



The Battle for the Falklands

Max Hastings , Simon Jenkins

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"Must be read by all our military people and anyone who wants to find out what really happened on the Falkland Islands." - James M. Gavin

The Battle for the Falklands Details

Date : Published September 17th 1984 by W. W. Norton Company (first published February 1983)

ISBN : 9780393301984

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Format : Paperback 424 pages

Genre : History, War, Military Fiction, Nonfiction, Military, Military History

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Vaughn says

Audio - I enjoyed these authors telling of events that were front page news during my senior year of high school. I found one author's inclusion of himself (Hastings) as an observer in the battles (as a journalist) to bring a chuckle. Overall an interesting study of what seemed so strange then and so odd now.

Richard K says

Whilst written shortly after the war, the book demonstrates a remarkable sense of balance. The thirty year run up to the war is enlightening and sets the conflict into a much broader context. The writing and pace is superb.

Jesper Jorgensen says

In 82' I was preoccupied with the task of being young as well as finishing my education in the merchant navy.

In those days - when at sea - the daily news were compiled and 'edited' by the radio officer and distributed on a single sheet of A4 paper pinned to the bulletin board in the mess. And to be honest, you would not find me in front of that reading it.

(To the youngsters: Once upon a time the internet did not exist. Amazingly we survived to tell the tale ;-)

So the 'big picture' of the state of the world was not all that clear to me.

To to read about the course of events in this - in many respects - strange war has been very interesting. And put more than a few things in perspective.

For me this book was a very good read

David Durnin says

Great read

Excellent account of the Falklands conflict from Hastings and Jenkins. Sets the scene of the build up to the conflict, followed by a chronological account of the war from both sides. Great book that is hard to put down. Recommended reading for students of the conflict.

Urey Patrick says

This is an excellent and enjoyably readable account of the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina in 1982. It is predominantly a British perspective, but the authors provide an admirable - albeit relatively limited - account of events from the Argentine perspective along the way. Although sympathetic to the British side of the conflict, they do not shirk from criticizing British mistakes and errors of decision making any more than they do regarding Argentine errors and misjudgments. This was a thoroughly unnecessary and avoidable conflict that was made necessary and unavoidable by the series of political, diplomatic and strategic actions and blunders over the 17-plus years preceding actual conflict. To cite but one example on each side, the British assumed that Argentina would move through three identifiable stages of increasing confrontation as a precursor to any actual invasion - then believed that assumption was real when it was not. When the Argentines actually invaded without having engaged in ANY of the assumed prerequisite stages, the British were unprepared - militarily, diplomatically and politically. On the other hand, the Argentines convinced themselves that Britain would not react with force at all, and Britain supported that misapprehension with its own political and diplomatic missteps. There were

The authors lay it out bluntly even as they narrate with admiration the daunting military challenges that the British faced and overcame - more or less successfully. And those challenges were severe - so severe that with more reflection Britain might not have even tried to retake the Falklands. She had no aircraft carriers - no air search radar - ineffective and unreliable communications - ineffective fleet air defense - insufficient air lift. It is a remarkable story of overcoming adversity and prevailing over materiel and capability limitations, horrendous weather conditions, and unforeseen weapon system deficiencies - although the inexplicable Argentine reluctance to take advantage of its own strengths and resources contributed mightily. It could have been a far more 'iffy' proposition for the British than it was had the Argentine Army and Navy shown half as much courage, determination and fighting spirit as did the Argentine air force.

This is yet another lesson in the inefficiencies, ignorance and incompetence of political and diplomatic functions that over time accumulate effects that ultimately ordain violent events that need not have happened. That is a lesson that never seems to take permanent hold. In an event, this is a superb starting point for anybody interested in the Falklands War and how it precipitated.

Chris says

Despite being written only a short time after the war itself, this book appears to be a well-written and considered history. Sketching out the long road to the war itself and reflecting briefly on the political and strategic consequences as they appeared in 1983, the book also provides good coverage of the war itself, if only from the British perspective. Ultimately, this Anglo-centric perspective is the book's weakness. It would be fascinating to know more about how the war is and was perceived in Argentina and to hear the story of their Army, Navy and Air Force in this conflict as well.

Scott says

An in-depth and comprehensive view of the 1982 Falklands War, almost entirely from the British perspective (and to the authors' credit, they make it clear up front they never pretended it would be anything else). By turns fascinating and disheartening. The authors congratulate the UK armed forces and the Thatcher

government for their very real achievements, but also pull no punches in revealing the layers of shoddy miscommunication, bad intelligence, and plain poor diplomacy (including the starkly embarrassing attempted mediation of the Reagan administration) that led to the by-no-means-inevitable shooting war. An Argentinian junta rode off to war desperate to prop itself up, and Margaret Thatcher's government rode out of it eager to parlay it into electoral popularity for as long as they could. The mists of popular memory are already closing around this fight, thirty years on. It doesn't hurt to be reminded what a ramshackle, close, and at times desperate affair it was.

Paul Pensom says

I vividly remember that spring morning in 1982 when my father opened the curtains with the declaration "Wake up boys — we're at war!". The Falklands was the first conflict I have any clear memory of. I can remember the crowds cheering the carriers off to sea, I can remember the talk of the awesome power of the new, untried Harrier jump jets, I remember the controversy of the exclusion zone and the infamous 'GOTCHA!' headline of the Sun newspaper. I can remember the whispered playground tales of the SAS, and the stories of the Argies turning tail when they saw the flash of the Ghurka's Kukri knives — said to demand the appeasement of blood once drawn from the scabbard.

So it was of great interest to me to read an account which separated the apocrypha from the truth. This book was written contemporaneously with the conflict, so it has the urgency of a first-hand report. Surprisingly, there seems to have been little else published about this most curious campaign since.

And curious it certainly was. I remember my Dad telling me at the time that this would in all probability be the last colonial war Britain ever fought, and I fancy he has surely been proved right. This is a very good account of that war. Written entirely, it is true, from the British perspective, but interestingly none the less biased for that. The summation of the diplomatic case is entirely even handed — in fact if anything the authors come down narrowly on the side of the Argentinians. The main point of the book though is that this was a war that could have been so easily avoided; it's as much a tale of the failure of diplomacy as the success of arms. Of a long-running, often bitter argument, over a wind-swept cluster of rocks in the unforgiving south atlantic. The opening lines sum it up very neatly:

"The Falkland Islands' misfortune has always been to be wanted more than they are loved"

As recent events have shown. The conflict resolved nothing. The arguments persist, and the unloved islands remain as wanted as ever.

David Highton says

An excellent book, written almost contemporaneously by two fine journalists, Hastings embedded with British forces and Jenkins providing the political analysis. Published only 7 months after the war ended, 35 years later it stands as a great piece of military history. the poor communications which led to the Galahad tragedy caused me great disquiet, and the mention in the final chapter of the Queen and Royal family attending the memorial service at St.Pauls reminded me I watched them all out of my office window in Dean Court. A moving book.

John says

This was the first Hastings book that I read... it was interesting at the time but, since reading other, is certainly not his best.

Because of the contemporary nature of the conflict, and his role as a journalist, this book always struck me as being rather like a series of newspaper articles - and sort of.... unfinished.

I am sure that the recent 25th anniversary of the conflict has meant a reprint or two... and that many copies have been sold - but there are far better narratives of the conflict.

My laytest favourite is *Forgotten Voices of the Falklands* by Hugh McManners

Nick Harriss says

The Falklands War was the first major world event I can remember in great detail, and a subject that I have read/watched numerous articles/documentaries on, but this is definitely the best work on the subject. Hastings was on the ground with the British forces, so it has the benefit of first hand coverage, as well as much additional investigation.

Nat says

My only memory of the Falklands War is of pretending that a puddle was the south Atlantic and throwing rocks at it with my dad, simulating the British attack. But I'm fascinated with this war because the matchup is so weird--it has the international appeal of a world cup match. Maybe Italy fighting Brazil would have the same level of geopolitical implausibility. And because the odds of victory were more or less even: the British were 6,000 miles from home, operating at the end of a long supply chain, with no land based airpower (besides a couple of Vulcan bombers operating at the extreme range of what was possible), and the Argentines had a substantial air force and navy patrolling close to home.

I had no idea how long it took for the British to sail to the warzone, or how inept the American attempts to intervene diplomatically were, or how heavy the British naval losses were. I knew about the sinking of the *Coventry*, but the *Atlantic Conveyor*, the *Ardent*, *Antelope*, *Sir Galahad*, *Sheffield*? And the Argentines were incredibly well equipped: I knew they had French Super Etendards and Exocets, but they also had modern German subs and even a couple of British type 42 destroyers, which is what the British themselves were fighting with! It also became very clear why every contemporary warship is equipped with radar-aimed close-in gattling guns, which were conspicuously lacking from British ships. They were trying to bring down low flying Skyhawks and Mirage IIIs with GP machineguns and (manually aimed?) bofors cannons instead.

A couple details that make it clear that you're dealing with a very British war written about from a very British viewpoint:

p.188: On the passage south, the British commando force band played the *1812 Overture* "with orchestration

from her bofors guns, at the direction of the ship's delightfully picaresque captain".

p.85: Describing the preparation for the invasion: "One of the most remarkable figures immediately summoned to duty was winkled out of a London flat where he was staying after a Cruising Club dinner. Major Ewen Southby-Tailyour was an exuberant romantic...With his white hair resembling a slight swell in mid-Atlantic, his infectious charm and enthusiasm, he was a familiar celebrity among Royal Marines. The son of a colonel commandant of the corps, he was commissioned in 1960 after Pangbourne Nautical College and Grenoble University. He boasted proudly that, in the ensuing twenty-two years, he had spent only two in an office; this had done little for his chances of promotion, but had enabled him to sail halfway around the world---he was a superb helmsman and ocean racer---speak and write Arabic, paint watercolors of seabirds, explore the wildest corners of Arabia, and, above all, to know the Falklands".

That almost matches the kind of characters the British had running around in the Greek Isles capturing German generals in WWII (Patrick Leigh Fermor, e.g.).

Watch some incredible footage of the amphibious landing and air attacks on the fleet from the comfort of your chair on youtube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-_l3e...

Graham says

A solid account of the Falklands War, co-authored by Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, each of whom brings their own contribution to the narrative. Jenkins concentrates on the politics of the situation, the build-up and aftermath, looking at the wider scale and the international scene. Hastings was a reporter who went to the Falklands alongside the task force so details the action on the ground.

Although dry with lots of technical detail, THE BATTLE FOR THE FALKLANDS is as comprehensive an account as you could wish for regarding this brief conflict. It was written almost contemporaneously with the action itself and it covers all of the right elements in just the right way. It's also remarkably even-handed, highlighting the courage and failings of both sides, explaining just what transpired and, most importantly, why it did so.

Steve says

It is now 30 years since the Falklands War. I was in the UK at the time, as well as being in New York having dinner with an Argentinian colleague when the announcement was made of H.M.S. Sheffield being sunk. Emotional times.

It was an unnecessary war (aren't they all?) caused by the failure of successive governments in the UK to deal with the problem of sovereignty. The invasion was rash, and the response (sending a "task force") rasher. But "we" (the Brits) overcame the odds and I suppose that being the more war-like nation, had better discipline. The Argentinians would not back down because of machismo, and the Brits would not back down

because of principle.

So they fought, and after some near-defeats by the loss of ships, the Brits got ashore and fought against an unprepared and inexperienced enemy. It could have gone so wrong: If the Argentinians knew how to fuse their bombs correctly, if their navy had come out to sink the carriers with Exocets, if Harriers had not been available.

The result was a victory for the UK, especially for Margaret Thatcher. It restored pride internally in Britain, but it was not a victory in the same way as at the end of WWII.

I should have read this in 1983. I didn't, and I am happy I have read it now.

Karen P says

A very readable history of not just the Falklands War but the politics behind it and the long history of the attempts made to come to some kind of agreement.
