

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Falklands War in British Filmography and Literature

Diplomová Práce

Jan Konečný

Anglická filologie / historie

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2018

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto práci vypracoval samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedl jsem všechny použité zdroje a literaturu.

V dne Podpis

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Pavlína Flajšarová Ph.D. for her help and valuable advice. I also thank my family for their support.

Obsah

Introduction	5
The History of the Falkland Islands	7
The War	11
The Falklands Play	18
The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman	29
An Ungentlemanly Act	38
Tumbledown	52
Conclusion	60
Resumé	66
Works cited	71
Shrnutí	74
Annotation	79
Anotace	80

Introduction

The Falklands War (1982) is the most recent armed conflict, in which the Great Britain suffered considerable loss of life. This paper aims to show that the war is still a controversial event in the British society—that there are those who believe that the actions of the British government were justifiable and there are those who consider the whole conflict an unnecessary act of violence. I will show how the Falklands conflict is portrayed in some works of British literature and filmography and through that the various views on the conflict present in the British society. Additionally, it will be pointed out that the arguments supporting these views are often valid, regardless of whether they condemn the British actions or justify it.

To achieve the aims of my thesis, I intend to analyze several chosen works of British literature and filmography and confront their view of the Falklands conflict with the real events or, at least, with the conclusions of professional historians. At first, I will briefly tell the history of the Falkland Islands, then I will try to objectively describe the Falklands War as a historical event. My description is based mainly on several works written by professional historians or political scientist, such as, Jaroslav Hrbek's *Falklandská válka, 1982*, Jiří Chalupa's *Dějiny Argentiny, Uruguayee a Chile*, Hynek Fajmon's *Margaret Thatcherová a její politika* and John Campbell's *Margaret Thatcher, The Iron Lady*.

In the following chapters I intend to analyze several works of British literary and film fiction. These include: Ian Curteis's drama movie *The Falklands Play* (first broadcasted in 2002) mostly depicting the actions of the British Prime minister, Margaret Thatcher and her conservative government during the war. Raymond

Briggs's graphic novel *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* telling a simple story about a war between two gigantic robots but at the same time including a satire of the Falklands conflict. A television film, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, which tells a story of a British marine squad serving on the islands and fighting the first battles with Argentine forces. Ultimately, I will analyze Richard Eyre's *Tumbledown*, which is based on first-hand experiences of a Falklands veteran, Scots Guards lieutenant Robert Lawrence who was seriously injured during the battle of mount Tumbledown, one of the toughest fights of the Falklands War. To complement my analysis, I will use reviews and various newspaper articles concerning the works in question.

The History of the Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands is group of two large and approximately 200 smaller islands situated roughly 300 miles to South American coast. In 1690 a British ship called *Welfare* was probably the first to land on the islands. Its captain, John Strong, named the strait between the two largest islands the Falkland Sound after the head of the British navy, Viscount of Falkland. Thus, the archipelago began to be called the Falkland Islands.¹

In 1764 a French captain, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, established the first settlement, Port Louis, on the main eastern island. He also named the islands *Îles Malouines* (after the port he had sailed from—Saint-Malo). This gave rise to the Argentine name for the islands, *Islas Malvinas*. In 1766 captain John MacBride founded a British settlement, Port Egmont, on one of the smaller islands. Whether the British and the French settlers were aware of each other's presence remains unclear.²

The establishment of the French settlement outraged the Spaniards, who considered the whole South America (with the exception of Portuguese Brazil) to be their possession. In 1767 the French settlement was peacefully taken over by the Spaniards and Port Luis was renamed Puerto Soledad and it became the seat of the Spanish Governor. The whole Archipelago was officially named *Islas Malvinas*.³

A few years later the Spaniards discovered the British settlement, Port Egmont, and called a war expedition numbering several warships and over a thousand soldiers. After a short battle, the Britons were forced to leave. However, because the danger of

¹ Jaroslav Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy 1982* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999), 8.

² Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 8–9.

³ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 9.

British retaliation was imminent, the Spaniards allowed the renewal of the British settlement but did not surrender the sovereignty over the islands. The British settlement lasted only a few years. In 1774 the British government decided to abandon the settlement due to financial reasons. Before their departure, the Britons left at the settlement a lead plaque declaring that the whole Falkland Islands remain under the rule of king George III.⁴

The Spaniards controlled the islands until 1811 and used them as a penal colony. The archipelago became well-known for its inhospitality. The Spaniards had to leave the islands in 1811 because of the Latin American wars of independence. Before their departure, they left in Puerto Soledad a lead plaque with a declaration that the islands belong to the Spanish king, Ferdinand VII. In the following years no one ruled the islands. They were only visited by seal hunters. In 1820 an Argentine warship landed on the islands, its crew proclaimed the islands an Argentine dependency and raised an Argentine flag. A permanent garrison, however, was not left on the islands. Puerto Soledad was renewed in 1826 under the Argentine administration but its governors had constant problems with keeping order and there were several rebellions against them. In 1833 a British cutter named *Clio* sailed to the islands. The crew raised the British flag and declared British sovereignty over the archipelago. All the Argentine soldiers and some of the settlers were forced to leave. The British administration of the islands lasted 149 years, up until 1982.⁵

In 1840 the islands were proclaimed a British colony and were governed by a British governor. Then the Falkland Islands Company started to colonize the islands,

⁴ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 9.

⁵ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 10.

buying the soil and building settlements and warehouses. The colonists, coming mainly from Scotland, made their living mostly on sheep farming. In 1880's the Argentine government raised claim on the islands, but the British government refused it, stating that the islands became a prosperous colony under the British administration.⁶

During both World Wars the Falkland Islands served as a military base and a rally point for the British navy. When the World War II ended the British forces left. Shortly after that, the Argentine president Juan Domingo Perón raised the question of the sovereignty over the islands in order to increase his popularity. Even though Perón was overthrown by a military coup, the idea of gaining control over the Malvinas remained a declared goal of all following Argentine governments.⁷

During the global decolonization process in 1960's, the United Nations included the Falkland Islands in the list of territories that should have been decolonized and recognized the Argentine name Malvinas as an official name of the islands. Both sides, Argentina and Great Britain, were bidden to solve the dispute peacefully. The UN resolution number 2065 invited both sides to find a peaceful solution, which would "bear in mind the interests of the population of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)." At first, the Great Britain reacted positively and was willing to negotiate about the sovereignty over the islands. However, the Falkland Islanders (who were mostly of British descent and who had their representatives in the UK Parliament) forced the British government to withdraw the question of the sovereignty from the negotiations. The negotiations continued but to no avail. In 1977, the option of a leaseback of the Falklands to the Britain after a formal handover of the sovereignty to Argentina

⁶ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 10–11.

⁷ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 11.

appeared. Nonetheless, this option was met with a resistance of the Falklands lobby in the Parliament and thus it was refused.⁸

The Argentines soon realized that it was impossible to come to an agreement in the question of the sovereignty. The British government did not realize that the futility of the negotiations increased the risk of an Argentine aggression and did not strengthen the defenses of the Falklands, even though the Falklanders asked them to do so. On the contrary—in 1981 the British government declared their intention to withdraw all armed forces from the south Atlantic and to call off the only British military ship operating in that area, HMS *Endurance*.⁹

On the other hand, the new Argentine military junta led by Leopoldo Galtieri inferred that it was necessary to create a pressure on the British government in order to overcome the pressure of the Falklands lobby. The Argentines leaders were well aware of the fact that regaining the Malvinas before the 150th anniversary of the British occupation would have provided them with substantial popular support. Regaining the Malvinas became a part of Argentine national heritage, whereas the British public was not very interested in the remote and inhospitable islands—until the spring 1982.¹⁰

⁸ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 12.

⁹ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 13.

¹⁰ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 13.

The War

The stagnation of the diplomatic negotiations urged the junta to take a decisive step, as the economic situation in Argentina was dire and the junta was losing its ground. The military junta had ruled Argentine since 1976. In 1981 there was a coup after which general Leopoldo Galtieri (who became the president), admiral Jorge Anaya and Air Brigadier Basilio Lami Dozo seized the power. In the period before the war, the new junta resorted to ever-growing repressions, which aroused civil riots. Thus, the junta needed to achieve some political success and to distract the public attention at the same time. Regaining the Malvinas would have provided both. Moreover, the declared British intention to withdraw all military units from the South Atlantic led the junta to believe that the Britons are not willing to defend the islands anymore. The Argentine leaders also supposed that after a successful invasion on the islands the Britons would not be willing to waste resources to regain such a remote territory. Towards the end of March 1982, the British intelligence informed the government that the Argentines are preparing an invasion, but no decisive actions were taken. When the invasion started, it was already too late to prevent it.¹¹

The Argentine forces invaded the Falkland Island on 2 April 1982. The invasion was to be carried out without civilian casualties and if possible without killing any British soldiers. This was probably because the Argentines did not want to give the British a reason to retaliate. There was only a small British garrison on the islands, which, however, made a stand against the invaders and killed one of the Argentine

¹¹ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 14, 17, 18, 19, 45, 54.

soldiers. Nevertheless, the British marines were forced to surrender because they were heavily outnumbered. None of the British defenders was killed.¹²

Shortly after the news of the Argentine invasion reached the UK, an emergency meeting was called to the House of Commons and it was decided that a task force to retake the islands would be created. Also, a War Cabinet (led by Margaret Thatcher) was established and was charged to direct the British counteroffensive in South Atlantic. The task force set sail on 5 April and headed for Ascension Islands (mid-Atlantic) where a British military base was to be established. From here the British forces were to sail to South Atlantic. The task force comprised of two aircraft carriers, several tens of minor vessels, two ocean liners, and three submarines, one of which was nuclear-powered. Later on, the Britons sent more ships to join the task force.¹³

After the Argentine invasion, new diplomatic negotiations between both sides started. Neither of the countries wanted to escalate the conflict if it was not necessary. The Argentine leaders still hoped that the Britons would not be really willing to risk the life of their soldiers in an attempt to retake the islands. The Britons, on the other hand, hoped that once the Argentines see the British determination embodied in the large task force, they will withdraw their troops.¹⁴

On 4 April United Nations Security Council was assembled. After a vote, on the basis of a British proposal, the council passed an official resolution (UN Resolution 502), according to which the hostility between both countries was to be ceased immediately and the Argentine forces were to withdraw from the islands. Both states were also called on to find a diplomatic solution without engaging in any military

¹² Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 57.

¹³ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 62, 63, 64.

¹⁴ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 82, 86, 100, 104.

conflict. Later, the UK gained the support of European Economic community which imposed economic sanctions on Argentina. Argentina gained political and material support from some South American countries.¹⁵

At the beginning of the conflict, the United States, who had good relationships with both belligerents, tried to mediate a diplomatic solution. The US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, strived to broker an agreement between the Argentine and British governments. The Argentines, nevertheless, repeatedly refused Haig's proposals and offered their own terms, which in turn seemed unacceptable to the Britons. Thus, Haig's pendular diplomacy was fruitless and the US eventually sided with the British and provided them with material support and important intelligence on Argentine operations.¹⁶

When Haig's shuttle diplomacy failed, the British government was prepared to launch the counter-invasion. Such action, however, seemed very difficult, especially because the Argentines had substantially more numerous air fleet. The British commanders wanted to weaken the Argentine air superiority by destroying the Falklands airports. Thus, a British strategic bomber was sent to attack the airport in Stanley. Even though the bombing did not cause estimated damage, the airport was damaged enough to be unusable for the Argentine jet fighters, which substantially hampered the Argentine air operations. In the following days there were repeated aircraft clashes in which the Argentines suffered substantially more damage and losses than the Britons.¹⁷

¹⁵ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 73, 80, 86.

¹⁶ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 80, 104.

¹⁷ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 110–113; Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands* (Norton, 1983), 115.

As the British forces closed the Falklands Islands, the naval fights also escalated. The British carrier HMS *Invincible* came to a dangerous situation, as the Argentine warships launched a pincer movement to outflank *Invincible*, which they could have sunk using the feared Exocet missiles. This constituted a serious threat to the British forces because losing an aircraft carrier could have endangered the whole British campaign. In order to prevent such incident, the British command sent the nuclear-powered submarine HMS *Conqueror* to neutralize one of the Argentine warships, which would have served as one arm of the pincer—*General Belgrano*. Although *Belgrano* was not in British maritime exclusion zone and suddenly changed its course and headed for the Argentine mainland, it was sunk by *Conqueror* because it still constituted a serious threat to the British aircraft carriers. The British command assumed *Belgrano* could have been carrying the Exocet missiles and that it was only maneuvering by heading back to Argentine coast. Sinking of *Belgrano* brought death to 323 crew members and another 700 hundred had to be rescued from the open sea. The fact that a modern British submarine sank an old Argentine cruiser killing nearly a third of its crew provoked severe criticism of the British command. Later it was also revealed, that *Belgrano* was not carrying the Exocet missiles. However, even though *Belgrano* was not carrying Exocets and was not in the British exclusion zone, it still posed a threat to the British forces and the British command had warned the Argentines prior to the sinking that *any* ships posing a threat to the British forces will be sunk *regardless* of their position. Moreover, in 2003, *Belgrano's* captain, Hector

Bonzo revealed that the cruiser's change of course was only a maneuver and that he had orders to sink any British warships he would encounter.¹⁸

After this incident a British ship was sunk in return. HMS *Sheffield* was attacked by the Argentine naval aviation fighters which hit *Sheffield* with Exocet missiles. Twenty crew members died, and the rest abandoned the ship before it sank. For the Britons this was the first heavy loss in the war.¹⁹

The losses on both sides led the UN to attempt again to mediate a peaceful solution. Through the UN mediation, the Britons proposed a withdrawal of both armies, after which the islands would be temporarily administrated by the UN until the question of sovereignty would be solved. The UN administration would cooperate with the islanders' representatives. The Argentines refused this proposal, which meant that the diplomatic negotiations definitely failed. After that, the British War Cabinet approved the disembarkation of the British forces on the Falkland Islands.²⁰

The disembarkation took place at night on 21 April in San Carlos (East Falkland) and was met with minimal resistance because the Argentines were taken by surprise. By the dawn, the Britons managed to set up a base in San Carlos. Other British forces continued disembarking in San Carlos during following days. In the meantime, the naval and air battles continued with casualties on both sides.²¹

From San Carlos, The British troops proceeded inland to take other strategic points. The British attacked two settlements defended by Argentine infantry—Darwin

¹⁸ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 116, 118–119; Peter Beaumont, "Belgrano crew trigger happy," *The Guardian*, May 25, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/25/uk.world>.

¹⁹ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 122–123.

²⁰ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 130.

²¹ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 134–137.

and Goose Green. The battle of Goose Green was one of the toughest infantry clashes of the war, during which 17 British and 47 Argentine soldiers were killed.²²

Apart from the battle of Goose Green the Britons won several other key battles and were ready to strike at the islands' capital, Stanley, where the main portion of the Argentine ground forces was stationed. The Argentines held a number of well defended high ground positions around Stanley and the Britons had to attack several of them simultaneously supported by fire from the British warships. After three days of heavy fighting, at the cost of heavy losses on both sides, the Britons finally broke the defense perimeter around Stanley. The Argentine commander in the town realized, that further resistance would be pointless and negotiated a ceasefire with the Britons.²³

When the defense of Stanley, which was strategically most vital point of the islands, was no longer possible, the Argentine leaders realized the hopelessness of their situation and surrendered. The capitulation was signed on 14 June 1982. After that, the Argentines soldiers began withdrawing from the islands and status quo ante bellum was restored. The British were victorious.²⁴

The Falklands War lasted for more than two months. 649 Argentines and 255 Britons died. Also, 3 Falkland Islanders were killed by British bombing. In the UK, the British triumph aroused public excitement and national pride and significantly contributed to Margaret Thatcher's reelection in 1983. In Argentina, the tragic defeat brought the fall of the military junta and the return to democracy.²⁵

²² Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 160.

²³ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 194, 196, 198–199.

²⁴ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 200.

²⁵ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 201, 204.

The Falklands Play

The Falklands Play, a BBC drama movie by Ian Curteis, was originally meant to be produced in 1983 but it was postponed because the Falklands conflict was still a too sensitive topic for the British society, as it had ended barely a year before the planned production. Curteis resumed his work on the play in 1985 and it was scheduled for broadcast in 1987 but was cancelled again, allegedly due to upcoming elections, which could have been strongly influenced by the play. *The Falklands Play* was eventually finished and broadcast in 2002 in a truncated form.²⁶

The play mainly depicts the political aspect of the conflict and shows the diplomatic and tactical struggle of the main players, where it focuses almost exclusively on the British side—the only Argentine actually appearing in the movie is the foreign minister, Costa Mendez, who only gets a few lines of dialogue. The leader of the Argentinian junta, Leopoldo Galtieri, is heard to deliver a few sentences via the phone when talking with president Reagan but he is never shown in person.

As for the play's immediate reception, the Curteis's movie was criticized for portraying Margaret Thatcher and the then British government too positively—Andrew Billen, a staff writer on the *London Evening Standard* newspaper wrote: "I have never seen patrician Tories portrayed so sympathetically on TV."²⁷ Billen also adds that Thatcher is shown as vulnerable and wracked by guilt over the sinking of *General Belgrano*. The political bias is undoubtedly present in the play, especially in several important details (which will later be discussed in this paper). In my opinion, however,

²⁶ Andrew Billen, "Mrs. T and sympathy," *New Statesman*, April 15, 2002, <https://www.newstatesman.com/node/155381>.

²⁷ Billen, "Mrs. T and sympathy."

from today's point view, the movie offers some morally valid arguments that might, at least to some extent, justify the attitude and actions of Margaret Thatcher and the then British government. I will try to show that some of those who criticized Margaret Thatcher and the British government at that time, might have overlooked some arguments, which are emphasized in the movie and which were later used to reassess the moral and political aspect of the Falklands War.²⁸

The play opens when Nicholas Ridley, a British Conservative Party politician and diplomat responsible for the affair of the Falkland Islands, gives a speech in the parliament and puts forward the Argentinian proposal according to which Argentina would take over the sovereignty over the islands in exchange for the option to lease them back to the British government. This statement is met with outright refusal, as surrendering the sovereignty over the islands to the Argentinians would be against the wishes of the British people living on the islands. One of the strongest arguments for Britons to insist on keeping the sovereignty over the islands is thus stated in the very beginning of the movie—the islanders were British, and they wished to remain under the British sovereignty. Thatcher herself speaks about the Falklander as about “our people” and when she announces in the parliament (after the Argentinian invasion to the islands) that the British taskforce will set sail toward the Falklands she says: “The people of the Falkland Islands, like the people of the United Kingdom, are an island race. Their way of life is British. Their allegiance is to the Crown. They are few in number, but they have the right to live in peace and to choose their way of life and their allegiance. It is the wish of the British people and it is the duty of our majesty’s

²⁸ Billen, “Mrs. T and sympathy.”

government to do everything we can to uphold that right.”²⁹ As can be seen, this circumstance—the wishes of the islanders, their right for self-determination and the fact that they felt to be British—is pointed out in the movie.³⁰

The emphasis which the movie places on the islander’s wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom can hardly be criticized, as it was the real state of affairs at that time. The islanders (who were mostly of British descent) were resolved to stay under the British sovereignty and it was them who made the British diplomats remove the question of sovereignty from their negotiations with the Argentines.³¹

The argument that it was the islander’s future that was the British government’s biggest concern is supported by the fact that the strategical and economic unimportance of the Falkland Islands is reminded on several occasions. When talking to Galtieri, president Reagan calls them “those little islands down there”³² and he is not even able to recall their name. He thinks the whole conflict is “a little scrap over some old British sheep pasture”³³. The U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, calls the Falklands “some bleak little rocks at the end of nowhere.”³⁴ The play thus implies that it was not so much the Falkland Islands themselves that were important for the British government but rather the people living on them.

Moreover, when the oil and mineral deposits under the islands (which were not very rich in reality) are raised as a possible reason for the British intransigence in the matter, Reagan says that the conflict is not about the resources but about pride

²⁹ Ian Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, directed by Ian Curteis (2002; London, BBC, 2011), DVD, 00:22:10–22:38.

³⁰ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

³¹ Jaroslav Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy 1982* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999), 13.

³² Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

³³ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 00:22:01–22:04.

³⁴ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 00:39:23–39:26.

and patriotism and Haig adds that it is about principle as well. This principle was another important aspect of the conflict. The Britons simply did not want to succumb to an aggression. The reasons for such attitude are another of the play's key themes. It is repeatedly reminded—and it was the truth—that Argentina was the aggressor. They failed to reach their goals through diplomatic negotiations, and so they resorted to a military invasion. The Britons thus only defended a territory which was legally theirs. In a scene when Thatcher is advised not to answer the Argentinian invasion with sending in the fleet, she says that yielding to the aggression would “send a signal round the entire world, to all aggressive, greedy states and dictators that they can just march in and grab and get away with whatever they want because the democracies are too feeble to say no”³⁵. In my opinion, this is a very insightful statement because the history has proven many times over that giving the aggressors what they want only makes them want more and inspires other aggressors. The play thus emphasizes the fact that it was the Argentinians who used force first, which might have been played down by some people because Argentina was economically much weaker than Britain and thus might have been perceived as the victim who was only trying to gain a territory which rightfully belonged to it because of its proximity to Argentina.³⁶

The idea that appeasing the aggressors is never an appropriate solution is elaborated when Thatcher proclaims that “only one thing makes war justified and lawful, only one thing—when it is a struggle for law against force, for people's laws, their language and way of life, everything that makes them what they are, against a brutal effort to impose on them a life and language and laws, which are not theirs and

³⁵ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 00:15:58–16:10

³⁶ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 15, 17, 103, 104; Curteis

which they do not want.”³⁷ To this she adds that if the Britain is wrong in this conflict, it was wrong to fight Hitler and other infamous dictators too. This is a scene of Thatcher’s private conversation with the British Foreign Secretary, Francis Pym, and because I have not found any record of such conversation, I am led to believe that it is a product of Curteis’s fantasy. Nevertheless, in television interviews, the real Margaret Thatcher was recorder to say that “[...] to see that an invader does not succeed is to stop further invasions and to really stand up for international law against international anarchy” and she also remarked that giving up “to an invader and an aggressor and a military dictator would be treachery or betrayal of our own people.”³⁸ This shows that Curteis’s Thatcher used very similar argumentation and rhetoric as the real one.

Comparing the then Argentinian regime to the Nazi Germany might not be so exaggerated as it might seem, considering that the Argentinian junta was an authoritative, right-wing government, which was known to be brutal and oppressive, often resorting to torture and executions. The brutal and immoral nature of the Argentinian regime is emphasized several times in the movie, especially in relation to the future of the Falkland Islanders, who would fall victim to this regime should the British government fail to protect them. This idea is promoted, for example, when Thatcher learns about the Argentinian proposal including taking over the sovereignty over the Falklands by the Argentina in exchange for the option to lease them back to the United Kingdom. She is convinced that it is wrong “...even to consider just handing

³⁷ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 01:26:00–01:26:22.

³⁸ George Russell; Bonnie Angelo and Gavin Scott, “Now, Alas, The Guns of May,” *Times*, May 10, 1982, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=20&sid=b04fa7bc-2cb5-46d8-8be1-e1195e7ef830%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=JmxhbmcyY3Mmc2l0ZT1lZHMtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=54222899&db=edb>.

over two thousands of our own people to an evil regime like that”³⁹ and she adds that the potential leaseback would be instantly dishonored by the Argentinians.⁴⁰

The Argentinian regime’s corruptness is proved by the fact that it was its unpopularity among its own citizens that made the junta invade the Falklands in the first place. The junta needed to improve the state’s poor economic situation and they believed that gaining control over the Falklands would be a great asset in this matter because of the islands’ mineral and oil deposits. The internally unstable regime also needed the people to focus their attention on an external problem, in which the junta succeeded—a wave of nationalism swept through the Argentina at the beginning of the conflict and the people supported the junta in its efforts to gain control over the Falklands. Nevertheless, after the British victory, the junta quickly became hated again and was overthrown shortly after the war ended and democracy was established in Argentina. Some historian even say that the British victory liberated no only the Falkland Islanders but the Argentinians as well.⁴¹

One of the most dramatic moments of the war (and of the movie) is the sinking an Argentinian war ship, *General Belgrano*, by the British forces. *General Belgrano* was an Argentinian cruiser which, despite its obsolete design, posed a threat to the British naval forces and the British assumed that it might have been carrying Exocet missiles (which it had not, as was later found out). When British intelligence obtained the information that the Argentine forces were about to launch a pincer movement (led on one side by *General Belgrano*) against the British forces, British commanders became

³⁹ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 00:04:00–00:04:04.

⁴⁰ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 14-15; Jiří Chalupa, *Dějiny Argentiny, Uruguayee, Chile* (Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2002), 255.

⁴¹ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 15.

afraid that one of their carriers could be sunk. In order to prevent that they decided to destroy one arm of the pincer—the one led by *General Belgrano*. This decision had to be made quickly because *Conqueror*, the nuclear submarine pursuing *General Belgrano*, could have lost the cruiser in the shallow waters of Burdwood. Thus, Thatcher called an unofficial, emergency meeting of the War Cabinet to Chequers, at which only some of the members were present—that is also why there is no official record of this meeting. The present members agreed on giving *Conqueror* the permission to sink *General Belgrano*—even though the cruiser had changed the course and headed back to Argentinian shore shortly before the meeting started. The British command decided to sink *Belgrano* regardless of its course because it still posed a potential threat to the British forces and could have launch an attack any minute. *Belgrano* was thus sunk and there were heavy casualties (out of 1042 men 368 died), which was partly caused by the fact that Argentinian destroyers accompanying *General Belgrano* fled instead of rescuing the crew of the sunk cruiser. British War Cabinet was immediately criticized for this action and was blamed for the tragic loss of life, as nearly one third of the *Belgrano's* crew died. Another problem was that *Belgrano* was outside of the British exclusion zone (area in which all enemy ships were to be sunk without warning) when it was sunk. Many of the Great Britain's allies were shocked at this escalation of the war. The *Falklands Play's* portrayal of the events described above is quite precise and it includes some crucial details, which might provide a better explanation and maybe a justification of the British actions.⁴²

The fact that *Belgrano* was not in the exclusion zone when it was sunk only contributed to the criticism of the British. There is one thing, however, that many of

⁴² Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 116,118-119; Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

the critics at that time overlooked but which is mentioned in the movie—the Britons warned the Argentinian government that any enemy ship which would pose threat to the British forces in the South Atlantic would be sunk regardless of its position. This is clearly stated in the movie during a scene that depicts the emergency meeting in Chequers. The Britons issued this warning nine days prior to the attack on *Belgrano* and then again two days before that. Thus, the Argentinian Government must have been aware that their ships could have been sunk even outside the exclusion zone.⁴³

Another key information that *The Falklands Play* stresses is that even though the British were not entirely sure that *Belgrano* was carrying Exocet missiles, it was still highly probable that it was since all larger Argentinian warships were armed with Exocets and the British could not have known that *Belgrano* was an exception. With Exocet missiles, *Belgrano* could have easily sunk the British carriers, which were irreplaceable. Moreover, even without Exocet missiles, *Belgrano* still posed threat as it was the second largest ship in the Argentinian fleet and it was ordered to attack the British ships wherever it would find them. All these crucial facts are stated in *The Falklands Play* as it depicts how the undoubtedly difficult decision to sink *General Belgrano* was made by Margaret Thatcher and her War Cabinet. The difficulty of this decision is emphasized as the members of the Cabinet consider the strategical, diplomatic and moral consequences, which the sinking of the cruiser might have. Surprisingly, the watcher is informed, although very briefly, that the British War Cabinet knew that *Belgrano* was heading back to the Argentinian shore when they ordered the attack, which was true. Despite the movie's obvious pro-British tendencies, the director decided to include information that might support the

⁴³ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 119; Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

criticism of the British actions. Thus, it cannot be said that the *Falklands Plays* is completely biased.⁴⁴

In the scene following the sinking of *Belgrano* John Nott (Secretary of State for Defense) makes a statement in the parliament about the attack on the cruiser, in which he admits that the loss of life was tragic, but he also emphasizes that the casualties might have been far lesser if the other Argentinian ships had not sailed away and started rescuing the cruiser's crew instead. When the opposition blames Margaret Thatcher for being responsible for the massive loss of life, the Prime Minister reminds that the Argentinian government was warned that their ships would be sunk if they constituted a direct threat to the British forces and she stresses that the British government must primarily consider the protection of the British soldiers. Then she expresses her fears about the potential future events: "The worry that I live with hourly is that attacking Argentine forces may now get through and sink some of our ships"⁴⁵. This is nearly a literal quotation of what the real Prime Minister said in the House of Commons after *General Belgrano* was sunk. One cannot be sure whether the protection of the British soldiers was really in the War Cabinet's best interest when they gave the order to sink *Belgrano*, but it is still a valid argument and *The Falklands Play* explains that well.⁴⁶

Ultimately, one of the of the mitigating circumstances for the British which is promoted in the *Falklands Play* is the UN Security Council resolution 502, according to

⁴⁴ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 116; Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

⁴⁵ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 01:18:57–01:19:04.

⁴⁶ George Russell; Bonnie Angelo and Gavin Scott, "Now, Alas, The Guns of May," *Times*, April 17, 1982, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=33&sid=b04fa7bc-2cb5-46d8-8be1-e1195e7ef830%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=Jmxhbm9Y3Mmc210ZT1lZHMtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=54222941&db=asn>; Curteis, *The Falklands Play*.

which the Argentines were to immediately withdraw their troops from the Falkland Islands. This resolution was issued a whole month prior to the attack on *Belgrano* but the Argentines decided to ignore it, which deteriorated their position in the international relationships.⁴⁷

The movie depicts the Security Council meeting at which the resolution 502 was passed. The British and the Argentinian diplomats both try to convince the representatives of other countries to support their cause. The Briton points out that by the invasion the Argentines violated the international law and the UN charter about peaceful solutions of disputes, which they really did. The Argentine proclaims that the Falklands is a part of Argentine territory, which the British have taken by force at 1834, and that “such a criminal action can give rise to no rights at all.” The Argentine diplomat adds that the conquest of the islands was an act of colonialism and imperialism. Interestingly, there is a sequence when president Reagan too says that one of the reasons why the British are determined to defend the Falkland Islands is “the scars still hurt from the loss of the empire.”⁴⁸ In my reading, these allusions could mean that Curteis perceives the British imperialistic past as something problematic and controversial. Maybe that is why he so much stresses that the British government’s prime concern was the Falkland Islanders and not the islands themselves—to show that the imperialistic times are gone. In any case, the fact that the director decided to include such allusions in the movie might be seen as another proof that the movie is not entirely uncritical towards the British.

⁴⁷ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 73.

⁴⁸ Curteis, *The Falklands Play*, 00:21:18–00:21:20.

To draw a conclusion, *The Falklands Play's* message is that it was the Argentines who started the war and the Britons only defended their territory and primarily their people because the majority of the Falkland Islanders felt to be British and wanted to stay under the British administration. The British government did not want to go to war at first and rather solve the conflict through negotiations, but the leaders of the Argentine junta were too obstinate to be negotiated with. Thus, Margaret Thatcher and her War Cabinet had to do what was necessary to protect the Falkland Islanders from Argentine occupation because handing over almost two thousand British citizens to a brutal military regime was simply not an option, at least not for the Iron Lady. Even though the reality might not have been this simple, the *Falkland Play* surely makes some rightful statements. Most of the Falkland conflict's key events are depicted quite precisely and correctly, as can be seen for instance in the scenes concerning the sinking of *Belgrano*, which proves that Curteis had done a thorough research into the conflict before he wrote the screenplay. He even left some space for some anti-British arguments, although very little. Curteis really tried to tell the real story with a minimal fabrication and even though the *Falklands Play* apparently adopts a pro-British stance and is told from the British point of view, its arguments are mostly based on verified information and, with the hindsight, they definitely have some validity.

The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman

Raymond Briggs's graphic novel *The Tin Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (first published in 1984) expresses a lot with its very title—this supposedly children's book can be read as a political satire, which, in addition, appeals on humanitarian values. "The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman was also as much humanitarian as political..."⁴⁹ writes Nicholas Wroe from *The Guardian*. Despite its simplicity and shortness, it offers some interesting observations about and allusions to the Falklands conflict. In one level, this graphic novel tells a simple story about a war over "sad little island at the bottom of the world" led by two inhuman, robot-like figures—the Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman. In another, implicit level, the novel expresses a criticism of the Falklands War and both belligerents.⁵⁰

Unlike the movie *Falklands Play*, this graphic novel does not depict the political and strategic events of the war, nor does it strive to find a justification of the British actions. On the contrary, the book condemns the Falklands War as an unnecessary act of violence, for which *both* sides (especially their supreme leaders) bear responsibility. This criticism of Leopoldo Galtieri and Margaret Thatcher is most notable in the way they are depicted—they are not humans but gigantic robots who are not made of flesh and bones but from metal. The Tin-Pot Foreign General (Galtieri) is made of tin pots, which refers to the term tin-pot dictator, which is usually used to describe an

⁴⁹ Nicholas Wroe, "Bloomin' Christmas," *The Guardian*, December 18, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/dec/18/featuresreviews.guardianreview8>.

⁵⁰ Raymond Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* (London: Penguin Books, 2013) Kobo eBooks.

autocratic, selfish political leader. The Old Iron Woman (Thatcher) refers to Margaret Thatcher's sobriquet, Iron Lady.⁵¹

The fact that the leaders of both sides are depicted as enormous metal robots alludes to the power and influence they had in real life—they could, and they did, send ordinary soldiers to kill one another. The fact that Thatcher and Galtieri are depicted as artificial figures suggests that they feel no emotions and have no sympathy for the soldiers whom they send to their death. Apart from being made of metal, The Old Iron Woman and the Tin-Pot Foreign general are described as “not real” which probably implies that they are not like ordinary people—those can be injured or killed, while their leaders (Thatcher and Galtieri in this case) remain in safety, pulling the proverbial strings. In contrast to that, the soldiers “were all real men, made of flesh and blood. They were not made of Tin or of Iron.”⁵² These ordinary soldiers are sent by their merciless robotic leaders to fight one another, and as “real” men they are killed and maimed. The part of the novel which describes the fighting is rather depressive and even though the book is rather short and simply written, it is very expressive and outright in its description of the war: “Some men were shot. Some men were drowned. Some men were burned alive. Some men were blown to bits. Some men were only half blown to bits and came home with parts of their bodies missing.”⁵³ Even the pictures accompanying this raw description are bleak—unlike the pictures in the rest of the book, these are not elaborate and colorful but simple and drawn only with a pencil. This serves to emphasize that the Falklands War was (as all wars) a terrible event,

⁵¹ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁵² Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁵³ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

which only brought death and suffering. This is probably the most prominent message of the work. Yet, there is more to the book than just a simple condemnation of war and violence in general. Briggs aims his criticism also very specifically—at the supreme political leaders of both belligerents, Thatcher and Galtieri. Both are depicted as inhuman, bellicose machines driven only by their lust for power.⁵⁴

As for the Tin-Pot Foreign General, he is portrayed as a typical military dictator with a general hat on his head and a twisted moustache. On the hat, which also serves as a symbol of the Argentinian military regime, there is a golden letter “G”, which probably stands for general, but it undoubtedly points to Galtieri as well. In one hand the General holds a simpler version of the Argentinian flag and a bloodied knife in the other. In my reading, the knife symbolizes the violent nature of the then Argentinian regime and of Galtieri himself. Such portrayal is hardly surprising, given the reputation of the Argentinian junta, which, as we have mentioned in the previous chapter, really was a violent and oppressive regime.⁵⁵

Brigg’s view of Galtieri as a petty dictator motivated mainly by his personal ambitions is also made apparent by the fact that in the book the Tin-Pot General decides to take the Falklands (“the sad little island”) because he “...wanted to be Important. He wanted to do something Historical, so that his name would be printed in all the big History Books.”⁵⁶ From this we can see that Briggs does not hint at any political and strategic developments that preceded the Falklands conflict but simply blames the Argentinian aggression on Galtieri’s ambitiousness. Of course, this simplification could have been used because the book is on the whole written in a

⁵⁴ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁵⁵ Chalupa, *Dějiny Argentiny, Uruguaye, Chile*, 255.

⁵⁶ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

simple way. It is highly probable, however, that Briggs's really did see Galtieri as the chief instigator of the Argentinian aggression, which would not be far from the truth because Galtieri really played a major role in initiating the conflict. After his rise to power in November 1981 (just a few months prior to the war) his position was rather weak as he lacked the popular support and therefore he needed to achieve some political or military success. Gaining control over the long-disputed Falkland Islands would surely provide him the lacking support. However, according to historians, admiral Jorge Anaya was the main supporter of the military solution.⁵⁷

Briggs' writing also makes Galtieri look like an unrestricted leader, which is not completely untrue because Galtieri held a major portion of power in Argentina. Nevertheless, his power was partly restricted by the military junta of which he was the president and the decision to invade the Falklands had to be approved of by the junta first.⁵⁸

This Briggs's negative assessment of Galtieri and his regime was understandable and more-or-less adequate. What is remarkable, is Briggs's portrayal of Margaret Thatcher (The Old Iron Woman)—it is equally negative as the portrayal of Galtieri. As well as Galtieri, Thatcher is portrayed as a huge, wicked, robotic figure with a villainous expression in its face. The Old Iron Woman has cannons protruding from her breasts, which probably symbolizes Thatcher's uncompromising nature. In addition, The Old Iron Woman goes to war with The Tin-Pot General because she, as she says, "bagsied it (the sad little island) AGES ago"⁵⁹, which might imply that Thatcher was, as well as Galtieri, driven by her personal ambitions (and it might be an

⁵⁷ Hrbek: *Válka o Falklandy*, 14, 15.

⁵⁸ Hrbek: *Válka o Falklandy*, 17–18; Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁵⁹ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

allusion to the British colonial past as well). By depicting Thatcher similarly to Galtieri, Briggs virtually puts the two leaders on a par, which is surprisingly critical of Thatcher. It seems that Briggs views Thatcher to be the same type of an autocratic dictator as Galtieri. The book says that The Old Iron Woman had “lots of money and guns...”⁶⁰ and that “she got all her soldiers and all her guns, put them into the boats and sailed them over the sea to the sad little island.”⁶¹ Such statement makes Thatcher seem like an absolutist leader, which, of course, she was not. As the head of the War Cabinet, however, Thatcher (temporarily) had substantial military resources at her disposal, which she used very actively during the Falklands conflict. Additionally, before she goes to fight The Tin-Pot General, The Old Iron Woman says: “It’s so exciting to have a *real* crisis...,”⁶² which seems to imply that Thatcher took pleasure in the war. This allusion is probably based on the fact that Thatcher’s popularity rose due to the British victory in the war, which contributed to her reelection in 1983. A Czech historian, Jiří Chalupa, even claims that Thatcher used the xenophobic wave and nostalgia for the British empire and the victory in a “just war” to win the elections. Briggs probably had a similar opinion. Nevertheless, it was the British parliament that urged Thatcher to retake the islands—even by force if necessary. Despite that, she tried to regain the islands through negotiations first and only after the negotiations failed did she use the force. Here it should be noted that even though Briggs places the blame for the Falklands War chiefly on Thatcher and Galtieri, he realized that the war would not have started without a surge of fierce nationalism on both sides. The author alludes to this

⁶⁰ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁶¹ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁶² Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

fact at the very beginning of his book by citing two quotes condemning nationalism and patriotism.⁶³

Although Briggs's criticism of Margaret Thatcher might seem exaggerated, it may only be a hyperbole based on some aspects of Thatcher's policies, which did not concern the Falklands War itself but which might have made her look rather draconic to some people. For instance, Thatcher voted for restoration of birching as a legal punishment. She was also in favor of capital punishment. In general, she was known (and often criticized) for her forceful and intransigent policies, which, after all, gave rise to her sobriquet. Thus, Briggs's criticism of Thatcher could have been based on his opinion of her overall political career and her persona and not just on her actions during the Falklands crisis.⁶⁴

As for the Falklands War itself, Briggs simply condemned the whole conflict, which we have mentioned earlier. In addition, in his *The Tin-Pot Foreign General And The Old Iron Woman* he also tried to point out some facts which are important for assessing the moral aspect of the war. Firstly, Briggs points out the unimportance of the Falklands Islands—right in the beginning of the book he writes: "... down, at the bottom of the world, there was a sad little island. No one lived on the island except for a few poor shepherds."⁶⁵ It is the truth that, as was mentioned earlier, the Falkland Islands really had no strategic value and almost no valuable resources. By stressing the strategic unimportance of the islands Briggs supports what he implies later on in the book—that it was the ambitiousness and pettiness of Galtieri and Thatcher that

⁶³ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 96, 101; Chalupa, *Dějiny Argentiny, Uruguayee, Chile*, 256; Hynek Fajmon, *Margaret Thatcherová a její politika* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2010), 164–165; Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁶⁴ John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher: The Grocer's Daughter* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 134, 151.

⁶⁵ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

escalated the Falklands conflict rather than the need to control the islands for strategic reasons. Thus, apparently, Briggs (unlike Ian Curteis) did not accept Thatcher's claim that it was the Falklanders' wish to stay under the British administration, which was her prime concern and the chief reason for going to war with Argentina. On the other hand, Briggs writes: "The poor shepherd did not like this at all because the Tin-Pot Foreign General started bossing them around."⁶⁶ This implies that he was obviously well aware of the Falklanders' aversion to the Argentinian control over the islands.⁶⁷

Secondly, Briggs writes: "Three of them (the poor shepherds) were killed in the battle but no one was to blame."⁶⁸ By this Briggs reminds that three Falkland civilians were killed by British bombing without the British public paying enough attention to that. Here, Briggs makes a valid point because the British public was so excited about the victory that almost no one mentioned the three dead civilians. The victory was celebrated as a huge success of Margaret Thatcher and her Conservative government, which is quite ironical because the Falkland Islanders' well-being was said to be the government's prime concern.⁶⁹

Finally, Briggs makes an allusion to a very sad occurrence regarding Lord Mayor's victory parade held to celebrate the British victory: "But the soldiers with bits of their bodies missing were not invited to take part in the Grand Parade in case the sight of them spoiled the rejoicing."⁷⁰ This is a completely rightful criticism of the

⁶⁶ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁶⁷ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 13.

⁶⁸ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

⁶⁹ Hrbek: *Válka o Falklandy*, 96; Fajmon, *Margaret Thatcherová*, 168–169.

⁷⁰ Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

British establishment's hypocrisy as some of the maimed soldiers really were not invited to the parade because "their injuries were insufficiently telegenic."⁷¹

On the whole, Raymond Briggs's *The Tin Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* condemns Falklands War as an event which caused too much human suffering without any justifiable reasons. He is at the same time severely critical of the supreme leaders of both sides on whom he places all the blame for the conflict. Unlike Ian Curteis in his *Falklands Play*, Briggs offers a very negative view of Margaret Thatcher. He portrays the British Prime minister as a rough military dictator comparable with the Argentinian leader, Leopoldo Galtieri. Briggs basically implies that both, Galtieri and Thatcher went to war to fulfill their personal ambitions and to get the needed popular support. While such negative judgement is understandable in case of Galtieri, it seems to be surprisingly harsh on Thatcher from a British author. Nevertheless, the British triumph in the Falklands War undoubtedly helped Thatcher win the elections in 1983. Moreover, she was by many considered to be too hard and uncompromising in her policies and she sometimes advocated harsh laws, which might also be the reason for Briggs's condemnation of the British Prime Minister.

Moreover, in contrast to Curteis, Briggs does not accept the idea that the protection of the Falkland Islanders and their way of life was the prime concern of Margaret Thatcher and her government. Curteis stressed this idea as a justification for the British counteroffensive on the islands, while Briggs apparently refuses such explanation and reminds the reader of the three Falkland Islanders who were killed by British shelling. Obviously, Briggs condemned the Falklands War as well as Margaret

⁷¹ Mark Townsend, "The hardest fight of all for a Falklands hero," *The Guardian*, January 14, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jan/14/falklands.world>; Briggs, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*.

Thatcher's general policy, for which he certainly had understandable reasons. Yet, it should be kept in mind that he wrote *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* merely two years after the Falklands War and thus could not have sufficient time distance to assess the events adequately. This is most notably reflected in his inability to see "the bigger picture" and to put the Falklands War in a broader context of British domestic and foreign policy, in which it played an important role. British government could not afford to let the Falkland Islanders—who were de facto Britons—be occupied by forces of a military regime because it would severely damage the government's credibility, which could lead to another, domestic problems. In addition, Margaret Thatcher put forward a valid argument when she said that letting a military regime seize a democratic territory with impunity would motivate similar regimes to do the same. Finally, there is the question of ethicality. It could have been hardly considered right to allow a military regime to control democratically thinking people.

An Ungentlemanly Act

A BBC television movie by Stuart Urban *An Ungentlemanly act* (first broadcasted in 1992) is a historical drama depicting the first days of the Falklands War. The movie is based on first-hand accounts by those who experienced the Argentine invasion on the Falkland Islands. The movie's authenticity was further enhanced by the fact that it was shot on the Falkland Islands. In the UK the movie was received well for its authentic and unbiased depiction of the true events.⁷²

An Ungentlemanly Act does not depict the whole Falklands War but only its beginning—the invasion of the Argentine forces on the Falkland Islands and the first clash between the British marines serving on the islands and the Argentine invaders. Unlike the *Falklands Play*, this movie does not show the high politics which stood behind the Falklands conflict, but it centers on the experiences of the ordinary soldiers and of the Falkland Islanders. The movie's protagonists are major Mike Norman, who arrived on the islands with his men to relieve the current British garrison, and Rex Hunt, the British governor of the Falkland Islands. The movie is narrated almost exclusively from the British point of view with only a few scenes showing the Argentine perspective.⁷³

As for the movie's authenticity, its account of the events largely corresponds to the conclusions of historians because the movie's authors, as well as historians, based their narration on firsthand witnesses. This fact is stated at the very beginning of the

⁷² "An Ungentlemanly Act," IMBd, accessed March 30, 2018, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0134178/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ql_stry_2.

⁷³ Stuart Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, directed by Stuart Urban, (1992; London, Ealing Studios, 2003) DVD.

movie, which shows that its authors wanted to emphasize that their work depicts the events as they truly occurred.⁷⁴

There are some aspects of the movie, however, which indicate that the movie is not completely unbiased as it shows the tendency to make the viewer sympathize with the British side and condemn the Argentine aggression at the same time. This is apparent in several aspects of the movie, from the way it shows and interprets certain facts, to its overall tone. Some of these aspects are valid and some of them less so. Let us now discuss these aspects in greater detail.

The movie opens with rather a disputable statement appearing on the screen. It says that in 1833 the British government “resurrected its claim on the Falklands Islands and sent Royal Marines to evict the Argentinian settlers.”⁷⁵ The phrase “resurrected its claim” can be quite misleading because, as we have previously mentioned, only one small British settlement existed on one of the Falkland Islands prior to 1833. Moreover, before this date, the Falklands Islands were never officially recognized as a part of the British Commonwealth nor as a British colony (the islands were proclaimed a British colony in 1840), unless we take into account the bronze plaque left by the British settlers when they abandoned the islands in 1774 stating that the islands are a property of the British king. This is rather a weak basis for a de jure claim. Especially if one realizes that a plaque with a very similar proclamation was left on island by the Spaniards. Thus, after reading the movie’s opening statement, an insufficiently informed viewer might come to a conclusion that the Falkland Islands were a legal property of the British crown *before* 1833, which they were not. A viewer

⁷⁴ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*.

⁷⁵ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:00:21–00:00:24.

might also conclude that the islands were taken from the English by the Argentines, which is not the case either. As we already know, the Argentines started to inhabit the Falkland Islands long after the British settlers left.

One of the ways the movie emphasizes the despicability of the Argentine invasion is showing how calm and pleasant the life of the islanders was before the invasion. The opening scene shows Stanley, the islands' capital, where we can see the islanders engage their everyday activities while being friendly to one another, which gives the impression of a placid village where good relationships between the inhabitants prevail. This generally pleasant atmosphere is suddenly disrupted by the news of incoming Argentine invasion. We can see how shocked the islanders were upon hearing the news and many of them were afraid of being killed by the invaders. Especially the governor's wife, Mrs. Hunt, is decimated by fear for her husband. Moreover, she does not understand why the Argentines want to take the insignificant islands, which she, however, has grown very fond of. It is pointed out that there was nothing valuable on the Falkland Islands, which made the Argentine aggression all the more incomprehensible to the Falkland Islanders. "Why would anyone bother over half a million sheep and some sea meal?"⁷⁶ exclaims Mrs. Hunt after learning about the incoming invasion.

The movie's course of the invasion mostly corresponds with the conclusions of historians. Nevertheless, one important fact, which sheds a different light on the Argentine invasion, is not stated in the movie (and there are occasions to do so) and it is that the invading Argentine soldiers were ordered not to harm the islanders and, if possible, neither the British soldiers. Even though this order was probably issued to

⁷⁶ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:28:20–00:28:26.

avoid giving the British additional reasons for a retaliation rather than out of actual concern for human lives, it could still change the way to view the invasion. Not only that this fact was not mentioned in the movie but the movie even makes it look like the Argentines wanted to kill the British marines without a warning. This is implied in a scene when British governor, Rex Hunt, watches as the Argentine soldiers attack the British barracks using heavy guns and grenades. Hunt comments on the attack saying: “It doesn’t look like they want to take hostages.”⁷⁷ In reality, some of the Argentine soldiers did shoot and throw grenades at the barracks but they knew that nobody was inside. Moreover, the soldiers shot at the barracks because they misinterpreted an order according to which they were to make noise while capturing the barracks to let the British marines know the invasion had started. In *An Ungentlemanly Act* these crucial details are not clearly mentioned, even though there are sequences in which it could be done. Yet, there is a scene in which the commander of the Argentine forces, Carlos Büsser, warns his soldiers against “excess against enemy troops, women or private property,”⁷⁸ for which he would “impose the maximum penalty.”⁷⁹ This is a vital information, which might shed a slightly better light on the invaders but the phrase “excesses against enemy troops, women or private property” is only a vague paraphrase of the real orders, according to which the Argentine soldiers were to avoid killing the British soldiers and were forbidden from actions that would *anyhow* negatively affect the lives of the islanders. In reality, the Argentine leaders assumed that the capture of the islands would be calm and non-violent because of the great numerical superiority of the Argentines soldiers, which would make the British soldiers

⁷⁷ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 01:01:19–26.

⁷⁸ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:25:11–00:25:17.

⁷⁹ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:25:18.

and the islanders surrender without a fight. The Argentine troops were supposed to demonstrate their strength by their very presence on the islands. Yet, the movie makes it look as though the Argentines expected they would have to kill some of the British marines before capturing the governor. On the whole, *An Ungentlemanly Act* views the Argentine invasion very negatively and strives to make it look even more aggressive and dangerous than it really was.⁸⁰

Moreover, as well as the *Falklands Play*, *An Ungentlemanly act* points out the cruelty of the then Argentine military regime and thus justifies the Britons' and the Falkland Islanders' distaste for potential Argentine sovereignty over the islands. The nature of the Argentine regime is mentioned by a British journalist, Simon Winchester, who says that the Islanders surely would not want to live under a "dictator who is capable of killing thousands of his own people,"⁸¹ which is a perfectly valid statement.

Nevertheless, the movie is not exclusively critical of the Argentinians as it portrays some of them rather positively. The chief of the Argentine State Air Lines on the Falkland Islands, Vice Comodoro Hector Gilbert is portrayed likeably, even though, in reality, some of the Falkland Islanders suspected him from collaborating with the invaders and from leading a fifth column. Similar suspicions are expressed in the movie as well, yet judging by Gilbert's behavior it seems that he sincerely feels for the islanders and that he really does not know anything about the Argentine invasion. He helps to arrange the negotiations between the Argentine commander and governor Hunt. After Hunt is forced to surrender, Gilbert expresses his regrets that the actions

⁸⁰ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*.

⁸¹ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:26:39–00:26:44.

of the Argentine government spoil his friendship with Hunt. It is worth noting that in reality, Gilbert helped during the negotiations by interpreting.⁸²

The commander of the Argentine invasion forces, admiral Carlos Büsser is too portrayed as an honest man and a considerate and reasonable commander. It is largely thanks to him that none of the British soldiers is killed during the invasion. He personally goes to the government house (still defended by the Britons) to negotiate the British surrender. Büsser points out the hopelessness of the British situation and declares that he wants to avoid killing Hunt's men if possible. Thanks to his reasonable approach, Büsser eventually persuades Hunt to surrender peacefully, by which he stops the battle. Moreover, during the negotiation, Büsser behaves very politely and treats the British soldiers with respect. After the British capitulation, he even stops an angered Argentine soldier who wants to kill the already disarmed Britons because they shot at an Argentine medic during the battle of the government house. According to firsthand witnesses, Büsser really negotiated with Hunt very reasonably and at least on one occasion, he calmed down the Argentine soldiers who started firing at the British negotiators. It is obvious that even though *An Ungentlemanly Act* adopts rather a pro-British stance, it tries to avoid presenting a wholly one-sided view of the Argentine invaders which is praiseworthy at least.⁸³

What also makes the movie's view of the conflict more balanced, is the criticism of the British government. It is stressed on several occasions that the British government should have predicted the invasion and should have taken appropriate

⁸² Graham Bound, *Invasion 1982: The Falkland Islanders' Story* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2007), 67, [⁸³ Bound, *Invasion 1982*, 67, 68.](https://books.google.cz/books?id=-z-ucTYJLLMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false;Urban, An Ungentlemanly Act.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

measures. For instance, there is a scene in which Hunt with two marine officers discuss how it possible that the British government did not learn about the invasion in time. Hunt says: “Yet, the joint intelligence committee must have known. Probably hoped the fleet would just go away.”⁸⁴ Observations about the government’s unpreparedness are undoubtedly correct because the British government really neglected the islands’ defenses, even though there were many indications that an Argentine invasion was being prepared.⁸⁵

This neglect is an object of criticism in several scenes of the movie. For example, when Rex Hunt receives a message from the British government warning him against the invasion and saying he should make his “dispositions accordingly”, he ponders the dire situation and, looking out of a window, he says to himself: “Bastards, Bastards.”⁸⁶ to which his Chief Secretary, Dick Baker, says: “Who, Buenos Aires or London?”⁸⁷ This probably alludes to the fact that the British government knew that the Argentine could launch an invasion but did not take appropriate measures, which proved to be a fundamental mistake placing Hunt (and the islanders) in an unpleasant situation. Such view is even more apparent in a sequence showing a conversation between Hunt and a British journalist, Winchester. Hunt shows Winchester the message received from the British government and says that London must have known about the invasion the day before. Thus, Hunt instructs Winchester to make sure this vital information appears in the press. In addition, in the dialogue between Hunt and Winchester, Hunt declares that he is not sure whether the British government will

⁸⁴ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:14:35–00:14:41.

⁸⁵ Hrbek, *Válka o Falklandy*, 52, 63.

⁸⁶ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:17:39–00:17:41.

⁸⁷ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:17:41–00:17:44.

actually “bother” to fight for the islanders, to which the journalist replies: “They’ll bother all right, if they’re interested in staying in office.”⁸⁸ It can be deduced from this dialogue that the movie views the British counter-invasion as a necessary act of protection of a British territory and its citizens against a foreign aggression and that idleness in such situation would be completely unacceptable to the British public.

Another allusion to the failure of the British high command concerns the insufficient intelligence about the Argentine military technologies and strategies. The allusion is made in a scene showing Hunt and the marine commanders, majors Norman and Noott planning the defense of the islands. The majors have to decide which of the beaches they will defend. To make the right decision, they would have to know whether the Argentines have modern amphibious personnel carriers, which would allow them to land on the shallow beach south of Stanley. Unfortunately for the marines, the British intelligence had no information about this. Noott comments on the fact by stating that there is only one MI6 man in Latin America. Since he has no information, Norman decides to defend the beach with deeper waters north of Stanley because he assumes the Argentines do not have modern amphibious personnel carriers and that they will have to use boats. Later, it is revealed that the Argentines do have modern amphibious vehicles and thus they choose to land on the shallow beach south of Stanley, which severely hampers the British defenses, as no marines are positioned there to defend the beach. This is exactly what happened in reality. The movie thus certainly makes a good observation because the British high command really erred in neglecting the intelligence gathering in Argentina. There was really only one MI6 agent in Buenos Aires, which is of course completely insufficient considering

⁸⁸ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:37:25–00:37:28.

the then political situation in Argentina. This lack of intelligence about the Argentine army eventually left the British marines on the Falklands unprepared for the Argentine attack. This is also why in the movie major Garry Noott implies that the Britons themselves substantially facilitated the Argentine invasion.⁸⁹

On the hand, what the movie apparently praises is the bravery and loyalty of the British marines, of the Falkland Islands' militiamen and especially of the British governor, Rex Hunt. These have to deal with the unexpected invasion and face an enemy who has a great numerical and technical superiority. Despite these overwhelming odds, the Britons and the Falkland Islanders make a stand. The decision to fight the invaders (instead of surrendering or escaping) is actually made by Rex Hunt, who is the commander-in-chief on the islands. Hunt makes the key decision to defend the government house, even though two experienced soldiers, commanders of the British marines advise him to escape and hide in the hills while they would lead a guerilla warfare against the invaders. He seems to consider fleeing and hiding unworthy of a man of his position. His determination to stay in his seat seems unshakeable. Hunt also refuses to set up the British defenses in Stanley, as it would endanger the town's inhabitants. When the soldiers warn him from getting surrounded inside the government house, he replies: "Better we take it in the guts than the women and children."⁹⁰ In fact, the real governor Hunt did show a deep concern for the islanders and was suspected by the British government from having "gone native." He even declared, via the Falklands radio, that if the British government instructed him to act against the islanders' wishes, he would resign from his post.

⁸⁹ Bound, *Invasion 1982*, 22; Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*.

⁹⁰ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:16:50–00:16:53.

Moreover, his courage while facing the invasion was not any lesser than it is presented in the movie. By emphasizing Hunt's exemplary behavior, especially his care for the islanders' well-being, the movie places the governor, and thus the British administration he represents, in a good light. Additionally, pointing out the governor's care for the islanders supports the British government's official *casus belli*, which was the protection of the Falkland Islanders.⁹¹

As for the British marines, their bravery and loyalty is pointed out repeatedly in the movie. Firstly, when the marine commanders learn about the incoming Argentine invasion, they do not consider surrendering for a single moment notwithstanding the enemy's superiority. The marines are determined to defend the governor, as the living symbol of the British government, until a UN resolution is passed. It is only after the governor decides to capitulate that they lay down their arms. Even though their dire situation is partly the result of their government's policy, they do not blame their government (which is often the case in war movies) but rather turn their anger on the Argentine invaders. They are even instructed to do so by their commander, major Mike Norman during a briefing: "Don't get angry with whoever dropped you in the smelly stuff. You're in fathoms of it and it's too late. Get angry with the arrogant bastards who are planning to waltz in here thinking you'll just take it up the bum."⁹² After the briefing, it seems that Norman is convinced that all the British marines on the Falklands will die, yet he is determined to resist the invaders until the governor surrenders or until the marines are defeated. When the governor's wife asks Norman whether the Falkland Islands are really worth death of a single British soldier, he

⁹¹ Bound, *Invasion 1982*, 12, 34; Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*.

⁹² Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:38:38–00:38:43.

replies that surrendering is not something the marines do easily. Although Norman understands the precariousness of his situation was largely caused by his country's government, he never expresses any criticism of the British government nor does any of his men. Even though he is obviously worried at the prospect of his men dying, he seems to be coped with this possibility and is willing to take the risk. In fact, the real major Norman had probably the same approach. Emphasizing Norman's exemplary soldier qualities not only contributes to the overall pro-British tone of the movie, but it also shows that after the Argentine invasion, there was no room for the British soldiers to question the British government, even if it largely contributed to causing the crisis.⁹³

This idea is apparent in Norman's relation to governor Hunt as well. It is Hunt who decides to defend the government house, by which he risks the marines' lives, as the enemy outnumbers them severely and the governor knows it is a fight the marines cannot win. He simply hopes that the marines will resist long enough for an UN resolution to be passed, which is, however, a very unreliable solution. Hunt makes this decision despite Norman's advice to retreat to the hills and lead a guerilla warfare, while the governor, who represents the British sovereignty over the islands, would be kept out of the enemy's reach. Again, Norman does not oppose Hunt, as he is the commander-in-chief and the representative of the British government. The governor, in turn, acts on the behest of the British government and although it does not instruct him directly to resist the invaders (just to make his dispositions accordingly), he understands that an immediate surrender is not something his government would be satisfied with, and thus he tries his best to repel the invaders. Even though he realizes that the British government put him in the dire situation, he does not question the

⁹³ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*; Bound, *Invasion 1982*, 40.

government, and represents it as best as he can. He acts not only out of loyalty to the government and to his country but also out of his national pride. Hunt's national pride is apparent at the movie's very beginning, when he, dressed in a British imperial uniform, pays homage to the British flag during an official ceremony while the whole scene is accompanied by a celebrative music. Additionally, at the end of the movie, when Hunt is forced by the Argentines to leave the Falkland Islands, he departs dressed again in his imperial uniform. When asked where he acquired the uniform, he replies that he bought it in a specialized shop. This means that he is not officially obliged to have the uniform but that he acquired it out of his own, inner patriotism and maybe even nostalgia for the times of the British empire.⁹⁴

The nationalism is not expressed through Hunt's character only. During a sequence in which the marines and the Falklands militiamen prepare for the defense of the government house, Hunt finds his driver, Don, guarding the British flag with a rifle in his hands. When the governor asks Don how is it that the flag is still raised, he replies: "Well sir... I took a decision to leave it flying tonight, sir. And to shoot the first Argie bastard who tries to take it down."⁹⁵ Moreover, after the British surrender, while the Argentine soldiers are triumphantly rising their own flag on the government house courtyard before the defeated marines, Don emerges from the house holding the rifle and it seems he is about to start shooting at the Argentines but then a sudden gust of wind blows the Argentinian flag off the flagpole, and Don and all the British soldiers start laughing out loud. Don is immediately disarmed by the Argentines, but he is so amused by the situation that he does not resist.

⁹⁴ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*.

⁹⁵ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, 00:53:13–00:53:21.

The scenes described above prove that nationalism and imperial nostalgia are undoubtedly present in the movie and thus in the British society as well. The patriotic feelings and the trust in the British leadership expressed in the movie reflect the mood prevalent in the British society immediately after the Argentine invasion. Even though the British government prompted the invasion by neglecting the island's defenses, most Britons did not criticize the government for its previous errors because there was no time for it then. The Britons demanded only a victory in the upcoming clash. They wanted the Falkland Islands, one of the last remnants of their empire, back under the British sovereignty and they firmly believed that their government will achieve that. The British victory is mentioned in the very last sequence of the movie, which also alludes to the nationalistic trans the Britons got into at that time. It is clearly stated that for the Britons a defeat was not an option.⁹⁶

To draw a conclusion, *An Ungentlemanly Act* strives to be authentic and truthful which is proved by the fact that its depiction of the given events and of the characters mostly corresponds with the conclusions of professional historians, since the movie is based on firsthand accounts. Yet, in some respects, it is apparent that the movie supports the pro-British view of the conflict. As we have shown, some facts concerning the Argentine invasion are overemphasized, while others are not mentioned at all, which makes the Argentine invasion look rather more aggressive and dangerous than it probably was in reality. The brutality of the then Argentine regime is mentioned too. The criticism of the Argentinian side is accompanied by a subtle criticism of the British government for its neglect of the Falkland Islands' defenses, as this neglect prompted the Argentine invasion. Regardless of this criticism, the movie

⁹⁶ Urban, *An Ungentlemanly Act*; Hrbek *Válka o Falklandy*, 7.

displays nationalist and patriotic tendencies, as it emphasizes the bravery of the British marines (and the governor) and their loyalty to their country and their government. Lastly, a nostalgia for the once great British empire is subtly expressed through governor's Hunt character, whose very office, as well as the Falklands Islands, is one of the few remnants from the times of the British empire. Remnants whose loss the Britons would not bear easily.

Tumbledown

Tumbledown (1988) a TV movie directed by Richard Eyre aroused a great controversy in the British society, since it showed the Falklands War and its consequences as no British movie before. The movie is based on experiences of Robert Lawrence, a Scots Guards lieutenant who was seriously wounded during the battle of mount Tumbledown, one of the toughest battles of the Falklands War. Lawrence's cooperation with the movie's authors contributed to an accurate depiction of his experiences and emotions. Apart from showing how terrible and destructive war is, *Tumbledown* openly criticizes the way some of the Falklands veterans were treated by the government and the military. These features made the movie "one of the most controversial BBC films ever"⁹⁷ as was written in *The Guardian*. The movie's open criticism and its truthful depiction of war atrocities even caused that the British military attempted to discredit Lawrence and BBC was accused of subversion, which only proves that the movie really "hit the nerve" of the British establishment.⁹⁸

Tumbledown shows not only what Lawrence (Colin Firth) endured during the war but also what hardships he faced after his return. During the battle of Tumbledown, Lawrence is shot in the head by an enemy sniper, which leaves the left part of his body paralyzed. The movie depicts Lawrence's subsequent social readjustment which is very difficult due to his disability, as he often encounters other people's incomprehension or indifference. Lawrence's story is told retrospectively, in

⁹⁷ Townsend, "The hardest fight for all for a Falklands hero."

⁹⁸ Townsend, "The hardest fight for all for a Falklands hero."

form of flashbacks, which are revealed as he narrates the story to his colleague's parents.⁹⁹

Unlike the other works analyzed earlier in this paper, *Tumbledown* does not so much focus on the events during the Falklands War itself but rather on the impact the war had on the British soldiers, especially on those who suffered injuries with permanent effects. Lawrence's partial paralysis is mentioned at the very beginning of the movie as he is about to start relating his experiences to his friend's parents. At this point, he seems to have mentally recovered, and he even jests about his disability. However, it is soon revealed that his way to mental and partial physical recovery was very difficult and painful. There are several scenes throughout the whole non-linear narrative showing Lawrence's resentment and bitterness resulting from his injury and the mental harm he suffered in the war. His dire emotional state is most apparent in confrontation with the medical staff who treats him. Some of the doctors and nurses seem to have little understanding for Lawrence's emotional state and treat him rather insensitively, which causes his angry outbursts and deepens his bitterness. When Robert's friend's come to visit him to the hospital, he tells them: "Nobody knows how to treat us, nobody."¹⁰⁰ In the following scene, some doctors discuss his wounds in front of him as though he was not present. One of the doctors asks the others whether they know what caused the wound, to which Robert reacts by recounting the exact caliber and velocity of the bullet which wounded him, adding that they should ask him if they want to know anything about weapons because he is a soldier. One of the doctors seems irritated by Robert's remark: "Might I remind you young man, that I'm a

⁹⁹ Charles Wood, Richard Eyre, *Tumbledown*, directed by Richard Eyre (1988; London, BBC, 2008) DVD.

¹⁰⁰ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 00:52:06–00:52:10.

lieutenant colonel in the REMC and that you're still a serving officer. Queen's regulations still apply to you, shot or not."¹⁰¹ Such reaction is reaction seems inconsiderate and unprofessional, given Lawrence's mental and physical state. In another sequence, Lawrence, who desperately needs to speak with someone, tries to join a conversation of two nurses but is only scolded for listening to a private conversation. Such treatment is again very unprofessional and proves that the medical staff did not take Lawrence's psychological state into consideration. Another sequence shows Lawrence making a rehabilitation exercise while being assisted by two nurses. The exercise is very difficult for him and he is obviously depressed because of his disability. When he suddenly bursts into resigned rage and starts shouting at the nurses that they do not understand him because they do not know what it is like to kill someone, the nurses immediately leave without trying to comfort him. A priest who is passing by overhears Lawrence and instead of talking to him reasonably, which one would expect from a clergy man, he only tells Lawrence:" Thank you, young man. I was privileged to hear that compassionate outburst."¹⁰² Then the priest walks away and leaves Lawrence alone, crying. This scene and those mentioned above show that Lawrence, who apparently suffered a severe mental harm in the war, did not receive any mental support from those who were supposed to provide it. Such scenes, however, do not relate only to Lawrence himself but they express a general criticism of the fact that many of Falklands veterans were not provided a proper psychological treatment, as is proved by the fact that during 25 years after the war, more Falklands veterans committed suicide than died during the war itself.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 00:52:37–00:52:43.

¹⁰² Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 01:05:22–01:05:27.

¹⁰³ Townsend, "The hardest fight of all for a Falklands hero"; Eyre, *Tumbledown*.

Relating to the loss of life caused by the war, the movie also asks the question whether the Falklands War was worth the losses and the suffering it caused. After his return to Britain, one of the first things Lawrence tell his parents is “it wasn’t worth it.”¹⁰⁴ He does not say so only because of his own suffering but also because he has seen so many of his comrades die. He is convinced that all men from the platoon he led are dead. His father has to obtain an official record to make him believe that some of his men are still alive. The tragic loss of life caused by the war is emphasized throughout the movie, as Lawrence’s terrible memories of his comrades-in-arms being wounded or killed are gradually revealed. In the hospital where he recovers, Lawrence also meets other soldiers who returned from the Falklands with visibly serious injuries and who probably suffered mental harm similar to his own. This further enhances the movie’s atmosphere of human suffering brought by the war. It is clear that *Tumbledown’s* view of the Falklands War, with regard to what the it caused, is the same as that of Lawrence himself—it was not worth it.

It is not, however, only the deaths and suffering of the British soldiers what weighs Lawrence. He is deeply troubled by the fact that during the battle of Tumbledown he brutally stabbed to death a young Argentine soldier who was already lying on the ground without offering any resistance. This memory weighs Lawrence heavily and he tries to tell that to the nurses and doctors who tend him, but he is ignored or misunderstood, which is obvious in several scenes. At one point, Lawrence shouts at two nurses attending to him that they “don’t know what it’s like to kill someone,”¹⁰⁵ and he adds that it is not like on television and that there are “bits blown

¹⁰⁴ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 00:46:36–00:46:37.

¹⁰⁵ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 01:05:02–01:05:05.

off.”¹⁰⁶ Instead of showing some sympathy for the obviously broken man, the sisters leave hastily. Subsequently, a priest admonishes Lawrence for his outburst. Lawrence reacts by crying “you don’t know how much it takes to kill a squirming man.”¹⁰⁷ After that, the priest leaves without a single word, and Lawrence bursts into tears. Lawrence speaks about the deed which troubled him so deeply several times during the movie but the act itself is actually shown only at the end of the movie. The brutality of this scene is overwhelming. It depicts Lawrence leading a charge on the Argentine positions on mount Tumbledown. Lawrence, who seems to be utterly consumed by the combat, lunges at an enemy soldier lying motionlessly on the ground and stabs him repeatedly with his bayonet while the young Argentine screams and begs him to stop. After his return from the war, Lawrence fully realizes what he did and is crushed.

Everything Lawrence suffered—watching his comrades die, brutally killing the Argentine soldier, being seriously wounded himself— turns him from a self-confident and hopeful soldier into a devastated and embittered cripple. His girlfriend abandons him because she cannot come to terms with him being a different person. His traumatic experiences also fundamentally change Lawrence’s view of war. The scenes which depict Lawrence’s life before the war shows that he was an idealist who wished to fight for his country and prove that he was a good soldier. His best friend says that Lawrence “...wants to do everything, jungle warfare. He’d done it all. He is, despite appearances, a real action man.”¹⁰⁸ After the ordeals he endured in the war, however, Lawrence realizes the war is not what he expected and his morale as a soldier is destroyed. He begins to understand that the war was not worth all the suffering it

¹⁰⁶ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 01:05:10–01:05:11.

¹⁰⁷ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 01:05:33–01:05:37.

¹⁰⁸ Eyre, *Tumbledown*, 00:11:37–00:11:47.

caused. Moreover, he feels that his country and the government are indebted to him for the horrors he endured for them, but he does not receive neither a proper psychological care nor any proper compensation for his sacrifice. He feels abandoned and betrayed. He thus starts blaming the army and the government for his suffering and ultimately, he loses his national pride and enthusiasm. Through this, *Tumbledown* points out how the proud patriotism of some soldiers was shaken by the Falklands War and by the way their government treated them. Some of those who experienced the horrors of the war came to the conclusion that the toll taken by it was too high. Unfortunately, as is implied in the movie, the rest of the country viewed the war differently, as they were consumed by patriotic enthusiasm incited by the glorious victory. The country celebrated those who sacrificed their lives for their country but almost no one paid attention to those who returned from the war crippled and mentally devastated. Nevertheless, as *Tumbledown* emphasizes, it was not only the wounded soldiers themselves who suffered but also their families. Lawrence's parents are happy about their son's return, but they are also visibly worried about his physical and mental state. They realize that their son is now a different, tormented man and they are troubled because they cannot seem to help him. In reality, there were other families who were impacted by the Falklands War same as the Lawrence's.¹⁰⁹

Ultimately, what clearly distinguishes *Tumbledown* from the other works analyzed in this paper is that its criticism is aimed at the British government and war in general but not at the Argentines. In the movie, Lawrence seems to blame nearly everyone round him for his suffering and for lack of understanding. His disability depresses him and demoralizes him, and he feels abandoned by his country because

¹⁰⁹ Townsend, "The hardest fight for all for a Falklands hero"; Eyre, *Tumbledown*.

he thinks it did not compensate him adequately for the injury he has suffered fighting for it. Yet he never blames the Argentine sniper who shot him. It seems that Lawrence realizes that the sniper was only an ordinary soldier doing his job for his country just like Lawrence himself.¹¹⁰

To conclude, *Tumbledown* is very different from the other British works depicting the Falklands War, as it is not interested in the political conflict between the British and the Argentinian governments, but it focuses on how the war impacted the common British soldiers. Through experiences of lieutenant Robert Lawrence, the movie depicts how some of the British soldiers were treated after their return from the war. Although the movie centers on experiences of one soldier, there were probably others with similar experiences. The movie shows that some of the Falklands veterans were mentally and physically so devastated that they found it difficult to resume their civil lives. Their mental devastation was often the result of injuries with permanent effects, but it was also caused by all the killing and suffering they witnessed in the war. Moreover, it is pointed out that the government, which sent the soldiers to the destructive war, did not provide the veterans with proper psychological care, which is proved by the terrifyingly high suicide rate among the Falklands veterans. *Tumbledown* thus clearly adopts an anti-establishment stance, as it shows the ordinary soldiers as mere expendable pawns who were used and then often “discarded” by their government. Interestingly, *Tumbledown* in no way criticizes the Argentines and it focuses exclusively on the British side. The scene in which Lawrence stabs a young Argentine soldier to death serves not only to show the savagery of war in general but it also portrays the Argentines as ordinary human beings who suffered in the war same

¹¹⁰ Eyre, *Tumbledown*.

as the Britons. Importantly, the movie's protagonist realizes everything which has been said above only *after* he is seriously wounded, and half of his body becomes paralyzed. It is his wound which makes him change his view on the war. Before his injury, he was full of the patriotic enthusiasm as most Britons were before but also after the war. By this, *Tumbledown* points out the fierce nationalism which enthralled the British nation, and which finally allowed the escalation of the war. Eventually, this nationalistic trance caused many Britons to forget about soldiers like Lawrence and about what the Falklands War did to them.

Conclusion

The Falklands War was and still is a controversial theme in the British society, as is proven by very different views of this event expressed in works of British filmography and literature. The opinions on the Falklands conflict, of course, gradually changed with growing time distance which allowed more objective views to appear.

Nevertheless, as for the works analyzed in this paper, it also largely depends on the authors' personal beliefs, as they all were created within a relatively short time span (1983–1992), and yet the views expressed in them considerably differ.

As for *The Falklands Play* (the screenplay was written in 1983), the movie strives to show that Margaret Thatcher and her government had rational and justifiable reasons for regaining the islands by strength. The movie in no way alludes to the fact that regaining the Falkland Islands helped Thatcher win the election in 1983. It presents the Falkland Islanders' wish to stay under the British administration as the British government's chief reason for coming into an armed conflict with Argentina. The necessity to protect the Falkland Islanders is also stressed in *An Ungentlemanly Act*, which also shows how calm and happy the life of the islanders was before it was disrupted by the sudden Argentine aggression. Both movies thus seem to agree with the then British government's official *casus belli*, which might seem naïve, since Thatcher's popularity before the war was decreasing, and it was clear that she needed to achieve some political success to win the upcoming elections. Yet, the movies should not be criticized for their view because even though the protection of the Falkland Islanders might have been a mere tool to gain popularity, it was still a valid argument. It seems unthinkable that any other government would leave their citizens

under a forced occupation of a foreign country governed by a brutal dictatorial regime. Moreover, *An Ungentlemanly Act* points out that it was the government's duty to protect their citizens and that failing in this duty would have endangered the government's position. Thus, it seems that the authors of *An Ungentlemanly* knew that leaving the Falkland Islands under the Argentine occupation would have been unacceptable for the British citizens, which could have caused the government's downfall regardless of its then position. In other words, to oblige the citizens and remain in power the Thatcher government would have had to retake the islands even if their popularity had been at its height. Taking this into consideration can put the Thatcher government's decision in a different light, since we can assume that any British government would have probably done the same in their stead. Moreover, considering the facts mentioned above, the potential blame for launching the British counter-invasion cannot be put solely on the British government itself because its actions were at least partially motivated by the effort to oblige the British citizens who called for retaking the Falkland Islands.

In addition, there is the brutal and oppressive nature of the Argentinian regime, which is pointed out in the two movies as well. Especially in *The Falklands Play* the cruelty of the junta is stressed several times. In the movie, Margaret Thatcher says that the British government cannot leave nearly two thousand of their citizens under a rule of a fascist regime. This is a valid argument because no one could guarantee the Falkland Islanders safety and freedom, had the Argentina retained the control over the islands. Thatcher also indirectly compares the Argentinian regime to infamous historical dictators who somehow limited people's liberty and says that the Great Britain has always fought these figures. This shows how much Britons still appreciate

the democratic values and that they see their country as the protector of these values rather than as a former colonial superpower which often denied such values in its colonies.

In addition, *The Falkland Play* observes that letting a dictatorial regime seize a democratic territory could inspire other dictators to take similar actions, as democracies would look too weak to stop them. Margaret Thatcher indeed used the same argument for justifying the British counter-invasion and it is again a valid one, since there was really the danger of creating a precedence for the then and for the future dictators.

Another phenomenon displayed in the both *The Falklands Play* and *An Ungentlemanly Act* is the British nostalgia for their empire. *The Falklands Play* mentions this aspect only once but it is named directly, and it is one of the few things in the whole movie which seems to be critical of the British because it stated that Britons were so eager to regain the control over the islands because it was one of the last remnants of their former empire. *An Ungentlemanly Act*, on the other hand, portrays the imperial nostalgia as something rather positive. It does so through the character of the British governor, sir Rex Hunt, who is obviously proud of the British imperial past and displays ideal qualities of a British colonial officer—he is loyal to his country's government and at the same time does everything to protect those for whom he is responsible, in this case the Falkland Islanders. Thus, if we compare *An Ungentlemanly* with *The Falklands Play* we can see that the role of the British imperial past in the Falklands conflict is viewed differently in each movie.

Even though both movies largely advocate the British side and the actions of the British government, *An Ungentlemanly Act* is critical of the British government in

one regard, and that is the factual neglect of the Falklands Islands defenses. The authors of the movie apparently realize that this British strategical error partially prompted the Argentine invasion. This means that they realize that their government was in part responsible for the war. It is also possible that by pointing out the unpreparedness of the islands' defenses the authors convey the idea that the inferior Argentine army would have never defeated the highly trained British marines had they been prepared.

Unlike *The Falklands Play* and *An Ungentlemanly Act*, which rather defend the British view of the Falklands war, the graphic novel by Raymond Briggs *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* and the BBC movie *Tumbledown* display a serious criticism of the of the Falklands conflict but also of wars in general. The graphic novel is especially critical of both belligerents' political leaders, Thatcher and Galtieri, who are both portrayed as inhuman, bloodthirsty machines sending ordinary living soldiers to their death in order to achieve their ambitions. Interestingly, in this work, Margaret Thatcher is portrayed as being the same, cruel, dictatorial leader as Galtieri. The reason for such a negative portrayal of The Iron Lady is probably not only her actions during the Falklands conflict but also her overall political career, as she was known for her intransigent and uncompromising policies. Importantly, Briggs points out that three Falkland Islanders were killed by British shelling during the war, which is sadly ironical due to the fact that the British government proclaimed that the islander's well-being was the chief reason for retaking the islands. Although the novel seems to place the blame for the conflict mainly on the political leaders of both countries, Briggs apparently realized that the war would have never started without a surge of fierce

nationalism among the citizens of both countries, as is proved by two quotations condemning nationalism placed at the book's introductory page.

Similar criticism of excessive nationalism is expressed in *Tumbledown*, which shows how badly some of the Falklands veterans were treated by the establishment. Hundreds of men who suffered serious physical and mental harm fighting for their country were not provided sufficient medical and psychological care and often encountered disrespect and incomprehension of others, which often led to mental breakdown of even suicides. *Tumbledown* points out that neither the British government nor the public paid enough attention to this, which was partly caused by the patriotic enthusiasm prevailing among the Britons after their victory on the Falklands Islands. Importantly, before the war, *Tumbledown's* protagonist was also enthralled by patriotism and the desire to fight for his country. Everything he endured in the war, however, made him realize that the toll taken by the war was too high. Sadly, as *Tumbledown* displays, many Britons never came to the same conclusion. Thus, ultimately, the movie does not criticize only the British establishment but also the British nation itself.

As was shown, there have been various views of Falklands War expressed in the British filmography and literature. Some criticized the British actions, some advocated them, and some condemned the war as such. Importantly, valid arguments were used in each of the works analyzed above and it is difficult to say where the moral truth actually is, but this was not the aim of this paper after all. The aim was to show how the Britons deal with the Falklands War in their film and literary production. As we could see there has been no unified opinion on this tragic event, and the controversy it

has aroused will probably never cease, as is proved by the countless arguments over this event one can see on various websites and social networks.

Resumé

This paper aims to show that the Falklands War is still a controversial event in the British society—that there are those who believe that the actions of the British government were justifiable and there are those who consider the whole conflict an unnecessary act of violence. The thesis shows how the Falklands conflict is portrayed in some works of British literature and filmography and through that the various views on the conflict present in the British society. Additionally, it will be pointed out that the arguments supporting these views are often valid, regardless of whether they condemn the war or justify it.

To achieve its aims, the thesis analyses several chosen works of British literature and filmography and confronts their view of the Falklands conflict with the conclusions of professional historians. The reflection of these works in critical literature is also used. At first, the history of the Falkland Islands and the Falklands War are outlined. The description is based mainly on several works written by professional historians or political scientist.

In the following chapters several works of British literary and film fiction are analyzed. These include: Ian Curteis's drama movie *The Falklands Play* mostly depicting the actions of the British Prime minister, Margaret Thatcher and her conservative government during the war. Raymond Briggs's graphic novel *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* telling a simple story about a war between two gigantic robots but at the same time including a satire of the Falklands conflict. A television film, *An Ungentlemanly Act*, which tells a story of a British marine squad serving on the islands and fighting the first battles with Argentine forces. Lastly,

Richard Eyre's *Tumbledown*, which is based on first-hand experiences of a Falklands veteran, Scots Guards lieutenant Robert Lawrence who was seriously injured during the battle of mount Tumbledown, one of the toughest fights of the Falklands War.

The Falklands Play strives to show that Margaret Thatcher and her government had rational and justifiable reasons for regaining the islands by strength. The movie in no way alludes to the fact that regaining the Falkland Islands helped Thatcher win the election in 1983. It presents the Falkland Islanders' wish to stay under the British administration as the British government's chief reason for coming into an armed conflict with Argentina. The necessity to protect the Falkland Islanders is also stressed in *An Ungentlemanly Act*, which depicts how calm and happy the life of the islanders was before it was disrupted by the sudden Argentine aggression. Both movies thus seem to agree with the then British government's official *casus belli*, which might seem naïve, since Thatcher's popularity before the war was decreasing and it was clear that she needed to achieve some political success to win the upcoming elections. Yet the movies should not be criticized for their view because even though the protection of the Falkland Islanders might have been a mere tool to gain popularity, it was still a valid argument. It seems unthinkable that any other government would leave their citizens under a forced occupation of a foreign country governed by a brutal dictatorial regime. Moreover, *An Ungentlemanly Act* points out that it was the government's duty to protect their citizens and that failing in this duty would have endangered the government's position. Thus, it seems that the authors of *An Ungentlemanly* knew that leaving the Falkland Islands under the Argentine occupation would have been unacceptable for the British citizens, which could have caused the government's downfall *regardless* of its then position. In other words, to oblige the citizens and

remain in power the Thatcher government would have had to retake the islands even if their popularity had been at its height. Taking this into account can put the Thatcher government 's decision in a different light, since we can assume that any British government would have probably done the same in their stead. Moreover, considering the facts mentioned above, the potential blame for launching the British counter-invasion cannot be put solely on the British government itself because its actions were at least partially motivated by the effort to oblige the British citizens who called for retaking the Falkland Islands.

Additionally, both movies point out the brutal and oppressive nature of the Argentinian regime. Especially in *The Falklands Play* the cruelty of the junta is stressed several times. In the movie, Margaret Thatcher says that the British government cannot leave nearly two thousand of their citizens under a rule of a fascist regime. This is a valid argument because no one could guarantee the Falkland Islanders safety and freedom, had the Argentina retained the control over the islands.

Even though both movies largely advocate the British side and the actions of the British government, *An Ungentlemanly Act* is critical of the British government in one regard and that is the factual neglect of the Falklands Islands defenses. The authors of the movie apparently realize that this British strategical error partially prompted the Argentine invasion. This means that they realize that their government was in part responsible for the war.

The graphic novel by Raymond Briggs *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* and the BBC movie *Tumbledown*, display a serious criticism of the of the Falklands conflict but also of wars in general. The graphic novel is especially critical of both belligerents' political leaders, Thatcher and Galtieri, who are both portrayed as

inhuman, bloodthirsty machines sending ordinary living soldiers to their death in order to achieve their ambitions. Interestingly, in this work Margaret Thatcher is portrayed as being the same, cruel, dictatorial leader as Galtieri. Although the novel seems to place the blame for the conflict mainly on the political leaders of both countries, Briggs apparently realized that the war would have never started without a surge of fierce nationalism among the citizens of both countries as is proved by two quotations condemning nationalism placed at the book's introductory page.

Tumbledown expresses similar criticism of excessive nationalism. The movie shows how badly some of the Falklands veterans were treated by the British establishment. Hundreds of men who suffered serious physical and mental harm fighting for their country were not provided sufficient medical and psychological care and often encountered disrespect and incomprehension of others, which often led to mental breakdown of even suicides. *Tumbledown* points out that neither the British government nor the public paid enough attention to this, which was partly caused by the patriotic enthusiasm prevailing among the Britons after their victory on the Falklands Islands. Importantly, before the war, *Tumbledown's* protagonist was also enthralled by patriotism and the desire to fight for his country. Everything he endured in the war, however, made him realize that the toll taken by the war was too high. Sadly, as *Tumbledown* displays, many Britons never came to the same conclusion. Thus, ultimately, the movie does not criticize only the British establishment but also the British nation itself.

It is shown that there have been various views of Falklands War expressed in the British filmography and literature. The movies *The Falklands Play* and *An Ungentlemanly Act* largely advocate the pro-British view of the war and portray the

British counter-invasion as a justifiable action. The graphic novel *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* approach the whole conflict more critically and both blame the British establishment and condemn the fierce nationalism which accompanied the escalation of the Falklands conflict. Apparently, the views of the Falklands conflict presented in the British film and literary production are considerably different and sometimes even opposing.

Works cited

Beaumont, Peter. "Belgrano crew trigger happy." *The Guardian*, May 25, 2003.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2003/may/25/uk.world>.

Billen, Andrew. "Mrs. T and sympathy." *New Statesman*, April 15, 2002.

<https://www.newstatesman.com/node/155381>.

Bound, Graham. *Invasion 1982: The Falkland Islanders' Story*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2007.+ https://books.google.cz/books?id=-z-ucTYJLLMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Briggs, Raymond. *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman*. London: Penguin Books, 2013. Kobo eBooks.

Campbell, John. *Margaret Thatcher: The Grocer's Daughter*. New York: Vintage Books. 2007.

Chalupa, Jiří. *Dějiny Argentiny, Uruguayee, Chile*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2002.

Curteis, Ian, dir. *The Falklands Play*. 2002; London, BBC, 2011. DVD.

Eyre, Richard, dir. *Tumbledown*. 1988; London, BBC, 2008. DVD.

Fajmon, Hynek. *Margaret Thatcherová a její politika*. Brno: Centrum pro stadium demokracie a kultury, 2010.

Hastings, Max and Simon Jenkins. *The Battle for the Falklands*. New York: Norton, 1983.

Hrbek, Jaroslav. *Válka o Falklandy 1982*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999.

IMBd. "An Ungentlemanly Act." accessed March 30, 2018.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0134178/plotsummary?ref=tt_ql_str_y_2.

Russell, George, Bonnie Angelo and Gavin Scott. "Now, Alas, The Guns of May." *Times*, May 10, 1982.

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=20&sid=b04fa7bc-2cb5-46d8-8be1-e1195e7ef830%40sessionmgr4008&bdata=Jmxhbm9Y3Mmc2l0ZT1lZHMtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=54222899&db=edb>.

Townsend, Mark. "The hardest fight of all for a Falklands hero." *The Guardian*, January 14, 2007. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/jan/14/falklands.world>.

Urban, Stuart, dir. *An Ungentlemanly Act*. 1992; London, Ealing Studios, 2003. DVD.

Wroe, Nicholas. "Bloomin' Christmas." *The Guardian*, December 18, 2004.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/dec/18/featuresreviews.guardianreview8>.

Shrnutí

Cílem této práce je ukázat, že Falklandská válka je pro Britskou společnost velice kontroverzním tématem – že jsou tací, kteří vnímají akce tehdejší britské vlády jako oprávněně, zatímco jiní považují celý konflikt za opovrženímhodný akt násilí. Práce má ukázat, jakým způsobem je na falklandský konflikt nahlíženo v několika vybraných dílech britské literatury a filmografie a tím přiblížit různé názory na tuto událost panující v britské společnosti. Zároveň je zdůrazněno, že argumenty, o které se tyto názory opírají, jsou často rozumné a opodstatněné, a to bez ohledu na to, jestli Britský postup v konfliktu odsuzují nebo obhajují.

Tato práce analyzuje několik vybraných děl britské filmové a literární fikce, které falklandskou válku nějakým způsobem reflektují a srovnává stanoviska, jenž k válce zaujímají, se stanovisky profesionálních historiků a politologů. V první kapitole je nastíněna historie falklandských ostrovů a poté je krátce popsána samotná falklandská válka. Tyto úvodní kapitoly jsou založeny na pracích historiků a politologů.

V následujících kapitolách je analyzováno několik děl britské literatury a filmografie, mezi něž patří: Televizní drama Iana Curteise, *The Falklands Play*, jež zachycuje zejména jednání britské premiérky Margaret Thatcherové a její konzervativní vlády. Obrazová kniha Raymonda Briggse, *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman*, která vypráví jednoduchý příběh o válce mezi dvěma gigantickými roboty a současně satiricky kritizuje Falklandský konflikt. Snímek *An Ungentlemanly Act (Bitva o Falklandy aneb jak jsem vyhrál válku)* sledující osudy Britských mariňáků sloužících na ostrovech v době Argentinské invaze. A konečně, film Richarda Eyera, *Tumbledown*, jenž je založen zkušenostech falklandského veterána

Roberta Lawrence, který byl vážně zraněn během bitvy o vrch Tumbledown, jedné z nejtvrděších bitev Falklandské války.

The Falklands Play se pokouší ukázat, že Margaret Thatcherová a její vláda měli rozumné a ospravedlnitelné důvody k tomu, aby falklandské ostrovy získali zpět za použití síly. Film nijak nereflektuje fakt, že znovuzískání ostrovů pomohlo Thatcherové k vítězství ve volbách v roce 1983. Přání ostrovanů setrvat pod britskou správou je ve snímku prezentováno jako hlavní důvod, pro nějž se britská vláda rozhodla vstoupit do ozbrojeného konfliktu s Argentinou. Nutnost bránit obyvatele Falkland je zdůrazněna také ve filmu *An Ungentlemanly Act*, jenž zachycuje, jak klidný a spokojený život ostrované vedli, než přišla náhlá argentinská invaze. Oba snímky tedy, jak se zdá, přijímají oficiální casus belli proklamovaný britskou vládou, což se může zdát naivní, jelikož popularita Margaret Thatcherové před válkou klesala bylo tedy jasné, že aby zvítězila v nadcházejících volbách, potřebovala dosáhnout nějakého politického úspěchu. Avšak nebylo by zcela oprávněné kritizovat snímky za jejich postoj, protože i když se zdálo, že ochrana falklandských obyvatel byla pouze nástrojem k získání popularity, stále to byl rozumný argument. Zdá se totiž nemyslitelné, že by jakákoliv jiná vláda nechala své občany pod nadvládou brutálního diktátorského režimu. Navíc, *An Ungentlemanly Act* poukazuje na to, že bylo povinností vlády bránit své občany, a že nesplnění této povinnosti by ohrozilo pozici dané vlády. Zdá se tedy, že autoři snímku si byli vědomi, že ponechání Falklandských ostrovů pod argentinskou okupací by bylo pro britské občany nepřijatelné, což by mohlo způsobit pád britské vlády bez ohledu na její tehdejší pozici. Jinými slovy, aby vyhověla občanům a zůstala u moci, vláda premiérky Thatcherové by musela ostrovy získat zpět, i kdyby její popularita byla na vrcholu. Když vezmeme výše zmíněné v úvahu, může to vrhnout na Thatcherovou a

její vládou zcela jiné světlo, jelikož můžeme předpokládat, že jakákoliv britská vláda by v dané situaci postupovala stejně. Navíc, když zvážíme zmíněná fakta, případná vina za vyslání eskalaci války nepadá pouze na hlavu britské vlády, neboť její akce byli alespoň částečně motivovány snahou vyhovět britským občanům, kteří se znovuzískání Falklandských ostrovů dožadovali.

Dále, oba snímky poukazují na brutální a represivní povahu argentinského režimu. *The Falklands Play* zdůrazňuje krutost argentinské junty hned několikrát. Thatcherová prohlašuje, že britská vláda nemůže ponechat téměř dva tisíce svých občanů pod nadvládou fašistického režimu. To je rozumný argument, neboť nikdo by ostrovanům nemohl zaručit bezpečí a svobodu, kdyby si Argentinská vláda kontrolu nad ostrovy udržela.

I přesto, že oba počiny převážně obhajují britskou stranu a postup britské vlády, *An Ungentlemanly Act* je vůči britské vládě kritický v jednom ohledu a tím je zanedbání obrany Falklandských ostrovů. Autoři snímku si zřejmě uvědomovali, že tato taktická chyba na straně Britů dala částečně podnět k argentinské invazi. To znamená, že si autoři uvědomovali, že britská vláda byla za vypuknutí války sama zčásti zodpovědná.

Obrazová kniha Raymonda Briggse *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and The Old Iron Woman* a film BBC *Tumbledown* vyjadřují kritiku falklandského konfliktu, ale také válek obecně. Briggsovo dílo je obzvláště kritické vůči politickým vůdcům obou válčících stran, Thatcherové a Galtierimu, jenž jsou zobrazeni jako nelidské, krvežíznivé stroje posílající obyčejné živé vojáky na smrt, jen aby naplnili své ambice. Zajímavé je, že Margaret Thatcherová je vyobrazena jako stejně krutý diktátor jako Galtieri. Ačkoliv se zdá, že kniha viní za rozpoutání konfliktu především politické vůdce obou stran, Briggs si patrně uvědomoval, že válka by nikdy nezačala bez vlny urputného

nacionalismu, jež se prohnala mezi občany obou zemí, jak dokazují dva citáty odsuzující nacionalismus na úvodní straně knihy.

Tumbledown vyjadřuje podobnou kritiku přemrštěného nacionalismu. Film ukazuje, jak špatně zacházel britský establishment s některými falklandskými veterány. Stovkám mužů, jenž utrpěli vážné fyzické a mentální újmy v boji ze svou zemi nebyla poskytnuta dostatečná zdravotnická a psychologická péče a tito muži se také často setkávali s despektem a nepochopením svého okolí, což často vedlo k psychickým zhroucením, nebo dokonce sebevraždám. *Tumbledown* poukazuje na to, že ani britská vláda, ani veřejnost nevěnovaly tomuto problému dostatečnou pozornost, což bylo částečně zapříčiněno vlasteneckým nadšením, jež mezi Brity po jejich vítězství na Falklandských ostrovech panovalo. Je důležité podotknout, že před válkou byl protagonista filmu také uchvácen patriotismem a touhou bojovat za svou zemi. Vše co ve válce vytrpěl jej však přimělo k pochopení, že daň, kterou si válka vybrala, byla příliš vysoká. Naneštěstí, jak film ukazuje, mnoho Britů ke stejnému závěru nikdy nedošlo. *Tumbledown* tedy nekritizuje jen britský establishment, ale i britský národ samotný.

Práce tedy ukázala, že v britské filmografii a literatuře byly na falklandský konflikt vyjádřeny různé názory a pohledy. Snímky *The Falklands Play* a *An Ungentlemanly Act* převážně obhajují probritské stanovisko a zobrazují britské tažení jako ospravedlnitelnou akci. Obrazová kniha *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* a snímek *Tumbledown* přistupují k danému tématu poněkud kritičtěji a obě díla obviňují britskou vládu a odsuzují urputný nacionalismus, jenž eskalaci falklandského konfliktu doprovázel. Jak se tedy ukázalo, názory na falklandský konflikt prezentované v britské filmové a literární produkci se velmi různé, a někdy jsou dokonce zcela protichůdné.

Annotation

This thesis is concerned with the image of the Falklands War in several works of British literary and film fiction which deal with this event. The thesis is based on analysis of these works and comparison of the views of the Falklands conflict expressed in them with the views of professional historians and political scientists. In the first two chapters the thesis briefly describes the history of the Falklands Islands and the Falklands War. Each of the following chapters deals with one of the chosen works and provides an analysis of its views, as it is also reflected in critical literature. In the conclusion, the views of the individual movies are compared with one another.

It is shown that there have been various views of Falklands War expressed in the British filmography and literature. The movies *The Falklands Play* and *An Ungentlemanly Act* largely advocate the pro-British view of the war and portray the British counter-invasion as a justifiable action. The graphic novel *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* approach the whole conflict more critically and both blame the British establishment and condemn the fierce nationalism which accompanied the escalation of the Falklands conflict. Apparently, the views of the Falklands conflict presented in the British film and literary production are considerably different and sometimes even opposing. Importantly, valid arguments were used in each of the analyzed works and it is difficult to say where the moral truth actually is.

Anotace

Tato práce se zabývá obrazem falklandské války v několika vybraných dílech britské filmové a literární fikce, které se tomuto tématu věnují. Práce je založena na analýze těchto děl a srovnání stanovisek, jenž k falklandské válce zaujmají, se stanovisky profesionálních historiků a politologů. V prvních kapitolách je krátce popsána historie Falklandských ostrovů a Falklandská válka. Každá z následujících kapitol se věnuje jednomu z vybraných děl a analyzuje jeho stanoviska. Tato analýza je doplněna recenzemi a články, které se díly zabývají. Na závěr jsou stanoviska a názory jednotlivých děl porovnána.

Jak se ukázalo, na falklandskou válkou panují v britské filmové a literární produkci různorodé názory. Snímky *The Falklands Play* a *An Ungentlemanly Act* převážně přejímají probritské snaží se akce britské vlády v konfliktu obhájit. Obrázková kniha *The Tin-Pot Foreign General and the Old Iron Woman* a snímek *Tumbledown* přistupují k tématu poněkud kritičtěji a obě obviňují britskou vládu a odsuzují Britský nacionalismus, který eskalaci konfliktu doprovázel. Je tedy zřejmé, že názory na falklandský konflikt prezentované v britské filmové a literární produkci se v jednotlivých počinech liší a někdy jsou dokonce zcela protichůdné. Důležité je, že ve všech analyzovaných dílech zazněly rozumné a opodstatněné argumenty a je tudíž velmi těžké říci, kde je skutečně pravda.