

Eight months ago, in Nassau, Canada and forty eight other members of the Commonwealth established a Group of seven Eminent Persons to seek ways of "dismantling apartheid and erecting the structure of democracy in South Africa". That was done in the belief that the multiracial Commonwealth, of which South Africa was once a member, had a better chance than any other institution to encourage change without violence. Twenty three days ago, while the Eminent Persons Group was still in Capetown, the Government of South Africa launched bombs and raids on Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. This morning, in London, the Group issued its report - a unanimous report.

It concludes that, at present, there is no genuine intention on the part of the South African Government to dismantle apartheid.

It reports that political freedom, far from being established, is being more rigorously curtailed, and the cycle of violence, and counter-violence, grows.

It finds that the concrete progress looked for in the Nassau Accord has not materialized.

The Prime Minister of Canada and six other Commonwealth leaders will meet in London August 3rd to 5th to consider what further action the Commonwealth can take together to increase pressure against apartheid. Already one thing is clear.

By its actions, its words, its raids against its neighbours, the South African Government has closed one more door on dialogue. The temptation is to conclude that they will never respond to our entreaties, never change by choice. That is not the view of the Eminent Persons - not yet. But it is their view that steady pressure is essential to any prospect of peaceful change. I quote their report:

"We point to the fact that the government of South Africa had itself used economic measures against its neighbours and that such measures are patently instruments of its own national policy. We are convinced that the South African Government is concerned about the adoption of effective economic measures against it. If it comes to the conclusion that it would always remain protected from such measures, the process of change in South Africa is unlikely to increase in momentum, and the descent into violence would be accelerated. In these circumstances, the cost in lives may have to be counted in millions."