

0. THATCHER'S WAR - THE FALKLAND ISLANDS - Story
Preface

1. ABOVE the SHOP in GRANTHAM

2. MARGARET and DENIS

3. MARGARET THATCHER, MP

4. THATCHER'S WAR - THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

5. LIFE at CHEQUERS and DOWNING STREET

6. LOSS ... of POWER and DENIS

7. IRON LADY - FINAL YEARS



British ships traveled a great distance when the Falklands War began. This map, from the U.S. Military Academy, depicts their journey. Image online, courtesy USMA.

In the early spring of 1982, about 1,800 people were living in the Falkland Islands. Considering themselves British citizens, the residents spoke English and wanted to maintain their British identity. British colonials had lived on the islands since at least 1841.

Argentina, located about 300 miles to the west of the Falklands, had previously claimed the islands. Part of its claim was based on a Papal Bull - from 1493 - when the Pope that year (Alexander VI, also known as Rodrigo Borgia) had divided the "New World" between Spain and Portugal.

With the amendment of that 1493 document the following year, by the "Treaty of Tordesillas" (between Spain and Portugal), the Falklands - which Argentina calls the "Malvinas" - fell on Spain's side of the line.

Negotiations about the Falklands/Malvinas - between Britain and Argentina - were ongoing, in 1982, with the potential of a "leaseback" in place. At the time, Argentina was governed by a military *junta*, and the Falklanders had no desire to be governed by those military generals.

If a leaseback were implemented, however, the Falklands would be turned over to Argentina at some future date. The Falklanders, themselves, were adamantly opposed to any such agreement. They considered themselves British and wanted to remain so.

In February and March, of 1982, Argentinians had landed - illegally, according to local residents - in Falkland territory. Making matters worse, those Argentinians were flying their country's flag.

General Galtieri - head of Argentina's ruling military *junta* who was facing much discontent in his own country - decided, in late March, that he would launch an invasion of the Falklands to reclaim the territory for Argentina. (Later-published articles indicate the *junta* - and Galtieri - believed Britain would not forcefully respond.)

Invading troops arrived, on the 1st of April, and were surprised to find that the Falkland residents did not regard them as liberators. They were even more surprised when they realized that Falklanders spoke English, not Spanish.

Prime Minister Thatcher was notified about the invasion and, following consultation with her military advisors, decided to dispatch a naval task force. Because the islands were 8,000 miles from Britain, it would take weeks for the ships to arrive. Meanwhile, the governor of the Falklands was forced to surrender the territory to Argentina.

By this time, Mrs. Thatcher had already cultivated a "special relationship" between Britain and America. Her friend, President Reagan, dispatched his Secretary of State - Al Haig - to see whether he could help to end the conflict.

Mrs. Thatcher, and her advisors, rejected Haig's conciliatory approach. Thereafter, President Reagan announced that America would support Britain.

On the 2nd of May, Mrs. Thatcher learned that an Argentinian cruiser - the *General Belgrano* - appeared to be moving toward British vessels. (It was later determined that the *Belgrano* was actually moving away.)

The Prime Minister gave an order to sink the Belgrano. A British submarine - HMS *Conqueror* - carried out the PM's order by sending torpedoes at the Argentinian ship.

Two days later, a British warship - HMS *Sheffield* - sank after it was hit by exocet missiles. As the list of casualties grew, so did worries about whether a war over the Falklands was worth it.

By the 14th of June, the battles (if not the dispute) were over when the commander of Argentinian troops surrendered at Port Stanley. Major General Jeremy Moore, in charge of British ground forces, sent a message to London:

The Falkland Islands once more are under the government desired by their inhabitants - God save the Queen.

Although the Falklands War did not last long, it was costly. The death toll included 655 Argentinians and 255 British servicemen. Most were sailors who died in the sinking of their respective ships. It was also during the Falklands War when an interesting British plane - known, informally, as the Harrier Jump Jet - proved its value.

The leaders of the two warring countries fared very differently after hostilities ended.

General Galtieri lost his job and served three years in prison for military incompetence. Later, in 2002, he was arrested again - this time for the deaths of people who opposed his military regime in 1980. He died in 2003, before going to trial on those charges.

Margaret Thatcher's stature and popularity grew, following Britain's victory. She easily won reelection in 1983.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THATCHER-S-WAR-THE-FALKLAND-ISLANDS-The-Iron-Lady>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THATCHER-S-WAR-THE-FALKLAND-ISLANDS-The-Iron-Lady>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Can Wars Enhance a Leader's Reputation?

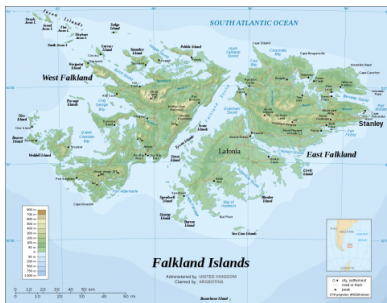
When Argentina captured the islands known as the Malvinas (in Argentina) and the Falklands (in the U.K.), during 1982, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister.

After consulting with her military advisors, Thatcher dispatched British Royal Navy ships and servicemen to recapture the islands whose residents wished to remain British. When Britain prevailed in the conflict, and the Falklands remained British, Thatcher's reputation as a leader was greatly enhanced. She easily won her next national election.

Was it worthwhile for Britain and Argentina to fight a war over the Falklands/Malvinas? Why, or why not?

Why did Margaret Thatcher's reputation improve as a result of the Falklands/Malvinas war?

Media Stream



Falkland Islands - Locator Map

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Falkland-Islands-Locator-Map>



Falklands War - General Galtieri

Portrait of General Galtieri, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Falklands-War-General-Galtieri>



Thatcher and Reagan - Special Relationship

Image of Reagan and Thatcher, online courtesy Reagan Library.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Thatcher-and-Reagan-Special-Relationship>



Iron Lady - Thatcher with Al Haig

Photo online, courtesy Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

LICENSE: [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Iron-Lady-Thatcher-with-Al-Haig>



Falkland Islands - Argentina Invades

Clip from "20th Century Battlefields," Episode 7 - "1982 Falklands" - originally aired on BBC 2 in 2007. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Falkland-Islands-Argentina-Invades>



Falklands War - Britain Sinks the Belgrano

Clip from "20th Century Battlefields," Episode 7 - "1982 Falklands" - originally aired on BBC 2 in 2007. Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Falklands-War-Britain-Sinks-the-Belgrano>



Exocet Missile Strike - HMS Sheffield Sinks

Video clip of the *Sheffield* strike, online courtesy YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Exocet-Missile-Strike-HMS-Sheffield-Sinks>



Falklands War - Summary

Clip of Charles Moore interview with Peter Robinson for "Uncommon Knowledge," sponsored by the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Copyright "Uncommon Knowledge," all rights reserved. Clip online via Uncommon Knowledge channel at YouTube.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Falklands-War-Summary>



Margaret Thatcher - 1983

Clip of Margaret Thatcher's speech to the Conservative Party conference in 1983.

Online, courtesy Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Margaret-Thatcher-1983>