sort of sanction to what the Argentines have done. It cannot, because the concept of consulting the islanders when they are living under duress, as a population within an occupied territory, is clearly meaningless. However, he argued that the future of the islands depends upon stability. First and foremost they need political stability, but they also need stability that will persuade the farms and businesses that are now on the islands to invest for the future and will encourage the population to stay on the islands and to contribute as much as they can.

As my constituent argues, it must follow that those who live on the islands should make their views known and that those who have an interest in the islands—whether they be in the United Kingdom, Argentina or, dare I say, the United Nations—should pay due respect to the views expressed.

Mr. Frank Allaun (Salford, East): A very sensible point of view has been expressed by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson). However, let us suppose that, of the 1,800 islanders, some wished to retain their British nationality and be resettled elsewhere and some wished to stay. Would it not be right to offer those people the opportunity to take either of those courses rather than to fight a war about it?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I was going to say to the hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Allaun) that I agreed with his point, until I heard his last words. I do not believe that what I have been suggesting can become a reality that will last and give stability if we ask the islanders to make decisions when they are living under duress and as a population under enemy occupation. It follows that if the

Argentines really wish a resolution of the Falkland Islands dispute, it is as much in their interests as in ours that the islanders give an answer that can be respected by either party.

I was glad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred three times in her speech to the right of the islanders to be free to determine their own way of life. What I have said is only an echo of the words that she used.

If the Argentines believed that their aggression would present Her Majesty's Government with a fait accompli to which they would not react, clearly they sadly misjudged the reaction of a democratic Government who have responsibilities that they intend to carry out for the sovereign parts of their territory. Perhaps all dictatorships are likely to make such a mistake, so none of us should be surprised. However, the Argentine Government must now recognise their miscalculation. Whether they recognise it from the words used in this House or whether they choose to recognise it from the United Nations Security Council or the EEC, it is there, written for them all to see and hear, from three great bodies with international responsibilities.

As to the need to consult the islanders, let us examine what we would be putting before them. We all know the options. We could hand sovereignty to Argentina with a view to a lease back, presumably for a defined time, after which the islands would revert to Argentina's administration and sovereignty. My constituent favoured that proposal, because he argued—

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): He has not lived there.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: He has lived there. He argued that in the future the Falkland Islanders would find themselves more in the sphere of trade and influence of Argentina than of Britain.

The second option is condominium—the concept of shared sovereignty—which no one believes is satisfactory. A third option may be to give the islanders self-government. Let them decide their destiny, for it is their country. In those terms, we would do for them no more and no less than we have done for many other islands scattered about the world.

Whatever decision we make, it is surely unrealistic to talk about the next steps until the Argentines withdraw and it is unrealistic for the Argentines to believe that might will succeed when nearly all the world is against them.

I continue to support the Government's original recourse to the Security Council and its endorsement that Argentina must withdraw. I see the task force as a follow-through to resolution 502. We all know that if we do not have mandatory trading sanctions there is a second sanction which the Security Council can introduce which involves measures where force may be used if necessary.

None of us wants bloodshed over this most intractable problem, but none of us can flinch from that possibility in a crisis of this magnitude. To do so would be to give way to aggression and to renege upon the concept of self-determination which we have all held so important for so long. Lastly, it would be to undermine the United Nations, which in future may be a more important body than it has been in the past.

4.31 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): I have read all the speeches made in the two earlier debates on

this issue. It seems that the mood of the House has moved from its initial emotional response to one that is much more questioning, to one that has a greater degree of realism in seeking a solution to the issue of the Falkland Islands and their people.

It would be wrong for me to range over some of the arguments that have already been heard other than to say that I believe that the majority of the British people believe and accept that the task force was a correct initial response to the invasion. I believe also that those self-same people do not give that support totally without conditions and that same support wish us to be involved in military conflict. What is now needed is for new initiatives to justify the support of the British people and to justify the support of, the actions taken by and the decisions arrived at by the international community. The Prime Minister said, as have many others, that we have obtained the support of substantial sections of the Commonwealth, including some countries, especially in the Third world, which can ill afford to demonstrate their support by the economic measures that they have taken.

I am not completely in accord with many of my colleagues regarding the European Economic Community. I am, perhaps, in a small minority on the Labour Benches. I have always maintained that the supreme test of the Community lies in its political decision-making, in its ability to speak with one voice and in the way in which it is able to use its economic force in support of a member State that has been aggressed. Those who share my views have not been disappointed.

The Foreign Secretary said that we shall need the support of the world community. We have that support but it is not sufficient to chalk it up on a scoreboard. It is not sufficient merely to obtain the approval of international bodies. We must justify that approval by seeking to implement the United Nations resolution, by exploring the possibilities of a role that the United Nations may be able to adopt as a mediator and in providing a mechanism whereby Argentina can be assisted to move off the hook of the Government's earlier arguments about sovereignty.

I have always believed that if statesmanship means anything it places demands on those who regard themselves as statesmen. It demands that those who aggress sometimes need to be provided with a face-saving formula; they sometimes need to be provided with an opportunity to retreat without loss of face. If we believe in the rule of law, we must develop our actions in concert with the United Nations charter, to which we have been committed for many years.

The Government have demonstrated that they have the military force. They have demonstrated that there is a will to use it. They must now demonstrate their belief in the rule of law and must put that belief into practice. They must be prepared to examine and contemplate a range of solutions and take some initiatives in presenting them. They may have to do so by diplomatic means through the United Nations. We need to look to the United Nations. The offices of the United Nations may have to be involved in seeking a withdrawal of both Argentine and British defence personnel and administrative personnel from the entire area. We may have to examine the possibility of filling the vacuum with a United Nations peacekeeping force, which would administer the islands until such time as a more permanent solution could be found.

We may have to refer the issues to the International Court so that it may state its views of the future of the

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

islands. We may have to seek a solution by those means for both the area and the people. At least an opportunity will be provided for an independent judicial body to examine the claims of Argentina and the claims of Britain as well as the wishes of the Falkland Islanders. There are many approaches and initiatives that we may have to take to bring about a solution.

I have tried hard to follow all the views of knowledgeable commentators outside the House, as well as the views of hon. Members of both sides of the House who are familiar with the islands and with the people who have lived on them for generations. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who know the islands and who have talked with the people have advanced varying points of view about the way in which they see their future developing. Those comments have been made in good faith. They have been accepted in good faith in the knowledge that they have been expressed by those who wish to be helpful to the House. However, the views vary considerably and many of us are left confused by them.

I was interested in what the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) had to say in expressing the view of a constituent to whom he has been talking recently. That view, and others, have led to greater confusion. What is not confusing is that we know that we cannot turn back the clock. I believe that the islanders are aware of that. They must be aware that we cannot provide a large and permanent military and naval presence in the area and that things will never be the same again in that part of the world.

I do not know the islanders and I do not know the part of the world in which they live. I have tried to educate myself in recent weeks about them. However, I believe that the islanders may be more realistic about a negotiated settlement and about how they see their future than perhaps some of us give them credit for. Let us not be more aggressive in seeking their protection than the islanders themselves would be. We must be honest with the islanders about what they can expect. The time has not come for appeasement. The Government have shown their potential military and naval strength. However, the time has come to try to implement the solidarity which has been demonstrated to us by world opinion. We should, perhaps, use the United Nations to explore all the possibilities that may bring a solution to the area—not through continued aggression or military might, but through the rule of law to which this country and this House are firmly committed.

4.40 pm

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness): In our first debate on 3 April, the day after the invasion, much was properly made of the fact that during the past few years we have been giving signs to Argentina of a lack of commitment to the Falklands Islands by our unwillingness to act following the Shackleton report, the leaseback proposals, the withdrawal of HMS "Endurance", and so on. The consequent invasion could almost be seen by Argentina as a move which would be greeted with a sigh of relief in this country—admittedly suitably concealed with expressions of indignation, but a sigh of relief nevertheless—rather than the genuine outrage which has been expressed by both sides of the House and by the country as a whole which led to the support for the dispatch of our fleet.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Cunningham) put this aspect aptly in our debate on 7 April. Unfortunately I was unable to be present, but I read all the speeches in detail. The hon. Gentleman said:

"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."

That summed up the position extremely well.

For that reason, as I said when intervening in the speech of the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot)—who made a fine speech—I have doubts as to the wisdom of proceeding in this manner at this stage where, willy-nilly, we have a series of set-piece debates. It is the essence of this Chamber and of parliamentary style that the Opposition seek to criticise the Government and work out a competing policy, not a joint policy. That is how we operate. A statement is made and an attempt made to distinguish from it. We tend to drift into that situation whether we like it or not.

Given the degree of common ground—although we may not officially be at war we are certainly on a war footing—I cannot understand why the Prime Minister has not, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal Party said last Wednesday, sought fully to consult the party leaders. It might not be possible to sustain a consensus for any length of time—one does not know—but it should be tried. In exactly the same way as the coded messages—to use the jargon of the past few years—clearly encouraged the Argentines, equally, the more we articulate doubts and uncertainties from a position of some ignorance of the military position on the spot, the more we encourage the Argentines to maintain their position and the more we weaken our own diplomatic clout and capacity to succour the Falkland Islanders without actually using force.

Will the Foreign Secretary tell me why that has not been done? It is important to know. Although the Leader of the Opposition responded to my intervention, I am still not clear whether he would co-operate or not. However, from the content of his speech, I see no reason why he should not. His speech was clear and as decisive as his speech on 3 April. The logic of all that is that the whole House should work together. Force has been used against us, but no one wants to see force used in response, as was said by many hon. Members. Equally, if we must use force, it must be the minimum necessary.

I would briefly put on record—this point has been made by other hon. Members—our gratitude and pleasure at the firm and united response from our European Community partners in immediately instituting economic sanctions at considerable cost to themselves. Critics of the Community should recognise how greatly this strengthens our position. However, I should like the Government to say how rapidly those measures will be implemented. I understand that although declarations have been made and the intention clearly signified, the sanctions have not yet come into effect.

In conjunction with that, while Mr. Haig's efforts and the way in which he has acted are greatly to be commended, one cannot let pass President Reagan's reference to an even-handed attitude being necessary between two friends of the United States, or the even more unfortunate remarks of Mrs. Fitzgerald, the United States' representative at the United Nations. Many hon. Members

have already said that the United States must be informed that one cannot be even-handed between an aggressor and his victim.

Picking up the point made by the Leader of the Opposition concerning the imminent sale of fighter planes to Venezuela and its relevance to Guyana, there is no doubt about the one clear lesson to be learnt from this crisis. By engaging in the indiscriminate sale of arms, the Western nations are stoking fires that may be hard to control.

I agree that at a critical moment in negotiations—as the Prime Minister said—it would not be helpful to examine negotiating positions or compromises in any detail. However, there has been talk by hon. Members about various options for continued British sovereignty. In this connection I refer to the speech of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South-East (Mr. Benn) on Wednesday. He said:

“Sovereignty is not what we want, it is the welfare of the people.”

Sovereignty is what the Falkland Islanders want. They want the continuing sovereignty of the British crown. They regard that as the best safeguard for their welfare. That is the answer to the right hon. Gentleman.

In talking of options, whether condominiums, leasebacks, or United Nations trusteeship, we are in logic saying that we cannot sustain the position indefinitely if we are to be faced indefinitely with the hostility of the Argentine and the possibility of further aggression at some unpredictable time or times in the future. If options are to be debated—I am not sure that they should be, but that is the nature of these debates—we should not seek to cloak them with verbiage about diplomacy, equitable solutions and just compromises, and so on.

If it were not for the invasion we would not be talking in such terms. We must face that fact. We are in the position that was well put by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) on 7 April. He said that “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.”—[Official Report, 7 April 1982; Vol. 21, c. 990, 994, 985-999.]

That is true.

Therefore, if long-term problems arise it will be necessary for the international community to come together. That point was well made by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), who was formerly Under-Secretary of State for Defence for the Navy.

I firmly stress that the principle of self-determination must be upheld, and the trust of the Falkland Islanders must not be betrayed by this country.

Finally, I wish to ask two simple questions that seek information, because there seems to be a lack of it. The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) referred to South Georgia. What is the position of the Argentine over South Georgia? As I understand it, there was no claim on South Georgia comparable with that on the Falkland Islands, yet the Argentine has occupied that island. Is that island also blockaded by us? Secondly, since the imposition of the blockade, have there been any incidents within that 200-mile zone? Do the Government know whether any Argentine vessels remain within that zone?

Our prayers must be with the Falkland Islanders in the dreadful circumstances that they now face.

5.41 pm

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove and Redditch): I follow the hon. Member for Inverness (Mr. Johnston) and several others by turning my thoughts to the future and to the possible solutions to this dangerous and difficult situation. Before doing so, as one who had the privilege of working in the Colonial Service for 13 years, I must say that I have a deep sense of outrage at the violent aggression on a British colony and a burning sense of shame that we were unable to protect, and do our duty by, the inhabitants and the British citizens of that territory.

I am therefore grateful to my former Colonial Service colleague, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), for his courage in resigning and for the dignified speech that he made to the House on that occasion, on which he deserves sincere congratulations. My hon. Friend and his more senior colleagues will be a great loss to the Administration, but I am sure that his chance will come again to offer distinguished service.

I am hopeful that when the story of this whole episode comes to be written we shall be reassured that the civil and military power in the Falkland Islands at the time of the invasion behaved with distinction and valour. Now is not the time to go into those events. We must turn our minds beyond the immediate future, however difficult that is for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary who is engaged in the heavy burden of day-to-day negotiations. We must think about the best future for the Falkland Islanders themselves. My right hon. Friend has said that the wishes of the islanders will be dominant. Have we the right to be confident of their decision?

Like the hon. Member for Inverness, I regret that the recommendations of the Shackleton report were not given greater weight and put into action. What have we done to earn the continued confidence of the Falkland Islanders, and what do we now propose? It is not enough just to restore British administration and to regain our effective sovereignty over the islands. As my right hon. Friend as said, we cannot go back to the status quo ante. What is being offered to the Falkland Islanders? In considering that, we must recall the signals that we have given in the past.

I am ashamed to say that we have a record of neglect of the islands. We have provided them with inadequate communications. Indeed, the airstrip was adequate only for service from the Argentine. Their oil supplies come from the Argentine. It even appears that at the crucial moment in the invasion, the transmitters were inadequate to impart the information. If we were embarked on a high risk policy ever since we gave up maintaining a South Atlantic squadron, at least we should have ensured that there was adequate communication so that we could be constantly aware of what was taking place.

That lack of interest has manifested itself over the succeeding years in the lack of development in the islands. My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) referred to one considerable absentee landlord. There are others. For example, what about the future of young people who find difficulty obtaining farms that they can tenant? The uncertain future for the islands’ staple product—wool—makes the situation extremely bleak, unless we can offer alternatives for economic development which must centre on oil, fishing, and even help with its valuable chemical properties. We must also consider the unknown and untapped resources of the Antarctic.

[Mr. Hal Miller]

The withdrawal of our Navy into the NATO sphere of operations; the decision to abandon HMS "Endurance"; our apparent lack of any negotiations with Chile as a countervailing power to the Argentine; and our negotiation on lease-back or other derogation from sovereignty must all have given signals to the Falkland Islanders, and to the Argentine, that we were not sincerely interested in their future on a long-term basis. We must now give thought to the signals that we shall give. We must now consider our future intentions for the islands. What future will we now seek for young islanders?

I have set out the various areas in which we must secure a basis for peaceful and continued development to the end of this century. These must play some role in the negotiations that must certainly take place. We should not blind ourselves to the strategic importance of the islands. It is highly significant that units of the Soviet Navy are already present in the area.

It is not enough for us to seek to determine the views of the islanders. We must have something to offer them. That is the course that I counsel most earnestly on my right hon. Friend. I urge him constantly to pursue the withdrawal of the Argentines in accordance with United Nations resolution 502.

I do not shrink from force, if necessary, but the restoration of Pax Britannica by itself is not enough. May we please have some positive plans for the future?

4.58 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Rother Valley): I shall try to be brief, and in doing so I follow the hon. Member for Bromsgrove and Redditch (Mr. Miller) in expressing the hope that at the end of this unhappy chapter there can be an improving quality of life for the people in the Falkland Islands.

At the outset, it is clear that one of two Governments are at risk—either the Government here or that in Buenos Aires. My hon. Friends and I have very little cause to admire the present administration here, but in the national interest and to avoid further international ignominy, one hopes that the Buenos Aires Government collapses rather than ours. It was interesting that recently the Prime Minister recognised the nature of the regime in Buenos Aires. As some of my hon. Friends have pointed out, it is perhaps a pity that she did not do so earlier.

Whether or not the Buenos Aires Administration collapses, it is clear that while the Government have given a commitment that there will be an inquiry, that inquiry will have to be very searching if it is to satisfy the British people. I am glad to see that the Foreign Secretary is nodding his head in agreement. I hope that the Foreign Secretary was nodding his head in agreement because the comments made by spokesmen on behalf of the Government in recent weeks seem to confirm that view.

Although my constituency is a long way from the sea, I have been surprised to learn in the past few days that a considerable number of young sailors in my constituency—some of them not yet 21-years-old—are members of the task force. Last night I spoke to the secretary of the Labour Women's Council in my constituency whose son, aged 20, is on board one of the Navy's ships. While she and other people are extremely critical of the Government's record in the matter, they recognise that the task force is serving an essential purpose

and must continue to sail southward in the hope that, before it reaches the war zone, the efforts to secure peace and the possibility of a reasonable settlement will succeed and prevent further risk. I do not know as much about the Royal Navy as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Atercliffe (Mr. Duffy) but I do not like the prospect of my young constituents who are in the Navy spending month after month in those inhospitable waters.

At the weekend I examined the journals of Captain Cook to see what relevant gems of geography or interest could be obtained. In those journals it seems confirmed that the climate and the waters in the South Atlantic are likely to be inhospitable. Therefore, I hope that the task force can secure a swift resolution to the crisis.

My main reason for contributing to the debate is to find out the position of those uninhabited islands that are involved in the current dispute. The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) referred to territory as well as to people. An examination of the atlas reveals points of considerable interest with regard to the South Sandwich Islands and South Georgia.

South Georgia is as far away from the Argentine as Athens is from the United Kingdom. From the United Kingdom to Warsaw is only two-thirds of the distance from the Argentine coast to South Georgia. Therefore, the Argentine claims to South Georgia is even more questionable than its claims to the Falkland Islands. While the Falkland Islands are much closer to the Argentine than to Britain, they are as far away from the nearest point on the Argentine coast as the Swiss border or, indeed, the Norwegian border is from Westminster. Our friends in Norway have as much entitlement to invade Iceland—indeed the Irish Republic has more entitlement to invade the Shetlands—as has any Argentine general to invade the Falkland Islands.

My right hon. Friends are correct to suggest that the Government cannot look idly at this aggressive invasion. We should not enter war lightly. I hope that the orders to fire that will be given by the Prime Minister will not be swiftly given, so that there can be time for negotiation. However, given the importance, investment and interest in the Antarctic throughout the past 100 years—Britain has led the world in Antarctic development—and given the important minerals and oil that may be available in Antarctica, it would be highly undesirable for us to allow 1,800 Falkland Islanders to decide by referendum that territory in South Georgia or the South Sandwich Islands could be lightly given away.

We must consider the question of territory as well as the question of people. One hopes that the future of the islands will be well served by an Administration who will be concerned more with the people there than with absentee landlords, who appear to have inspired the speeches of several Conservative Members. The Government have brought about a considerable humiliation for Britain. That has had the unfortunate result of arousing a degree of jingoism in Britain that is hardly appropriate to the twentieth century. But the fact remains that, if the task force does not continue to sail, the Government will have surrendered an opportunity to serve principle and international decency. For that reason, my support continues to go with Her Majesty's Navy.

5.5 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I sometimes find it difficult to understand the part that the

House and Parliament can play in the difficult and complicated matters of foreign affairs. I certainly think that some of our questions on foreign affairs are not always helpful. It is of course right that we have been recalled again today and it is right that we should be kept informed by Her Majesty's Government about what is happening. Parliaments in the past were an awful nuisance to kings when they were conducting difficult diplomatic negotiations. Queen Elizabeth I took a very severe view when Parliament interfered in foreign affairs, let alone in questions of whom she should marry. I am sure that many modern Governments must have felt the same.

Yet the House and the other place have a part to play. Our vital role is to express the will of the nation as we understand it and, on this occasion, to give our unstinted backing to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and to the Government. The nation expects us to meet when there is a crisis. People somehow feel better when they know that Parliament is sitting. I was told that the crowds outside the Houses of Parliament on the last special sitting on Saturday were the largest since the abdication crisis of 1936. May we live up to the high regard in which, apparently, the public regard us.

I consider that our main role today is to represent the wishes and feelings of our constituents—which are that the Government should see this matter through to the end. That is the message that I am receiving loud and clear from my constituents, and I believe many other colleagues have had the same experience. That means that the Argentine must remove its troops from the Falkland Islands before we can enter into negotiations. We can then have perfectly sensible and reasonable negotiations.

The nation is quite remarkably united at present. All the previous conflicts that seem to have divided us appear to have faded into the distance. I watched with admiration, as I sure millions of my compatriots did, on television the fitting out of the battle fleet, the majestic departure from Portsmouth and the cheering crowds on the shore. I was reminded of the Dutch wars of long ago and of the efforts of Samuel Pepys in the fitting out of the Fleet of those days. We have now national unity and cohesion in Britain which is something precious and not, I hope, to be lost. That is not to say that the nation yet realise how long and protracted the struggle may be, nor are some people yet ready to accept that if we have to fight it is inevitable that some British blood will be spilt. We may face some very difficult weeks or even months. As we know from our long history, blockade is, in essence, a slow business.

Anxiety is, I believe, felt by many hon. Members and by people in the country about the part that the United States and Mr. Haig will play. After all that our Prime Minister and the Government have done in supporting the United States—we have been its most fervent ally over Poland, over nuclear arms and even over El Salvador—it would be appalling and unthinkable if the American Administration should try to sell us down the river now. I am sure that it will not. The United States Administration must know that if that happened it would strike a death blow to the Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Does the hon. Gentleman not think that there is a danger that President Reagan could take this country's continued friendship for granted?

Mr. Stokes: That is difficult to say. Time alone can tell. I believe that, in the end, President Reagan and his advisers must know that we are their greatest supporters. Without that support, their position and the position of the whole of the West would be put gravely at risk.

We have many cards in our hands. Our cause is self-evidently just. We are supported by a resolution of the Security Council of the United Nations and we have received remarkably strong support from the EEC. I hope that some of those who are invariably critical—I am sometimes critical—of the EEC will think that this must be its finest hour.

We must never forget that Soviet Russia—not the Argentine, and certainly not the people of the Argentine with whom we have the friendliest relations—presents the greatest threat to us. The decision to stand and, if necessary, to fight is not just about the Falkland Islands, about their 1,800 inhabitants, or about the possibility of finding oil and gas in the South Antarctic. It is a question of national will. The answer that we give will be noted not only in Gibraltar and in Hong Kong but in West Berlin and wherever the West may be threatened. Soviet Russia, above all, is watching on the sidelines. The successful resolution of this conflict will not be lost on it.

There is little point at this time in worrying in too much detail about what form the eventual negotiations will take. The wishes of the Falklanders are of the highest importance, as will be the desires of the British Government and our people. Meanwhile, the Argentine troops must be removed from the islands—by diplomacy we hope, by total blockade, possibly, and, if not, and finally, by all means of force, difficult and bloody though that may be.

One small but highly disagreeable feature of the handling of the crisis in some of the national, although not, I believe, in the local newspapers, has been the carping against the Prime Minister. After all, these decisions are the decisions of a Government led, it is true, by a remarkably strong-willed and definite Prime Minister. If, however, one goes outside Fleet Street and listens to the views of ordinary people, I believe that the criticism comes only from those whom I shall call silly intellectuals. anyhow, our duty here is to represent good, ordinary people. I believe that most ordinary people admire the courage and patriotism of the Prime Minister and that they are thoroughly behind her. I find that the nation, as a whole, is remarkably calm and resolute and that it trusts the Government to see this matter through to the end. I am sure that they will.

5.15 pm

Mr. Alexander W. Lyon (York): No one called me an intellectual until I came into this place, when it was used as a term of abuse. I hope that the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) will not feel that any offering I make in this debate is couched in those terms. I envy his assurance about what is right and what is wrong. I confess that for the last fortnight I have been racked by a real feeling of conscience about what is right and what is wrong in this situation. If I speak in a manner that is out of sympathy with the consensus that has emerged in the House, it is not because I have any disrespect for the judgment or experience of many hon. Members who have spoken in a contrary sense.

If the fleet gets to the Falkland Islands and by that time the Argentines have withdrawn from the islands and there

[Mr. Alexander W. Lyon]

is a settlement that is acceptable to the Falkland Islanders and to the Argentine, no one will breathe a greater sigh of relief than myself. I am bound to say, however, that in questioning the consensus that has emerged here, I find it almost impossible to believe that such a situation awaits our fleet when we get to the destination.

Every indication given by the Argentines is that they regard the occupation of the Falkland Islands as their natural right in asserting their claim over territory as, recalling the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell), we should assert in relation to ours, that they have occupied them in sufficient force to make it a very dangerous assignment to try to reoccupy them and that they therefore intend to remain. If that is the case, we have to ask ourselves what the fleet is going to do when it gets there.

It may well be the intention of Her Majesty's Ministers at the moment simply to surround the islands in such a way that they cannot be easily provisioned from the sea. All the indications are that the islands are capable of withstanding such a blockade for some considerable time. We know that the airfield is sufficiently intact for the islands to be provisioned by air. In those circumstances, the question that arises, if the Government are serious that they will not negotiate about the future status of the Falkland Islands unless the Argentines withdraw, is whether we are committed to anything short of bloodshed and war. I find that a horrifying prospect. I cannot approach it with the equanimity of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge.

The idea that we should shed blood over this issue tends to transcend the principles inherent in it. That is largely because I see the principles inherent in this situation differently from many hon. Members. I have thought for years that for us to assert that the issues of a number of islands, the remainder of our colonies around the world, are to be determined simply by the will of the inhabitants of those islands is a wholly unrealistic principle. To allege that the right of a people to decide whether they want to be an independent country is the same as the right of a small island that cannot be an independent country, because it is not viable as a country, to assert that it should remain part of the British Commonwealth as a colony seems wholly unrealistic in relation to some of the areas that we are discussing.

There are not only the Falkland Islands; there is Gibraltar. If the facts of the situation suggest that the islands are within the economic area of a larger territory which has always regarded them as its own, it is difficult for us, approaching the twenty-first century, to go on asserting that they are British and that they have the right to remain British because their people claim that that should be so.

Incidentally, in relation to Gibraltar, the United Nations has never asserted that the people of Gibraltar have a right to make such a decision themselves. The United Nations has always recognised that, in relation to areas which have been a source of long-standing controversy, there are real difficulties in asserting that it is simply a question of self-determination.

The issue of the Falkland Islands has been the subject of controversy between the United Kingdom and the Argentine for almost as long as we have occupied the islands. I remind those who say that the occupation by the

Argentine is aggression that our right to be present in the Falkland Islands rests on just such an invasion—150 years ago, yes, but nevertheless an invasion. For most of those 150 years the Argentine has been protesting against our right to occupy the islands.

The protest was made long before the assumption of power by the present dictatorship or by an earlier dictatorship. It goes back to the time when the Argentine was ruled by a democratic regime. It is not enough to say, as some of my colleagues have said, that this is a Fascist dictatorship and that therefore we should not give any consideration to its claim upon the Falkland Islands. If that be the case—I recognise that most hon. Members see it differently—I do not find it easy to say that we should shed the blood of Britons or Argentines in seeking a settlement when the reality, in my judgment, is that the Falkland Islands ought to go back to the Argentine.

Sir John Eden (Bournemouth, West): Surely it is not just a case of self-determination, or whether the islanders are capable of a separate existence. Surely it is the case that under British sovereignty they live in freedom. If that sovereignty were to be changed by an act of aggression, those people would be denied the opportunity to continue to live in freedom, and there would be no opportunity of any kind for self-determination.

Mr. Lyon: I feel immense sympathy with the 1,800 inhabitants of the Falkland Islands, who are not Argentines, do not speak Spanish, do not have a Spanish culture and do not wish to be part of the Argentine. I would certainly make provision, in any settlement, for them to have the right to come and live in Britain if they wanted to do so, but what I would not say is that they have a right to determine whether we shall, in pursuance of their right to self-determination, expend not only money, ships and aeroplanes but people's lives in order to ensure that the 1,800 islanders are entitled to maintain the way of life that they already have.

Mr. Percy Grieve (Solihull) *rose*—

Mr. Lyon: In that question lies a real uncertainty about our present attitude. When hon. Members question the argument, as so many do, I ask what will happen if and when the Chinese occupy Hong Kong. It is, of course, true that the New Territories are on lease and will go back to China at the end of the lease, but the island is British. On the thesis advanced by the right hon. Member for Down, South, we ought to be willing to assert our territorial integrity in relation to Hong Kong Island, and I do not believe that this House would go that far.

Mr. Grieve *rose*—

Mr. Lyon: If the Chinese invaded Hong Kong, I do not believe that we would send the fleet to Hong Kong. I do not think there would be any question of considering how many aeroplanes we could send in the hold of a cargo liner in order to assert our integrity in relation to Hong Kong.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: As the hon. Member mentioned me, perhaps I may say that I do not think that we should, because I do not think that it would be practicable for us, by military force, to maintain that territory if it were seriously challenged and attacked by China. But I think that it is self-evidently practicable for us to maintain our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Lyon: I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman because he has brought me on to the next

fundamental point in the British position. It is one thing to make such an assertion—although I do not believe that we can reoccupy the islands and drive the Argentines back to Argentina—but it is a wholly different thing to presume that from now until the Falkland Islanders change their view of the situation we can police the area in a way that will stop the Argentines going back on to the islands. I do not believe that we have the capacity, in the late twentieth century, to mount such an operation permanently in the South Atlantic.

The fact that we are sending nearly two-thirds of our Navy, and the fact that we are commandeering trawlers and fishing boats to send to the South Atlantic at this moment in order to maintain this one response, suggests to me that Britain can no longer claim that it can police the world. It is in that final assertion of our role in the world that I find myself so much at loggerheads with most hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The fact is that the British Empire is over. We are no longer able to say that we are the policeman of the world and can determine what the people of the Pitcairn Islands, the people of Ascension Island or the people of St. Helena want or should have. We ought to have settled the future of those tiny dependencies a long time ago through the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations.

For 16 years in this House I have listened to one Government after another saying, "Oh, no, we cannot do that because the inhabitants do not want us to do it." I have listened to hon. Members who have been to such places maintain on their return: "Whatever we do, we must safeguard the integrity of the Pitcairn Islands"—or of Gibraltar, Hong Kong or some other country. Galtieri has shown us that we cannot honour such a pledge to the islands permanently. We ought to come to terms with reality and recognise that we cannot.

If we do not come to terms with reality, what we have in prospect is disaster on a massive scale. I do not care whether it brings down a Government. What I care about is whether human beings are to lose their lives, whether they are Argentines or British, just in order that we can preserve a baref principle so that we can preserve an illusion about the power of the British Empire which in my view is out of tune with what we have and what we are capable of achieving.

5.30 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): We have listened to a speech by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Lyon) in which he admitted that he is in a minority in the House. The feeling in the House has been demonstrated by the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. They have made it clear that they regard this act of aggression as unwarranted, and something that should be put right. Sovereignty and the rule of law should be restored. If we fail to do that we fail not only in the Falkland Islands but in the world and we shall pay for it in future.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) mentioned the task force. All of us have constituents in the force. I make no secret that my own regiment, the Blues and Royals which is stationed in my constituency, in Windsor, is in the task force and I am sure that all hon. Members have a constituent or constituents in the task force. It is a great tribute to our nation and to the Prime Minister that we have been able to mobilise this force in

such a short time. How many other nations could have mounted a force so well and so quickly? With the exception of the United States and the Soviet Union we are the only nation capable of mounting an operation of this nature.

Why have we had to do this? We have had to do it because the only way of showing the present Administration of the Argentine that we mean business is by sending out a force capable of carrying out a task if necessary. It is noticeable that we have no quarrel with the Argentine people, as the hon. Member for Attercliffe pointed out. However, it is not the Argentines that we are dealing with, it is the junta. Those are the people with whom we have to negotiate in the long run until, let us hope, they are no longer the rulers of the Argentine.

As we all know, this country has many friends in the Argentine but we are compelled by events and by an act of aggression against our territory to act in the way that we have and to follow the path so well laid by the Prime Minister. She has gone to every possible means and spent hours with our American allies in an effort to avoid any war-like action. At the same time, she has had the backing of the EEC and the Security Council.

The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) made a very important point. He said that it was not only a question of the islanders but a question of sovereignty of territory. That is a point that has to be brought out. We all think, quite rightly, of the future of the Falkland Islanders, but at the same time we must also think about the wider implications of what would happen if we had given in in this instance.

The implications are that if we give way to the forces of dictatorship we pay for it in the long run. In this case our objectives are simple. They are, first and foremost to restore the sovereignty, or the Administration as it should be called of the Falkland Islands. The second is to make sure that the Argentine troops are withdrawn. It would be impossible, as my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) made clear, to find out the wishes of the Falkland Islanders so long as the Argentine soldiers remain on the island.

Therefore, our first duty is to clear the island of the invading forces. A great deal of nonsense has been talked about flags. There is only one flag that should be flying over the Falkland Islands—the British flag. There is no place or justification for the Argentine flag. As far as we are concerned it is sovereign territory inhabited by British subjects.

I should like to refer to the position of the islanders. Their views may have changed because of the occupation. Many views may be expressed, but I put it to the House that the only time that we can ever obtain the views of the islanders is when the Argentine troops have gone. We must then have some form of referendum to find out the views of the islanders, because their future is of paramount importance, although it may well have been changed by the recent events. Nevertheless, we have a solemn duty to find out what those views are. Successive Governments have, in their wisdom, decided that their views should and would be considered.

We are immensely grateful to the EEC for the rapid way in which it has responded to this wanton act of aggression, and we are grateful for the United Nations. But there are two points that must be answered. With 9,000 troops on the island, unless they voluntarily withdraw, how long will

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

it take to get rid of the invaders? It will be an immensely difficult task, even if they are subjected to long periods of economic sanctions, both by the EEC and other countries.

There are problems. As we all know, there are Russian troops in the area. The 200-mile limit round the Falkland Islands may be breached by the Argentine navy. However, it is a tribute to the House of Commons, to all the parties and to the leaders, that they have unanimously come down on the side of resolution and are firm not only in their determination that we should carry out this operation to its conclusion but that they should back the Government in their dispatch of the force necessary to achieve the objective.

We all want to see the matter resolved by a diplomatic solution but if that is not possible we know that we have the superiority to be able to achieve that objective by force. Let us hope that after the objective has been achieved, whatever negotiations take place, we do not give away any sovereignty and we recognise the importance not only of the islands but the area in that vicinity.

I hope and pray that the solidarity of the House of Commons behind the Prime Minister will remain, except for a few hon. Members who have already—

Mr. Bob Cryer (Keighley): Some of us are dissidents.

Dr. Glyn: The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Cryer) will have his chance of showing his solidarity with the Government and the nation.

For my part I believe that the House has shown that it is firmly behind my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, with a few exceptions. I hope and pray that this matter will be brought to a swift conclusion.

5.37 pm

Mr. William Hamilton (Fife, Central): Having listened to all three debates on this matter in the course of the last two or three weeks the impression that I have is that the House has a feeling of helplessness in circumstances where no solution that will be satisfactory to us either in the short or the long term is possible. The great danger is that there will be a battle not so much of principle but of survival of one Government or another—the survival of our Prime Minister or the Argentine President. All matters of principle may go out of the window.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Cheap and nasty.

Mr. D. N. Cambell-Savours (Workington): Not very original.

Mr. Hamilton: Let the Prime Minister be under no illusion as to the support that she gets from the Labour Benches. She, in the first debate, sought to make cheap party political capital out of the matter. Now she is rather more smooth about it because she more than anybody understands that her survival depends very much on the outcome of this issue. It is her ineptitude, more than anything else, that has brought us and the country to this impasse.

I wish to say one or two words about the role of the United Nations. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition made a powerful speech, a combination of the idealism for which he is known and realism. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Lyon) made a similar

speech. Unless we understand that there are ideals and measures of realism in this matter we shall never have a solution to the problem.

My right hon. Friend referred to the Organisation of American States and its definition of aggression. He said that we should make the United States Government understand clearly that they could stop this matter overnight. If the United States Government took action in conformity with their own Organisation of American States, they could stop the Argentine Government in their tracks within a week. But they will not do it because they have too many vested interests in Argentina and in South and Central America as a whole. So it must be understood clearly that some of us do not trust the United States Government to deliver the goods, even though the Prime Minister has fallen over backwards ever since she took office to defend every action that the Reagan Administration has taken.

That is the first factor that I want to get on the record. The other one concerns the task force, and here I take issue with my right hon. Friend the Member for Lanark (Dame Judith Hart). Now that it is on the ocean, I do not believe that any useful purpose would be served by, as she said, halting it in its tracks. Halting it where? In the middle of the ocean? Sending it back and dismantling it?

Dame Judith Hart: Essentially.

Mr. Hamilton: My right hon. Friend did not make it clear. She simply said "Halt it." That would be a tremendous fillip to the junta in the Argentine—the very thing to which my right hon. Friend objects. Like me, she objects to the junta. To do what she suggests at this moment would be a great fillip to a regime that we want to bring down at the earliest moment.

We are faced with this dilemma. That is why so many Opposition Members are uncomfortable and uncertain about the outcome. Meanwhile, we owe loyalty to those men who are on the ocean not because they volunteered but because that woman, the Prime Minister, said "You will go whether you like it or not." They have no choice. Meanwhile, we have to give them what support we can.

If that force is used, it fails. I ask hon. Members to imagine the scenario. The guns fire from our ships, the bombs are dropped, the torpedoes are let loose, and we raze those islands to the ground with the result that every one of the 1,800 inhabitants are killed. What happens then? The Prime Minister has not a clue, and nor has anyone else. But anyone who pretends that that is a solution to the problem must be wrong in his mind. That is why my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition is right to insist that, come what may, however long it takes, there must be a peaceful solution.

Mr. Frank Allaun: I agree with my hon. Friend, but if the task force continues into the zone and the Argentine Government do not withdraw their forces from the Falklands, can we rely on this Government not resorting to force and not sinking a ship, leading to blood and tears from both sides?

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with that absolutely, and that is the scene that I was trying to paint. We have had bellicose noises from successive Ministers, including the Secretary of State for Defence, saying that we would be quite prepared to sink ships and to blow everyone to Hell—as if that would solve anything. My right hon.

Friend the Leader of the Opposition is right to say that we must at all costs get a peaceful solution. If it means losing face, it is better to lose face than to lose lives.

That brings me to the United Nations resolution. It instructed the Argentine Government to withdraw their forces, and they have refused. It also demanded of the two parties that they get together to arrive at a peaceful solution. It did not rule out the use of force. It did not rule out the use of economic sanctions. We should not hesitate to say to the Argentine Government that we are prepared if need be to use economic sanctions and to engage in peaceful negotiations over an extended period of time.

The final part of my remarks concerns the 1,800 islanders. My hon. Friend the Member for York approached this matter realistically. A great deal of romantic nonsense has been talked about the rights of 1,800 people to determine how we should use our Armed Forces, no matter what the expenditure, if they say that they want our protection. It will cost us half our Budget, but if they want that protection, we shall give it to them. What nonsense! We should spell out to them that the restoration of the status quo is impossible. They cannot have back what has been taken from them. We must rely on the United Nations to protect them as best they can, but we must make them understand, if they do not understand it already, that our days of Empire and our days in the role of international policeman are long since over—and thank goodness for that.

The Prime Minister must understand that the apparent unanimity of the House now is more apparent than real. She will get her deserts in due course.

5.46 pm

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant and Waterloo): I cannot help a certain sense of déjà vu on this occasion. Some time ago I had the opportunity to read in considerable detail a debate which took place in the House in 1867. Two British subjects, a British consul general and one other, were held by the Emperor Theodore in Abyssinia. We sent two divisions, one from India and one from this country, to Abyssinia to recover those two individuals.

The interesting feature is that during that debate, although our power comparatively and relatively was totally different from what it may be comparatively and absolutely today, exactly the same arguments were used.

I give some of the answers made then, because they are extremely relevant to some of the arguments used today, especially by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Lyon). It was said, for example, that if we sent two divisions into Abyssinia, because it was difficult, we would be inviting a similar nemesis to that which overtook the British Army in Afghanistan some 12 years earlier when, I remind the House, we failed to do anything about the murder of two British colonels in that country.

The arguments were advanced effectively on that occasion by Sir Henry Rawlinson. On the cost of the operation, he said:

"I cannot subscribe to the doctrine, now so prevalent, of weighing the honour of England against gold and silver." Speaking of the scale of the disaster, he said:

"the same Nemesis may again overtake us now if we exhibit to the East such a miserable example of moral cowardice and military weakness as to allow our envoys to perish in an Abyssinian dungeon and yet make no sign, show even no desire, to wipe such a stain from the escutcheon of England."

As for the difficulty, the answer was given on a previous occasion by General Nott—I am not aware that

he was any relation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. What he said was equally relevant. He was taxed with the difficulties of the Kandahar campaign, and he said:

"It is our first and only duty to overcome difficulties when the national honour and our military reputation are so nearly concerned."

That gives the answers to some of the arguments that we hear today. Although the dislike of war and of bloodshed is widely shared on both sides of the House because we are fully aware of the consequences of that kind of action, equally we are fully aware of the consequences of inaction.

The Falkland Islands situation has raised two major issues. The first is the question of intelligence, which I believe to be quite fundamental, both to any past failure there may have been and to any future success which we may have and deserve. The second is the influence on policy and procedure which we should be prepared to concede to circumstances. I am sure that I do not have to remind the House of the advice given a very long time ago by Aristotle, who reminded us that the true legislator ought to be acquainted not only with what is best but with what is best relative to circumstances—advice which applies even more to questions of foreign policy than to domestic policy.

First, then, intelligence. The history of major wars, their anticipation and their conduct, is of course littered with intelligence failures. We have only to think of the following brief list: the invasion of the Low Countries and France in 1940, the sinking of "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse"—already mentioned in the context of air power—Pearl Harbour, the escape of the "Scharnhorst" and the "Gneisenau" up the Channel. The whole problem of intelligence, obtaining it, distributing it, and judging it is most memorably documented in R. V. Jones' book "Most Secret War", in which he describes the brilliant performance of a small group whose contribution to victory in 1945 is still largely unrecognised, at least by the establishment, which did so much to reach different and disastrous conclusions. The basic problem has not changed one iota.

Mr. Dalyell rose—

Mr. Lloyd: Certainly I give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the fourth time that the hon. Member for West Lothian (Mr. Dalyell) has interrupted. It only stops someone else from being able to speak.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Member for Havant and Waterloo (Mr. Lloyd) recollect that the original "Scharnhorst" and "Gneisenau" were sunk in the battle of the Falkland Islands and that in those seas there were very few survivors? The point one makes is that if there is a naval battle there now it will be very difficult to effect rescue. While we are on Greek history, was any fleet sent out with quite such purposes since Agamemnon set out to rescue Helen of Troy?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not necessarily dispute the hon. Gentleman's qualms—he is entitled to them—but I do not think that they are relevant to the point about intelligence that I am about to make.

[Mr. Lloyd]

The electronic devices to which R. V. Jones referred have aggravated the complexity, and it is nowhere better summarised than in Churchill's commentary on Czar Nicholas II:

"At the summit, where all problems are reduced to yea or nay, where events transcend the faculties of men and where all is inscrutable, he had to give the answers."

So has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Let those who dare to criticise or point the finger of scorn first demonstrate a superior ability in this field. None can do so. R. V. Jones has described the difficulties, which none can escape, not even my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He says:

"The commander's information system . . . can easily bring about the hierarchical attenuation of front-line experience . . . Commanders must delve to lower levels and exercise something akin to artistry in selecting key details."

So must Ministers.

The Foreign Office, despite what my noble Friend Lord Home has written, has clearly not reached its usual standards of artistic performance, but it is method and understanding and not supermen that we require. There are no supermen, but what we do need, and need now, are men who are aware of the immense significance in today's context of military affairs, of electronic technology and its effects on the character of intelligence and the course of events. [Laughter.] Those who laugh may have occasion to laugh on the other side. I give examples.

The United States "big bird" satellites can be directed to take daily scans of any area of interest and televise the images to the ground. The Russians have similar devices. We may be certain that our fleet will be minutely observed by both. Are we certain that this information is secure? In this context it is well known that the launch of a Russian satellite two days before the Yom Kippur war gave the first direct signal of the impending Egyptian attack. We have the capability of detecting such launches. Did we do so on this occasion, what significance did we attach to them, and have others been launched since the invasion? The House would like to know.

Secondly, what is known as the "Sosus" system can detect submarine movement at 3,000 miles range with the precision which enabled the United States navy to locate in 1968 a Soviet C-class submarine which had sunk in the Pacific. Presumably the Soviets have at least by now that capability. Can we be sure that the intelligence about our submarines is not reaching the Argentine command? Since the provision of such intelligence could make a fundamental difference to the success of the whole operation, what should our attitude be if we discover that it is being disseminated?

I turn now to what I might describe as the sophistication superiority argument. The influence of morale is doubtless still 10 times that of material in any invasion. Again, we have been warned that the subtle enemy will avoid encounters when his technical inferiority will impose unacceptable risks, as it will to the Argentines. R. V. Jones says:

"A subtle enemy will try to fight the war in whatever terms of sophistication or non-sophistication will suit him best."

It has never been better put than by Marius in his reply to Pompidaeus Silo, who tried to bring the former out of the hills to fight in the approaches to Rome. Silo said to Marius:

"If you are a great General, come down and fight."

to which Marius replied:

"If you are a great General, make me do so against my will." That will surely be the Argentine response on this occasion—to keep our fleet at bay and avoid battle. They will rely on four admirals—Admiral Attrition, Admiral Expense, Admiral Indifference and Admiral Boredom. But if they are brought to battle, as they might well be by skilful commanders, this will be the first battle whose outcome will be decided by computer software written probably over two years ago.

I turn now to the policy options. What should we do, and what can we do? What, indeed, are the circumstances that complicate the otherwise simple issues of sovereignty? As I see it, there are only four possible outcomes. First, the engagement will be limited, successful and brief—that is obviously the hope of the House. Secondly, the engagement will be limited, inconclusive and long-drawn-out. Thirdly, the engagement, whether successful or not, in the first instance will involve other South American powers. Finally, other major powers will be involved.

Clearly, if diplomatic pressure fails, our primary objective must be to achieve the first of those outcomes. Any of the remainder will not only be costly, dangerous and possibly disastrous; they would also indicate a calamitous failure on the part of the civilised world to recognise that we had not sent an expeditionary force to reimpose British sovereignty, which is a limited if legitimate objective, but to uphold and reassert the rule of law. I believe that to be common ground.

The Argentine has not just offended British pride and seized what it may regard as disputed territory. It has undermined everything that the allied powers fought to establish and protect in both world wars—the rule of law and international order.

The Argentines have also undermined and challenged the whole philosophy underlying the attempts to impose that rule of law in the League of Nations and the United Nations. That is why it is so serious; that is why the scope for mediation is so limited; that is why, as the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) pointed out in a most effective speech, countries which uphold the rule of law would all be threatened by any failure of our nerve or resolve, or of naval expedition.

First and foremost, therefore, we must not weaken our resolve. It was once said that the Emperor Andronicus had a heart to resolve, a head to contrive and a hand to execute. We need all three, but it is the resolution of the Prime Minister and of those around her that is critical. The contrivance and execution are well within our grasp and capability, and always have been.

Secondly, we must not modify our objective to the point at which it becomes unrecognisable.

Thirdly, as always, we must leave tactics and operational decisions to those on the spot.

Fourthly, we must do all that we can to bring home to the Argentine people, with the minimum of damage to their economy and livelihood but the maximum damage to their ill-advised Government, that as part of the West they have as much to lose and nothing to gain from salvaging the decrepit pride of decadent oligarchy.

Fifthly, we must make it clear to all that we are defending a general interest—the rule of law, the charter of the United Nations and civilised procedure in the relationship between States in dispute. If every dispute about a national boundary or sovereignty were to justify

unilateral aggression, the millions who died to defend freedom in both World Wars, in Korea and in Vietnam, will have died in vain. The Argentine nation did not participate in any of those conflicts, although many of the British residents may have done so. The Argentines should be asked to choose which side they are on—we do not know—and help to distinguish between the nationalist fervour and the long-term interests of their country.

Therefore, my support for the Prime Minister, which is unequivocal, does not rest on the narrow interest of the nation State, although I believe, as the Security Council has decided, that ours is entirely legitimate in this context. It rests rather on the threat to international order in a world that has paid a staggering price in life and wealth to establish the present precarious and fragile structure of international relations.

There are two answers to the question whether that order is gravely threatened. The first might be described as the sceptical negative. All major armed conflicts diminish international order, destroy life and wealth, increase anarchy and threaten or cause wider conflagrations. That view begs the question whether any particular conflict is ever justifiable. It is the *raison d'être* of the United Nations and the principal concern of the Security Council. Yet the founders of that organisation recognised that the greatest threat to international order is the unilateral and unprovoked resort to force to secure the objectives of the nation State. That is why its charter recognises the right of national self-defence and does not unduly fetter that right.

There is then the positive affirmative, which follows directly from the previous qualification. Nothing imposes a greater threat to international peace and stability than the actions of nation States, alliances or even terrorist groups, based on the assumption that a long-standing national grievance or expectation legitimises aggression.

Those are the major criteria. From them, all the rest flow, but they are not without significance. Time does not permit me to go into all the detail. I merely say this. It is conceivable that this operation may run into difficulties, but that is no reason why this House should in any sense diminish or restrict its support for the Prime Minister and the Government. It is my earnest wish and hope that the operation will succeed. It deserves to succeed, it has right on its side, and we should support it wholeheartedly.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that it is hoped to begin the winding-up speeches at 6.50 pm. I hope that all hon. Members who are called will bear that in mind.

6.2 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarvon): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Havant and Waterloo (Mr. Lloyd) back to 1867, except to say that it was my impression that gunboat diplomacy was a matter for that age, not this, and I am appalled at some of the recent jingoism, particularly in the media.

I approach the debate with an awareness of the seriousness of the position and I shall not go into matters that are not directly relevant. The speeches of a number of Opposition Members will have made it clear that there is not total unanimity on this matter and that there is an understandable worry. There is unanimity in condemnation of the Argentine junta and the way in which it has attacked and occupied the Falkland Islands, but the view

falls short of unanimity, outside the House in the countries of these islands, on the question of where our present course will take us. If it leads us into an escalation towards a general war, many people ask at what point we should withdraw from that course. The possibility of Russian submarines around the coast now brings home the point clearly.

I see this matter from a standpoint slightly different from that of many hon. Members in that there have been close links between Wales and the Argentine over the years. There are now 20,000 people of Welsh descent living in the Argentine. I had the opportunity to go there and meet many of them, and I know from discussions 15 or 20 years ago that even among that community, let alone among the community of Spanish descent, there is a strong feeling of the affinity between the Falkland Islands and the Argentine. Whether or not we in this House or in these islands like that, that is the reality. The strength of that feeling can be judged from the number of people who turned out for the demonstrations in Buenos Aires and the way in which a tin-pot dictator who was a month ago on the way to oblivion appears to have been rescued by the sad sortie that he has undertaken. That must be borne in mind.

I have discussed the position with officers of the Welsh Argentine Society, of which I am a member. It is concerned and worried at the possibility of a war in which Welsh people in the forces now going to the Falklands could be confronting their cousins who have been conscripted into the Argentine army.

I have a constituent who was a fourth generation farmer in the Falkland Islands. He tried for 10 years to return to Wales from the Falkland Islands. Up to last year, when I took him to the Foreign Office and met the then Minister of State, he had been unable to sell his farm, not because there were no buyers—there were buyers—but they were from the Argentine. He was not allowed by Government policy to sell his farm to those buyers from the Argentine. The point that was made by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) is one of which I am aware also from my constituent. There is a significant element among the population of the Falkland Islands that may not be looking to their future in the Falkland Islands.

We must find a diplomatic answer to the problem for three reasons—

Mr. Geraint Morgan (Denbigh): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the unhappy history of the Welsh colony in the Argentine to which he has referred, provides the best possible justification for the Government's policy of protecting the Falkland Islands? Does he not recall that the colonists went there intending to set up a Welsh colony under its own government, preserving its own language? It was prevented from doing so by an Argentine dictator named De Rosas, a name, I notice, which figures among the names of the junta today. They were prevented from running their own government and even from speaking their own language as the official language in that colony.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a very long intervention.

Mr. Wigley: I take the point that the hon. Gentleman is making.

Of course, there have been difficult times in the Argentine. The Welsh people living there, like other people from the countries of Britain living in the Argentine, have suffered under successive regimes. There

(Mr. Wigley)

have been a number of unhappy dictatorships. I make absolutely clear our condemnation of the type of government now in the Argentine. I wish to see a more democratic government evolved there.

We must find a diplomatic answer to the problem for three reasons. The first is the well-being of the islanders themselves. They are the people in the front line. Those 1,800 people may well suffer most if it comes to fighting. We must also bear in mind the position of British citizens in the Argentine. A number of the Welsh colony there still have dual citizenship.

Second, we must ensure that there is stability in the long term. If we do not have a diplomatic answer, even if we get our way by force in the short term, there will be instability in the future. That will give us major headaches in the years to come.

Third, we must set an example to other countries. Problems like this can be resolved without resort to the force of arms. It would be a terrible indictment of the failure of diplomacy if we have to resort to other methods.

The Falkland Islands are a small community 7,000 to 8,000 miles away. They are to a large extent dependent on South America for food, education and health services. That is a day-to-day reality for those 1,800 people when they look beyond the present occupation. It is a small population which could not possibly be self-sufficient in all aspects of life in the modern world. There are many of that community who would like to leave the island if it were possible to do so.

In her opening speech the Prime Minister underlined that it is the wishes of the 1,800 people on the Falkland Islands which are paramount. I think her words were: "This aspect is paramount in all considerations." Therefore, I hope that in any negotiated settlement the Falkland Islanders will be given an opportunity, once the troops have been withdrawn—we appreciate that the troops must be withdrawn before there can be a meaningful settlement—to make their voice heard on their long term future. The hon. Member for Newbury was right. I have also had feedback from my constituents that there may be people, particularly after the recent experiences, who will be looking for solutions other than the previous relationships.

At the end of the debate, perhaps the Government will give an assurance that if the majority of those 1,800 people want a solution that involves a different formula for sharing sovereignty, or for lease-back and so on, the Government will accept that their voice is paramount. I hope that the Government will give a commitment that they will not resort to the argument that territory is more important than the islands' inhabitants. The Government have made it clear that they will respect the Falkland Islanders' wishes. Now is the time to find a way of determining their wishes.

If there is to be a negotiated settlement and the Argentines withdraw their fleet, there may be some dispute about whose flag is to fly on the islands. However, if that is the only question remaining in the short term, the United Nations' flag could fly for a limited period until the other problems have been sorted out. Surely it is not worth risking a war that could escalate by arguing about national flags. Although people want the Argentines out of the

Falkland Islands, they do not want bloodshed if it can be avoided. They certainly do not want the situation to escalate into war.

The Government may be able to take other steps to put pressure on the Argentine regime. One possibility has not been mentioned today, although it may have been mentioned previously. I refer to the fact that World Cup football is held very dear in the Argentine. If the countries taking part in the World Cup applied some pressure against the Argentines taking part in it, the message would go home loud and clear. Mandatory sanctions by the United Nations have already been mentioned. Several other courses could be pursued and there is no earthly justification for allowing the situation to develop into a war that could escalate into a nuclear confrontation. It has been said that we should use all arms possible. However, we must make it clear that we will stop short of such a war, because it would not carry the support of the peoples of these islands.

While there is still time I urge the Government to start seeking a de-escalation of the situation and to find a peaceful solution.

6.12 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I add my warm support to that already given to the Prime Minister and the Government for their conduct of affairs since Argentina's wanton act of aggression against the Falkland Islands. The Government have taken every conceivable step calmly and with great efficiency. That view has been reflected by many of my constituents and by others who have spoken to me.

I wish to put on record time and again the exceptional performance given by the Royal Navy and the Ministry of Defence in putting the task force to sea in four days. It reflects tremendous credit on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and on everyone who worked so hard that weekend. When the fleet left it had great support from the crowds at Portsmouth and the support of the vast majority of the country. It is right that our Service men should feel that at the same time they have the united support of the House in their efforts on behalf of the nation.

Of course, there are a few predictable dissenters. We heard them both today and last week. They have every right to protest, but they are probably gaining more publicity than they are worth. I hope that their views will not deflect the United Nations or our mediators who are working on our behalf. Never, at any time since the last war, has there been a more important period during which the nation should stand together. I welcome the views expressed by the leaders of the Opposition parties. The situation may last for quite a long time—months or more—and we must not falter. This is no time for the faint-hearted. We have heard some of their voices during our recent debates. Of course, we shall have an inquiry later, but until then let us forget our differences and be united.

Since our previous debate—of which I heard every word—the "Canberra" and other ships have sailed to the South Atlantic. More of our Service men have sailed on those ships. Perhaps even now they have reached the staging post of Ascension Island on their way to the Falkland Islands. They, too, must have our full support in the task ahead. It is right to say that the House has every confidence that our Service men will play their full part, because it is the finest trained volunteer force in the world.

We all welcome the maximum diplomatic activity towards finding a peaceful solution and our thanks are due to the United States of America for its efforts during the past week. Of course we wish to save lives through diplomacy and it will be far less expensive and perhaps more enduring if we can win through diplomacy. But Argentina has committed an act of war that has been condemned by the Security Council of the United Nations. Argentina has been required to withdraw, but it has taken no notice of that order from the Security Council. I doubt whether there is any way in which the Argentine Government's face can be saved through a compromise that would be acceptable to Britain.

The first condition—my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has rightly brought it home to the nation and time again—is that the Argentine invader must leave the Falkland Islands forthwith, flags and all. There must be no "ifs" and no "buts" and no quibbling. The Argentines must leave the islands before we can begin to negotiate. We must not allow, as Opposition Members have mentioned from time to time, endless procrastination in the form of peace conferences or diplomatic negotiations to deflect us from the first priority of the Falkland Islands being returned to our administration.

While that is going on, we know that even now fortifications are being strengthened in our islands and against our interests. We must confer only when the duress of occupation is removed. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced a 200-mile maritime enforcement zone around the Falkland Islands. I wonder whether it is feasible to announce an air space zone, because with a highly vulnerable airstrip near to the sea, with aircraft taking off and landing low over the sea, the Argentine air force might as well know that it is as vulnerable as the Argentine ships if it flies troops and supplies to the Falkland Islands.

The message that we all wish to send is that the Government have the full support of the vast majority of the House in their determination to succeed. The sovereignty of the Falkland Islands is ours. We insist that it returns to our administration as soon as possible. Then we shall consider the future in the light of the wishes of the islanders, many of whom are of good Scottish descent.

However, Britain must react to the support that we have received from the Commonwealth and the EEC. The economic measures will be valuable but long-term. We must show that the spread of dictatorship or Communism by force must be stopped in the interests of freedom and democracy. The task force will be concentrating the minds of the Argentines. As soon as they realise that we are not bluffing, the better. So good luck to our force. Let us remain a united House until victory is ours.

6.20 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline): I shall not take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) because I just do not agree with some of them. I do not think that the House is united behind the Government in their desire and outlook. The Government must spell out much more clearly to the nation their essential aims. Initially the Government should take on board the need to produce a White Paper that sets out the background to the issue and shows clearly the nature of our aims. I understand the difficulties in doing that immediately but I hope that the Government will appreciate the need for such a document.

In representing Dunfermline and Rosyth I represent a constituency that is heavily involved in the Navy. I pay tribute to the speed and effectiveness with which the task force has been prepared. I say, as a former merchant navy officer, that we should remember those in the merchant navy—those in the "Canberra" and others—who responded immediately. We should not seek on the Floor of the House to undermine the resolve of those who are under the Government's direction.

Let us try to be clear about our aims and how effective we might be in pursuing them. It is said that the United Kingdom must maintain sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the dependencies, no matter what. However, the Argentine troops are there and it is not right for us to be so inflexible that we refuse to negotiate as long as those troops remain on the islands. They are there and, therefore, there must be some flexibility.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Why?

Mr. Douglas: Because we live in the real world. The task force will be 8,000 miles from its base.

Mr. Winterton: It will be 7,500 miles away.

Mr. Douglas: Very well. That is the distance from the United Kingdom to the Falklands alone. Another 500 or 1,000 miles are involved if we include the dependencies. I do not want to quibble about that. Whatever the exact distance, we shall be involved in an enormously costly exercise. The British people might not have known that on 1 or 2 April, but they are beginning to realise that now. More important is the fact that the Argentines know that. In the next few weeks or months we might defeat them, but in the longer run it will be impossible to maintain a force of the magnitude of the task force that will have consequences for the Argentine military regime. That is the reality. I accept that it is not palatable. Being a wee fellow, I never like giving way to a bully, but we have to face facts.

What is the position of the United States and the Organisation of American States? The United States cannot be even-handed. It is a wrong posture for the American President to be parading in his bathing suit on holiday when we are facing a potential conflict. At a suitable time I hope that the Prime Minister will have in mind the need to ask the President to intervene.

We are not privy to all the things that are happening behind the scenes involving Mr. Haig. He has been exposed to great personal strain and has made a great sacrifice. I am sure that we are all grateful to him for that. At a suitable time—it cannot be far off because the task force is rightly proceeding in order to strengthen our diplomatic position—the American President, with the prestige of his office, should intervene, perhaps through the Organisation of American States or through the organisation of the United Nations.

I do not want to be disrespectful to the Prime Minister at this juncture, but it would be wrong for the nation to become involved in a war of "Maggie's ego". It will be wrong if we appear to be inflexible towards negotiations. Like my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Lyon) I have great respect for the principle of self-determination. However, the people of the Falklands cannot hold a veto over us in terms of what they want.

That is not a long-term viable position in which we should be engaged, or one that should be maintained until

[Mr. Douglas]

Kingdom come. That should be made clear. I support the Navy and I support the task force, but above all I plead that a clear indication of our longer term aims should be given to the people of this country. In the mid-term there must be extreme flexibility in negotiations and a resolve to try to solve this crisis by peaceful means through the medium of the United Nations.

6.20 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Flint, West): I have set myself a hard and disagreeable task that has been made harder and more disagreeable by the wise speeches with which the debate was opened, particularly by the very balanced and judicious speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I shall say two things that will be distasteful to both sides of the House. The first is that I believe that the clamour that the House set up on 3 April for the resignation of Lord Carrington marked one of the lowest points in its history. Lord Carrington's offence was to believe in the absolute necessity to reach some kind of agreement with the Argentines over the Falklands, since to defend them against a hostile neighbour in perpetuity would be prohibitively costly. Events will prove him right.

The House did itself no honour by echoing the hysterical demands in the press that national humiliation should be purged by offering a scapegoat. My right hon. Friend the present Foreign Secretary is a man of outstanding ability and total integrity, but with Lord Carrington we have lost the Minister who could best have turned to our advantage the initial prejudice of world opinion in our favour—a prejudice that his diplomatic skill had done so much to create. Clearly, the strongest card in our hand is the whole-hearted support of the EEC. I hope that hon. Members on both sides will note that.

The second and still more distasteful thing I must do is question some part of the consensus in this House, excluding only far Left and the hon. Members for West Lothian (Mr. Dalyell) and for South Ayrshire (Mr. Foulkes), about what to do next.

The Government have, rightly, the unanimous support of the House for the two propositions that the Argentines must not be allowed to enjoy undisturbed the fruits of their wanton and unprovoked aggression, and that the people of the Falkland Islands must recover their right of self-determination. They have the overwhelming support of this House for the proposition that it is both right and expedient to dispatch the task force to demonstrate the firmness of our resolve and to use that task force, if need be, to enforce a blockade. I am part of that consensus, although not without misgivings caused by the gap that is now left in our defences against our real enemy—the Soviet Union.

There is also overwhelming support on both sides of the House for the proposition that we should seek a peaceful solution to the crisis, but that if diplomacy fails we must be ready to use force to restore British sovereignty or, at any rate, British administration to the islands. I have to tell my right hon. Friends with great sadness, having given many hours of agonising thought to the matter, that I for one on this side—and, perhaps, only for one—am not part of that consensus.

Mr. Frank Allaun: Well said.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I do not believe that it would be right, I do not believe that it would in the end help us to achieve our objectives, to use force in such a way as to kill people, Service men or civilians, just to ensure that the Union Jack—the Union Jack alone—flies over what would be left of public buildings in the Falklands.

If there is fighting, there will be casualties—British casualties and, indeed, Welsh casualties—on both sides. Some casualties may be unavoidable from the very presence of the task force in those waters. Of course, if the Argentines attack, we must defend ourselves, and that risk is a real one—[HON. MEMBERS: "They have attacked".]—

Mr. Eric Ogden (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Anthony Meyer: No.

Mr. Ogden: But they have attacked the islands.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I would rather not give way. This is in the nature of a personal statement, and I do not want to be drawn into saying anything more than my carefully chosen words. Of course, if the Argentines attack we must defend ourselves. That risk is real if we establish a blockade.

I accept that risk. What I cannot accept is that the task force should at any time be given instructions to seek out and destroy Argentine vessels or installations or to attempt an opposed landing in circumstances where substantial casualties are to be expected.

If the Government really intend—as reports in *The Times* today suggest, and contrary to the impression given by the Prime Minister in her opening speech—to carry matters as far as that, I have no doubt that they will have the overwhelming support of this House, certainly of Conservative Members and of the majority of Opposition Members. I must tell them that at that stage they will no longer have mine.

6.31 pm

Mr. Douglas Jay (Battersea, North): Despite the Government's blunders that led up to this crisis, today almost for the first time I found myself in almost total agreement with both Front Bench speeches.

Now, as we near the end of the debate, let us be clear about the real issues that are at stake. It is not the Union Jack or national prestige that are primarily at stake, but two crucial principles. The first is the principle of self-determination. I agree with the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) that that is not the only principle, but it is one. At any rate, the inhabitants of the Falkland Islands have never freely expressed a wish to be governed either wholly or partly by the Argentines, least of all by the present military clique that rules there.

Of course, if it is argued that what matters is not the wishes of these people now, but who seized what territory one or two centuries ago, the Argentine dictators must be reminded that on that argument the Spaniards or, indeed, the Portuguese have very little right to be in South America at all. They seized that country by force from the American Indians. However, that line of argument is absurd.

The second fundamental principle—this is where I part company with my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Lyon)—is that it is vital to show that unprovoked armed aggression does not pay, if the post-war system of international law and order is to survive.

This is not just an issue of 1,800 people or so many thousand square miles of territory. In the 1930s, which we need not rehearse now but should not forget, one successful aggression led to another and in the end to the catastrophe. If we now let this would-be Mussolini prove that aggression does pay, we shall again be on that fatal slide.

If any positive gain came out of all the appalling sacrifices of the second world war it was the establishment of the United Nations system, and a collective promise by all members to resist aggression at once. The nearest post-war parallel to the present attack was the invasion of South Korea by North Korea in 1950. It is worth remembering that on that occasion the United Nations called on all members to resist aggression, and that the British Government sent British forces immediately to the assistance of the American forces there engaged. I see no less an obligation on everyone to resist this aggression as a matter of principle.

The case for resistance now is made all the more overwhelming by the right of self-defence that is written into the United Nations charter, by the almost unanimous United Nations resolution and by the support given to Britain by both Commonwealth and European countries. Of course, a diplomatic solution must be sought eventually, and, of course, loss of human life must be avoided if that can be done. But that solution must be one which is consistent with the paramount aim of showing that armed aggression does not succeed.

Therefore, the Government are right in my view to refuse negotiations on the future of the Falkland Islands until the Argentine forces have been withdrawn. There will be plenty of time later to discuss all sorts of possible eventual solutions. We do not do much good, I believe, by discussing them at this moment.

Ministers are also right to refuse any conditions about Argentine administration, Argentine flags or power-sharing during the interim period. If the economic and naval blockade can succeed without any loss of life, that is plainly by far the best alternative. But if there is loss of life, let there be no doubt that the responsibility lies squarely and wholly on the Argentine regime, which first took armed action. Let us also remember that that regime might not long survive a military reverse, and that its paper promises are not worth a very great deal.

If international law is to be vindicated and a civilised and secure future assured for the Falkland Islanders, we must, together with other UN members, prove indisputably that this armed assault does not pay the aggressors.

6.38 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Although we have been tricked and humiliated we have not yet been beaten. The two main reasons for our being tricked and humiliated and that stimulated the Argentine attack were, first, that the Argentine military junta was insecure internally and in need of an external successful adventure and secondly, externally, that the junta was encouraged by Britain's weakness—or apparent weakness. By appearing to be disinterested in the Falkland Islands, weak and unprepared to act or to back up diplomacy with force, we in Britain actually encouraged this aggression. The Falkland Islands must have seemed to the Argentine junta to be an

extremely tempting target. That is why I strongly support and welcome the speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I also welcomed the opening speech of the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale (Mr. Foot), the Leader of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition. First, he is absolutely right. The United Nations charter itself is now under threat. Secondly, he showed calm, wisdom and firmness. Above all, he stressed unity. This is the vital fact. At long last, the world can see that we are actually one nation, that we mean business when attacked and that the Government are strongly supported both in the House and throughout the country. I thank the right hon. Gentleman, but I hope fervently that he will maintain his support if and when any shooting starts.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister showed clearly in her speech that our case is just and that we are defending our own territory and our own people who have been subject to blatant military aggression. Secondly, my right hon. Friend showed that our case is right under article 51 of the United Nations charter. Thirdly, she showed that our case is strongly supported. Here, I believe, Ministers and officials in the Foreign Office have been extremely successful. We have resolution 502 of the United Nations Security Council, the strong support of the EEC, of the Commonwealth countries and of the mass of free world opinion. Most importantly, we have strong support here at home.

The future freedom of all nations is affected by this aggression. The reception of the Prime Minister's speech today shows that she has undoubted support in the House. Her clear statement of the aims, the fact that our sovereignty is not affected by the invasion and the fact that we have a clear resolution to aim for a diplomatic and peaceful settlement but to use force if necessary, is good. It shows that our clear duty as hon. Members is to ensure that the spirit of resolution outlined by the Prime Minister is impressed upon the military dictatorship in Argentina, that it is made entirely clear, and that there is no further room for misunderstanding. I feel that speeches such as those of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) have the unfortunate effect of suggesting that this country does not mean business.

I echo the support of the Armed Forces. The assembly of a task force of 36 ships in four days, when one realises that we had 27 ships of the line at the battle of Trafalgar, required an enormous effort of the Services and the Ministry of Defence. It has so far been a great success.

I wish to refer to the position of the United States and also that of Russia.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) when he says that the United States can surely not remain neutral against aggression for much longer. I agree with those who say that we owe President Reagan a great deal of thanks for his efforts to avert the aggression before it even took place and secondly for his great efforts through Secretary of State Haig in mediating following the aggression. But there must be a limit to the thanks that the Argentines are to gain for their support of the United States in El Salvador.

The Americans appear to be convinced that, if the junta fails, Communism will sweep Argentina. It is the job of our Foreign Office to impress upon the United States that many juntas in South America, including Argentina, have failed that Communism is not immediately under the floor and that fear of Communism is not sufficient grounds for

[Mr. John Browne]

the United States not to throw its weight behind us. President Reagan would do well to remember the strong and unequivocal support that this Government, and especially the Prime Minister, have given him and his country on matters such as Afghanistan, the Iranian hostages and even interest rates.

I believe that the overall aims of Russia are that it intends to fish in troubled waters and to continue to subvert central and south America. Furthermore, Russia sees in Argentina a massive alternative source of grain supplies of great value to it, and it also sees a chance of increasing subversion. The Russians want to spy on the Royal Navy—first, to give aid to the Argentines in the location of our ships and submarines; secondly, to observe how a modern navy such as ours controls and operates under today's war conditions and, if any modern weapons are used, to see how they are used and to what effect.

I wonder whether Russia has already had a hand in the operations to date. When I look at Argentina and consider the sophistication of the invasion, my suspicions are aroused. First, there was the very successful transfer of an exercise into an operation; secondly, there was an invasion during a period of radio silence when the Falkland Islands Government were out of contact with the United Kingdom; thirdly, there was the willingness of the Argentines, in that very successful invasion, to accept casualties themselves while not inflicting a single casualty on a British civilian or soldier. There was, indeed, great expertise and great sophistication. There was also the immediate repatriation of prisoners out of the war zone and back to the United Kingdom.

Most important of all, we have a very vivid illustration of the dangerous exposure of the southern flank of NATO. Amazingly, the official southern flank of NATO is drawn on the map along one of the tropics, whereas the actual southern flank of NATO surely lies in the South Atlantic approaches.

I believe that it is in the interests of NATO security that we cover the sea routes from the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean into the South Atlantic, and that NATO could well re-think its naval strategy. There may be a case for having naval outposts in Ascension Island, Simonstown and the Falkland Islands.

In regard to the wish for the long-term security of the Falkland Islands and in the interests of NATO, I suggest that we should aim for the sovereignty of the United Kingdom over the islands, because I believe that no one will accept any longer the sovereignty of the Argentines. They have thrown away what trust they had.

I think that it is necessary to maintain, in the long term, United Kingdom sovereignty, but that we should accept joint United Kingdom-Argentine administration. We should also establish a NATO naval outpost in the islands. That would have the effect of assuring the long-term security of the Falkland Islands. It would also influence the southern area of the South Atlantic, while at the same time providing a source of earnings to the Falkland Islanders.

I repeat that we have been tricked and humiliated, but we have not been beaten. We must win and I believe that we can win if we remain determined and united. It is the clear duty of all of us in this House to see that we win. We must leave no room for doubt in the mind of anybody—least of all the Argentine junta—that we mean business.

6.48 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I think that the House will agree that it has been a necessary and a useful debate. Although we have had little new information—and I do not blame the Prime Minister for being unable to give us more at this delicate moment—it has enabled us to establish a broad consensus rather more firmly and precisely than in the earlier debate on the major issues at stake in the Falklands crisis.

There have been on each side of the House some notable exceptions to the consensus, and I applaud the courage of those such as the hon. Member for Flint, West (Sir A. Meyer) and my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Lyon) who put unpopular views but with great strength and knowledge of some of the issues.

Overwhelmingly we agree that we are dealing here with an act of aggression. It was recognised as such by the Security Council. It has been seen as an offence against the United Nations charter. After listening to the arguments again today, I find it more difficult than ever to understand the odd line of reasoning used by the American ambassador to the United Nations, Mrs. Kirkpatrick, that a Government who use forces to pursue a territorial claim that they believe to be justified on historical grounds are not committing aggression.

Let us face it, there are very few frontiers that are not disputed by one country or another. Even in our country we have a dispute about where the line should go between the Republic of Eire and Northern Ireland. There are disputes between France and Spain on their common frontier, between France and Germany and in the Middle East, Africa, the Far East and Latin America. There is scarcely a single frontier whose rectitude is not disputed by one party or another. If Mrs. Kirkpatrick's line were to be accepted, we should no doubt soon see her justifying an attack by Mexico on Texas, California or New Mexico.

However, if we take this view it has some implications, upon which I hope the House will reflect on another occasion, on the attitudes that we should follow where territorial disputes have been successfully pursued by force in recent times, and, notably, in the case of the island of Cyprus. We cannot take one line on one part of the world and another on another simply because it happens to be inconvenient to our personal interests or attitudes.

We are also agreed on what the rest of the United Nations Security Council resolution said, when it demanded an Argentine withdrawal and a diplomatic solution to the dispute. We are mostly agreed that we shall not get either the withdrawal or the solution unless the British Government are able to provide the strength against which to negotiate. Therefore we have supported the dispatch of the naval task force. I support today the recent decision by the Prime Minister to increase the air power available to the task force, and an early decision to provide it with something that was peculiarly lacking in early descriptions of the force—a capability to sweep mines in deep waters.

I should also like to congratulate the Government, for once, on declaring the maritime exclusion zone and doing so in time to ensure that we had at least one round up the spout before Secretary Haig arrived to explore the scope for negotiation. It was rather nifty footwork for the Prime Minister to take this decision between the moment when the Foreign Secretary sat down in the debate last Wednesday and the moment when the Defence Secretary

stood up. There is no doubt that that decision helped to increase the enthusiasm of all concerned to explore the possibilities of a solution.

I should like to put one question to the Foreign Secretary. The Government have been wise to plan on doubling the size of the Harrier force that is to accompany the naval task force and to provide it with the deep water minesweepers. I imagine that the conversion of the ship to carry Harriers will take some time and there will be more time for the ship equipped with Harriers to sail to the South Atlantic. The minesweepers—I gather that they are deep sea trawlers that are to be converted—travel at about ten knots so it will take some time for them to arrive.

Therefore, the force will not be fully equipped as the Government have decided that it should be until some time after the date when it was originally envisaged that the task force would be on the spot in the South Atlantic—the end of next week. This gives us more time for negotiation before the question of a major military action can arise. We must spend that time in very intensive negotiations.

Therefore, I should like to explore the state of the negotiations, recognising that it is not possible, I readily allow, for the Government to comment in too much detail on some of the ideas that I put forward. But it is right to put them forward in the House, and it is the duty of an Opposition spokesman to do so.

It seems to me that if we are to believe what has appeared in the newspapers over the last few days, the shape of a diplomatic settlement falls into two phases. The first phase is that in which we secure the withdrawal of the Argentines from the Falkland Islands lock, stock and barrel, as the Prime Minister said—and not only the military personnel but the civilian personnel and any drapery that they happen to have with them. On the other hand, it seems to appear from recent news reports that we are very unlikely to secure the withdrawal of the Argentines from the Falklands unless we can arrange for them to be replaced by some authority whose presence does not pre-empt the solution of the second stage of the diplomatic negotiation.

The second stage, which has been discussed a good deal in these debates, is the negotiation for a future status of the Falkland Islands which will offer the islanders greater military security and perhaps more material prosperity than they have enjoyed till now.

If I interpret properly the Foreign Secretary's interesting dialogue with Mr. Walden on Sunday morning, he does not rule out some sharing of authority after the Argentine withdrawal while negotiations on the future status of the islands proceed. In that connection, I agree with my hon. Friends the Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) and Sheffield, Atercliffe (Mr. Duffy).

I hope that the Government will seriously consider replacing the Argentines during this first phase with some form of United Nations presence, whether it is as an administrator or as a truce team. There are some very interesting precedents for this. In 1947, for example, the United Nations established a presence which operated effectively in the crisis over sovereignty in the Dutch East Indies. There was another perhaps more relevant example in the 1960s when the United Nations established a temporary authority in West New Guinea in a dispute over sovereignty between the Netherlands and Indonesia. That held the ring for nine months until May 1963 when a resolution of the dispute was effected.

While not necessarily promoting this concept, the Foreign Secretary did not rule it out—he actually used those words in his discussion with Mr. Walden on Sunday—and this may be a very useful weapon of diplomacy if we really want to get a peaceful diplomatic resolution of the conflict.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was right to say in response to an intervention that it was very difficult—indeed, it has hardly even ever been done—for the United Nations to use force to defeat aggression. But it can administer, and it can police. In a situation such as this one the United Nations might have many advantages as a temporary presence on the islands, not least to be able to canvass the views of the islanders on possible solutions in the longer term in a position where neither Britain nor the Argentine, the main parties to this dispute, could be accused of exerting undue pressure.

That is not the only possible solution, of course. There are almost as many different diplomatic scenarios as there are military ones. But some solution along these lines may produce a framework in which the major negotiations between Britain and Argentina on the future status of the islands can take place.

The great majority of us agree—there were one or two notable exceptions during the debate—that the views and interests of the islanders must be paramount. After all, the central objective of our operation is to protect the right of self-determination of the islanders. But I was glad that last Sunday the Foreign Secretary echoed my words that we cannot say how the attitude of the islanders may have been affected by recent events. It could have moved in either direction and we certainly need an opportunity to canvass their views in a situation rather more normal than the one which exists now.

But we would all feel that it was very much in the interests of the islanders themselves to resolve a situation which has condemned them to physical insecurity and less material prosperity than they might have enjoyed for many years. The Prime Minister herself, in the moment of greatest excitement in the House when she spoke on Saturday, 3 April, made the point that

"The only way of being certain to prevent an invasion would have been to keep a very large fleet close to the Falklands, when we are some 8,000 miles away from base. No Government have ever been able to do that, and the cost would be enormous."—*[Official Report, 3 April 1982; Vol. 21 c. 637.]*

This is a fact that the House really must not ignore, because it is the fact that has determined the attitude of successive British Governments to the peculiarly difficult problem of the Falklands. That problem is not unique in the world—there are several island territories. Very few of them are threatened externally in the way in which the Falklands has been, but some of them might be if the Argentines are able to get away with this one.

The right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) expressed very strongly a different view. He suggested that any compromise on this issue would be totally unacceptable, and he put the case, with his usual glittering and icy logic—which is a wonderful machine for dazzling the groundlings. But I cannot help recalling that he used exactly the same glittering and icy logic to justify us doing nothing whatever about Rhodesia. Our responsibilities to the black population of Rhodesia were no less in those days than our responsibilities today to the white population of the Falklands, yet he then argued that, because we had not the physical capacity to do just what we wanted there,

[Mr. Denis Healey]

we had not the right to seek to influence the situation. Nevertheless, the right hon. Gentleman made a fascinating speech, a pyrotechnic display of the type which always fills us with admiration.

The negotiations, of course, will be difficult and they must be conducted from a position of strength. But there is still some time left even before our task force is on the spot, fully equipped with the new facilities we have been told about today and yesterday. The only thing I would say is that we do not have infinite time. I do not think that time is necessarily on the side of a diplomatic solution.

As the economic sanctions bite on Argentina, as the rigours of an Antarctic winter bear ever more heavily on our own naval task force, as other issues begin to distract the world from our problem with the Argentine—there are some very dangerous problems facing the world, including the relations between Russia and the West, the risk of a new war in the Middle East; the list is almost infinite—and as other issues emerge strongly into international consciousness, I think that there is the risk that impatience or despair might produce a spark which sets off a major conflict. In addition, of course, as time passes, the risk of a conflict involving other countries than Britain and Argentina—other countries in Latin America, perhaps other countries like the Soviet Union—will be liable to increase.

I end these remarks with an appeal to the United States. I believe from what I have read that Mr. Haig has made heroic efforts to get the process of negotiations started, and I can only applaud his courage—his physical courage as well as his intellectual stamina—in being prepared to undertake yet another voyage or perhaps series of voyages of diplomacy in the coming weeks.

I cannot help feeling, however, that the time has come when we must tell the United States that the attitude of an even-handed honest broker is not quite enough. We must recognise that the United States has legitimate diplomatic and economic interests in Latin America. Indeed, it has a whole foreign policy in Latin America which, for obvious geographical reasons, is of far greater importance to it than our Latin American policy will ever be for us. Nevertheless, I believe that if the United States were prepared to follow the examples set by Britain's European allies and at least to warn the Argentines that it, too, might cut off imports and stop supplying arms, it might sufficiently tip the balance.

Most of our discussions today have revolved around the principles at stake—the principle of not allowing the aggressor to get away with it and the principle of self-determination. But there is even more than principle at stake. There is the stability of the Western hemisphere, which may depend—in my view, will depend—on early and successful diplomatic action, in which the United States must take a more active and positive role than it has until now.

7.6 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Francis Pym): I agree with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) that this has indeed been a very useful debate. The House has addressed itself to the gravity of the real issues

involved, which the House understands very well but which, beyond doubt, I think that the British people also understand very well.

The debate has shown a very broad measure of agreement and a broad measure of support for the actions that the Government have taken and are taking. It is a very good example of the way in which our democratic procedures in Parliament are a source of strength to our nation.

There have, of course, been a number of dissenting voices on both sides—naturally and rightly so. But it has been as heartening to us as it must have been discouraging to the Argentine aggressors to witness the degree of unity that has been reflected in the debate and which was mentioned most recently by the right hon. Member for Battersea, North (Mr. Jay). There has been unity in the resolve that the rule of law must be re-established by the withdrawal of the invaders from the Falklands in accordance with the mandatory resolution of the security Council, of which the Argentine is in breach. There has been unity in our determination to do all that we can to achieve a solution by peaceful means, provided that such a solution is in accordance with the basic principles that successive British Governments have upheld—principles which we know to be essential if small countries are not to be at the mercy of their larger neighbours. There has been unity, too, in the sober recognition of our right to use force in self-defence—that is unquestionable—and is the recognition that, if needs be, that right will be exercised.

At the outset, I wish to give the House a first report that I have just received from the Chief Secretary in the Falklands Administration, who arrived last night in Montevideo. He stated that he and other senior officials who left with him had all been deported from the Falklands. Until his departure, the Administration in Port Stanley had succeeded in maintaining essential services for the islands—including medical services, water, electricity, telephones and police—but restrictions had been imposed on the radio-telephone links with outlying farms and the internal air service had been stopped.

According to the Chief Secretary, the conduct of the Argentine forces so far has been correct. The report contains no indication that there is serious hardship among the people of the Falkland Islands, but the deportation of their senior officials is a cause for concern and underlines the need for the involvement of the International Red Cross, which Her Majesty's Government are trying to secure.

Last week I spoke to the House of the determination with which we are pursuing our efforts to secure Argentine withdrawal from the Falkland Islands. They have no right whatever to be there and they must go. The whole of this business started with them. The entire blame for the crisis rests on Argentina.

This act of aggression—unprovoked, illegal and unforgivable—must be reversed. The House, the country and the world would prefer it to be reversed by peaceful means. In the interests of avoiding bloodshed we are working with all our strength for just such a peaceful solution—a solution consistent with our commitment to the Falkland Islanders.

At the beginning of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister outlined the steps that have been taken so far, the discussions that we have had with Mr. Secretary Haig and some of the ideas that have been produced. Work

proceeds apace. Nobody can say whether a peaceful solution will prove possible. If it does not, Argentina knows what to expect. Let it not doubt it.

I should like to join with the right hon. Member for Leeds, East in thanking Mr. Secretary Haig for the onerous work that he has undertaken. He has shown not only intellectual stamina, but great physical stamina. He has approached this difficult task with great willingness and thoroughness. The House and the country are in his debt.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the process as being contemplated in two phases. He referred, first, to the withdrawal. That is an absolute prerequisite for any progress of any kind whatever. At that stage, he mentioned some ideas in relation to the United Nations and the possibility of a United Nations presence—which other hon. Members have raised—and he made other suggestions upon which I would prefer not to comment. I will, of course, take a careful note of all that he has said.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to refer to the second phase—the negotiations for a longer-term solution. I should like to say something about that later on in my speech. I have noted his ideas and I will carefully consider all the other ideas that right hon. and hon. Members have made in the course of the debate.

Our clear resolve, and the international support that we have mustered from our friends and partners, are beginning to tell. Argentina has seemed at times to be having second thoughts. Certainly, it has been invaded by doubts from time to time. We now need not only to maintain those pressures, but to build them up wherever we can.

Britain's support for the islanders is no empty commitment. Our national response to this crisis has demonstrated that. It was Argentina's great mistake to imagine that there would be a lack of will on Britain's part to defend the Falkland Islands if the need arose. Britain has had a lot of experience of dealing with unprovoked aggression and invaders. That is unfortunate, but we have had it. We understand the vital need not to permit aggression to succeed. It makes no difference to us whether that takes place on our doorstep or 8,000 miles away. Freedom under the law is at stake.

Presumably, the Argentines reckoned that if they presented us with a fait accompli we would not take steps to reverse it; that they would be met with a great fuss and ballyhoo, but not with any action. They were wrong. They never imagined that we would back our commitment with diplomatic and economic measures that were needed to uphold it, let alone the military measures, which are surely having their effect. The task force is, as we know, sailing on its course towards the South Atlantic. It will build up as operational requirements dictate. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced one element in that build-up today and there will be others in due course. It is a remarkable tribute to the Royal Navy—although I know that the House would expect no less—that it mounted that task force and that it sailed with such speed and efficiency.

The Argentine reckoned without the response of the international community. It was not in any way prepared for what was going to happen. No doubt it expected the world to deprecate the use of force, but in its ill-judged enthusiasm and perhaps even in a bit of excitement, it failed to foresee the revulsion and anxiety felt by nations all round the world at seeing an act of aggression by a large country against a small, nearby territory. The Argentine was unprepared for the resolution that was passed by the

Security Council and was certainly unprepared for the task force's rapid departure from the United Kingdom. It was certainly unprepared for the response that we received from the international community by way of economic measures. It failed to realise that countries all around the world would see its act as totally repugnant and intolerable and that they would condemn it almost unanimously.

The Argentine also failed to see the strength which that condemnation would give Britain in its efforts to rally support to the cause of repelling aggressors. In other words, the Argentines misjudged the situation from the start. They anticipated what might happen, but they did not get it right. The Argentine must now be dismayed at the solidarity shown to Britain by our major allies. It did not see that the United States of America would be bound to condemn invasion.

I think that I am right in saying that the United States of America has already banned the export of arms to the Argentine. Of course, the United States of America supported us very strongly in the United Nations resolution and is at the moment playing a crucial role in the negotiations for a peaceful settlement. The House has certainly shown that it would like to achieve such a settlement.

The Argentine did not reckon with the close ties that link the nations of the Commonwealth. Those ties are at their strongest when democracy is challenged. Above all, it totally failed to foresee the strong political solidarity that so many years of common endeavour have built up in the European Community. The Community's decision to ban all imports from the Argentine was wholly unexpected in Buenos Aires. Condemnations and diplomatic sanctions it could perhaps have lived with, but to see about one quarter of its export trade wiped out at a stroke was a body blow to its already rather shaky economy. All the evidence suggests that the Argentine was very surprised by that and it is one of the actions that we have taken—supported by our friends—that has undoubtedly affected the Argentine's attitude towards the situation.

I am glad to tell the House that the texts for the complete embargo on imports were agreed in Brussels today. They will come into force as soon as they can be published, which will probably be on 16 April. I should like to express the gratitude of the Government and the whole House for the powerful and positive action taken by the European Community.

Mr. Healey: Has the Community accepted the advice of the Commission that the ban on imports should last, in the first instance, for only two weeks?

Mr. Pym: No. In the first instance the Community has agreed that it should last for one month. During that period the position can be re-examined with a view to extending or modifying it, or whatever. However, the initial period is for one month.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) mentioned export credit guarantees. They are a matter for national rather than Community action. I understand that there is a gathering consensus among the Ten that in present circumstances in the Argentine there will not in practice be any new offers of officially supported export credits. In other words, pressure there is mounting considerably. The very positive response by our friends to our call for pressure upon the Argentine rests fundamentally on the firm legal grounds of the United Nations charter and the Security Council resolution.

[Mr. Pym]

After the events of the Second World War, there is no doubt that the desire for a better way of settling international disputes was founded in the United Nations. All nations subscribe to it and that is the basis upon which we obtained our support. But, by contrast, Argentina's friends in Latin America can find no such basis for supporting it. The Leader of the Opposition put that point extremely fairly and cogently in his speech. Following that, and the doubts about Argentina's position, it is fair to say that the gestures of those countries have been, to say the least, unenthusiastic. Despite the agreement of some of them with Argentina's interpretation of the sovereignty issue, they have nearly all refused to condone the use of force. They have joined their voices to those of our supporters in favour of a peaceful settlement, if such can be achieved.

Many hon. Members have raised the principle of self-determination and the wishes of the islanders. Certainly no one pays more attention to that or gives more weight to it than the Government. However, although we have not set our faces against any idea of change in the future, we cannot accept that some form of change should be imposed on the islanders. Of course, at the moment their views cannot be known. They are bound to be affected by the trauma that they have gone through. I have always taken the view that, as a result of it, they would be likely to wish to be even more British than they were before, if that is possible. But no one knows.

We must take much care in ascertaining their views accurately when the present invasion is over. We cannot ascertain them at the moment. As I consider the matter at this range, the islanders will need time after the crisis is over to reflect upon the position and consider the prospects and alternatives. They should not be unduly hurried. We have heard talk of suddenly taking a quick poll, but that will not do at all. They will wish to consider the matter in their own way before they come to any conclusion about it. We should enable them to do that, but we shall continue to be guided by their wishes.

Mr. Sidney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): It is a mystery that we have not heard much detail about what was discussed in New York at the end of February. We know what the communiqué said and we heard the resignation speech of the Minister of State, but he conveyed very little. Was one of the items on the agenda—if the right hon. Gentleman cannot tell me now, perhaps he can at another time—the question of some derogation of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands?

Mr. Pym: I cannot comment on the details because I was not in New York at the time. My point is that we are guided by what the islanders prefer. It has been argued in Argentina and in other places that this is a colonial problem, but it is a quite different issue. All that I am trying to convey to the House is that the wishes of the islanders are all-important to us. That implies quite clearly that if another form of government is required by the islanders, the Government would not wish to stand in their way and neither would the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) and other of my hon. Friends have mentioned that point. We wish to ensure that all the islanders have an opportunity to make their views known, but we must wait some time before we can do that.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove and Redditch (Mr. Miller)—the Leader of the Opposition also touched on the point—about the need to prepare plans for the long-term future. Obviously we wish to settle that as best we can. I shall not speak on that aspect, because my overriding concern now and in the immediate future is to reach a position where long-term proposals can again become relevant. The priority of the invading Argentines leaving the islands is crucial so that we can get on with the process that will lead to a long-term settlement. In the meantime, there is no reason whatsoever why we should not be thinking about the possibilities and, indeed, that is happening. However, my immediate concern is to ensure that we can put any long-term plans that we decide upon into practice in due course.

The hon. Member for Inverness (Mr. Johnston) asked about South Georgia. Argentine claims sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islands dependencies, including South Georgia. As the House knows, Argentine forces invaded South Georgia on 4 April. The maritime exclusion zone covers only the waters surrounding the Falkland Islands themselves.

The hon. Member for Inverness asked also whether there had been any incidents in the maritime exclusion zone. The answer is that there have not been so far. Whether this remains the case will depend upon the Argentines themselves. We have made our position on the zone quite clear and specific and they know well what will happen if they violate it. The creation of the zone is the beginning of the process which makes withdrawal itself possible. My answer to the hon. Gentleman is "Nothing so far but it is up to the Argentines".

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said earlier, the Argentine navy is concentrated outside the zone. We hope very much that that will continue to be so. We believe that the Argentines, like ourselves, desire above all else a peaceful solution if it can be achieved without prejudice to the principles that are involved. It is vital to us that the Argentine navy stays outside the zone so that no incidents are invited.

The British task force is moving steadily towards its destination. Our diplomatic action has yielded magnificent support from our friends in the form of concrete action parallel to our own. It is deeds that they have done as well as uttering words. The costs of aggression are being made clearer every day. The pressure is mounting on Argentina. The vice is tightening.

As Mr. Haig's admirable efforts continue, we shall see whether reason and responsibility will prevail in Buenos Aires. Should Mr. Haig's diplomacy fail to produce a settlement, it will not be for lack of efforts or of reasonable flexibility on his part or on ours, but on Argentina's. Britain will remain determined to achieve peace if possible but ready for conflict if necessary, because we shall not be deflected from the objectives reaffirmed today by the Prime Minister.

The priority is the withdrawal of the Argentine forces from the Falkland Islands as a first step towards a settlement that accords with the wishes of the islanders. In the name of international law and order, they must go.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Seven o'clock till Monday 19 April, pursuant to the Resolution of the House this day.