

Letters to the Editor

grounds been in constant battles or semi-battles with its neighbors in Chile, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Lastly, one should remember that during World War II Argentina strongly supported the Nazis and, in fact, sheltered their Atlantic fleet.

On the British side the authors are also off-base. Margaret Thatcher took a tremendous gamble in deciding to fight Argentina. First there is tremendous anti-nuclear and anti-trident missile sentiment in Britain, which is against any military role for the UK. Secondly, British naval and air strength has been seriously undermined by inadequate budgets in recent years, and thirdly, the logistics problems of mounting this type of operation are horrendous.

Why then, did Thatcher go to war, with inadequate military and shortage of money? The compelling reasons were strategic, such as protection of the Straits of Magellan against possible closing of the Panama Canal. One might note that the Americans were the first foreign invaders in the Falklands, in order to clean out pirates who were raiding the China clipper fleet. There was also the fact that leaving Argentina in the Falklands might trip similar situations in Panama, the Malay Straits, etc. Britain also wanted to protect its position in the Antarctic.

Finally, even though the Falklands were an economic burden to the UK, its people were British citizens. The victory accomplished much more for Britain than the popularity of Thatcher. It showed up the serious weaknesses and some surprising strengths in its military preparedness. It demonstrated the ability, with the assistance of the Americans, to fight a remote war, something that is clearly possible in the Arabian Gulf today.

William O. Twaits
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Sir,

I am very surprised that a magazine of your aspirations should have published so superficial an article as that of

Professor Nef and Miss Hallman entitled "Reflections on the Anglo-Argentinian War" in your September/October edition.

It is hardly penetrating to ascribe the Argentine invasion of the Falklands to the junta's internal crisis but it is facile to suggest the British government's prompt action to recover the islands was to direct attention from "the myriad of social ills and tensions associated with its generally unsuccessful domestic program." If Mrs. Thatcher's political survival was at stake at this juncture, it was because her defence economies had left this colony unprotected. What else, in any case, was she to do? Can anyone argue that the "kelpers" should have been abandoned to the regime these authors brand with "the worst human rights record in Latin America?" Does anyone believe the UN would have ousted the Argentines by now?

As to the speculation that this war promoted a "potential for multiplying and accelerating conflicts" in Latin America on the 1914 model, it is more likely that it had the opposite effect. The junta's success in the Falklands, like Hitler's in the Rhineland, could well have been the prelude to further adventures to distract attention from later domestic reverses: the Beagle Channel islands come readily to mind and who knows where next? Uruguay? The swift and decisive British challenge may have averted a repeat performance of 1939.

I believe I discern in J. Nef and F. Hallman, and in your sub-editor who sub-titled the article "**Britain and Argentina** — alike under the skin," an ivory tower desire to castigate even-handedly. It is certainly their privilege to like Margaret Thatcher's politics no better than General Galtieri's but in the real world nations have to take a position, if necessary on the basis of the lesser evil. I am delighted the governance of Canada was not in their hands on this issue.

Richard Donaldson
Victoria, BC

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