

# Perspectives in HISTORY

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JOURNAL OF THE ALPHA BETA PHI  
CHAPTER OF PHI ALPHA THETA

Perspectives  
in  
HISTORY

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Perspectives in History is a semi-annual publication of the Alpha Beta Phi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. Manuscripts are welcome from students and faculty.

**Send all articles, essays and book reviews to:**

Northern Kentucky University  
History/Geography Department  
Highland Heights,  
KY 41076

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Vol. II No. 2, Spring, 1987

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### **The Sinking of the ARA *General Belgrano*: A Description of the Events, and Evaluation of the Controversy They Caused**

*by Andrew O. Lutes*

Possibly the most controversial act of the Falklands/Malvinas War of 1982 was the torpedoing of the Argentine light cruiser *General Belgrano* on orders from the British war cabinet. The heavy loss of life involved, that it occurred early in the conflict while a peace initiative was afoot, the timing and purpose of attack -- all have combined to make for a lively and dramatic debate that continues to this day over the wisdom and motivation of the decision.<sup>1</sup> This article will detail the events before and after the sinking, and attempt to make a judgement from the perspective of the facts presented.

The Falkland Islands, also known as Islas de Malvinas, located in the southern Atlantic Ocean, were forcibly acquired by the United Kingdom in 1833 from the United Provinces of Buenos Aires (later known as the Argentine Republic). Seen as a colonial backwater by most Britons (if thought of at all), the Argentines never renounced their claim or gave up hope of acquiring the islands.

After World War II, the United Kingdom, as part of her de-colonization process, began negotiations with the Argentine Republic on changing the islands' status to suit both nations. These negotiations continued fruitlessly for decades, with the Argentine Republic desiring a quick process of reconversion and the United Kingdom desiring a retention of the islands, though not legal ownership.

By 1982, negotiations were stalled completely. The 150th anniversary of the loss of the islands was approaching, and reacquisition seemed nowhere in the offing. The military junta then in power in the Argentine Republic, urged chiefly by "Armada (Spanish for navy) Argentina," decided to force the issue. On April 2, 1982, the armed forces of the Argentine Republic landed on the Islas de Malvinas, evicting the British governor and garrison there. The junta believed the move would boost its declining popular support, and judged a military response by the United Kingdom as unlikely.

When the United Kingdom rallied, assembled, and sent south a powerful task force to retake the Falklands (much to the Argentine junta's surprise), the burden of the defense of the Malvinas was supposed to rest with Armada Argentina. The idea of retaking the islands at this time had largely been that of its commander and junta member, Admiral Jorge Anaya.<sup>2</sup> Their reacquisition had largely been a Navy operation, and due to the

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blue water nature of the military situation, it seemed natural to think that the Navy would handle much of the defense.

A source of pride of the Armada Argentina was the ARA *General Belgrano*. The vessel was named for Manuel Belgrano (1770-1820), a leader in the Argentine War of Independence against Spain who had, ironically, also fought against a British attack on Buenos Aires in 1806. The vessel began her career as the USS *Phoenix*, surviving, in another irony, the attack on Pearl Harbor. Sold to the Argentine Republic, she was initially called the *17 de Octubre*, then renamed the *General Belgrano*. This was a 13,645 ton light cruiser of the "Brooklyn" class.<sup>3</sup> Though of World War II vintage, she had more firepower than anything in the Royal Navy,<sup>4</sup> armed with fifteen 6" guns, (range of 13 miles)<sup>5</sup>, eight 5" guns, two 40mm guns, and two quad surface-to-air Seacat missile launchers. Her armor was 1.5-4" around her belt; she carried two helicopters, and had a speed of 32.5 knots when new, but probably went below this.<sup>6</sup> Her crew was 1,000 strong after departure from port but included 300 new recruits, with an average age of eighteen. Commanded by Comandante Hector Bonzo, the *Belgrano* set forth from Ushuaia, the Argentine Republic's most southern port, on April 26.<sup>7</sup> Accompanying her were two "Allen M. Sumner" Class Destroyers, the ARA *Hipolito Bouchard* (ex-USS *Borie*) and the ARA *Piedra Beuna* (ex-USS *Collett*), both armed with four Exocet anti-ship missile launchers and two forward-firing Hedgehog (mortar launched) depth charge tubes.<sup>8</sup>

The task entrusted to the Royal Navy during the Falklands/Malvinas War was transporting land and air forces to the islands and preventing enemy supplies and reinforcements from getting to the islands from the mainland. Part of this job would lie with the submarine force, which was to find the possible threats to the Task Force before its arrival in the South. Specifically, the British submarines were looking for the Argentine vessels *Veinteciento de Mayo*, an aircraft carrier, and the *Belgrano*.

Among the submarines in the Royal Navy was HMS *Conqueror*. A "Valiant" Class Fleet Submarine, she was propelled by a nuclear reactor/geared steam turbine and had a speed of 28 knots submerged. She displaced 4,900 tons submerged, was manned with 13 officers and 90 ratings, and was armed with six 21" torpedo tubes firing either conventional or Tigerfish guided torpedos, but no missiles or nuclear armament.<sup>9</sup> Her length was 86.8 meters and her beam was 10.1 meters.

Her commander during this war was Commander Christopher Wreford-Brown. He had been in command only three weeks when she was ordered into action,<sup>10</sup> and this was the first overall ship command.<sup>11</sup> Located in the naval base of Faslane on the Firth of Clyde in Scotland at the start of the conflict, she completed a maintenance period, took on stores for war,<sup>12</sup> and moved south on April 4th.<sup>13</sup>

She moved on her own, independent of the main Task Force.<sup>14</sup> Her attack and fire control teams practiced constantly on the voyage, acting on the maxim that "a submariner's first mistake is her last mistake."<sup>15</sup> She was informed along the way of the likely Argentine threats and the rules for engaging enemy vessels,<sup>16</sup> which were to attack those either inside the Total Exclusion Zone or threatening the Task Force.

The *Conqueror* took part in the first major British counter-stroke of the conflict. The island of South Georgia (also claimed by the Argentine Republic), located some 1,000 miles southeast of the Falkland/Malvinas and occupied by Argentine forces on April

3rd, was recaptured without resistance by a small detachment of ships and commandoes from the main Task Force between April 21 and 25. The *Conqueror* scouted around the island, making sure there were no Argentine naval forces to interfere with the landing, then stood patrol against possible hostile naval interdiction.<sup>17</sup>

Between the departure of the Task Force and its arrival at the Falkland/Marvinas Islands, the United Kingdom designated what she considered to be the conflict area. On April 12, a "maritime exclusion zone," extending 200 nautical miles around the Falklands, would be in effect. Any Argentine warships and naval auxiliaries thereafter in the zone would be treated as hostile and would be liable to attack by British forces. On April 8, the Argentine Republic established a 200-mile defensive zone of her own off her coast and around the Malvinas. On April 23, the United Kingdom informed the Argentine Republic that "any approach on the part of Argentine warships, submarines, naval auxiliaries, or military aircraft, which would amount to a threat to interfere with the mission of the British forces in the South Atlantic would encounter appropriate response." On April 30, the United Kingdom extended the coverage of its "maritime exclusion zone" to include any ship or aircraft, making it a Total Exclusion Zone. This was a true blockade, and during the conflict only one Argentine ship got through. United Press International quoted an Argentine general as saying that the British air-sea blockage was a total success.<sup>18</sup>

The Task Force was seen by the British leadership as being very vulnerable. When it reached its destination, it would be thousands of miles from repair and refit facilities. An attack could severely damage the Task Force and disrupt its entire mission. The British high command was very sensitive to this. The Royal Navy wanted Argentine surface threats to be pinpointed very soon.

In the weeks before the Task Force sailed the South Atlantic, British civilian and military leaders argued over where their submarines could go to find the enemy. The civilians were concerned that if the submarines got too close to the Argentine coast an incident might occur before they were diplomatically prepared. The military argued that if the submarines stayed within the Total Exclusion Zone, Argentine vessels could safely get within attacking distance of the Task Force. Finally, on April 26, the rules of engagement were extended to include the area around all units of the Task Force.<sup>19</sup>

Upon being informed of this, the *Conqueror* moved from South Georgia to a position southwest of the Falkland/Malvinas, outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

A large part of the controversy over the *Belgrano* sinking concerns the timing of the diplomatic mediation that was occurring at the time. U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig had attempted to arrange a settlement between the United Kingdom and the Argentine Republic with a plan calling for the withdrawal of the contestant's forces, a neutral interim administration, and a negotiated final settlement of the dispute. After the Argentine Republic rejected this mediation, President Ronald Reagan, on April 30th, declared the support of the United States for the United Kingdom.

On Sunday morning May 2nd, President Fernando Belaunde of Peru, a nation known for its friendliness to the Argentine Republic, made a peace initiative based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 502, passed on April 3rd. (This was a British diplomatic victory that ordered Argentine withdrawal). This was very similar to the Haig plan, calling for withdrawal, interim administration, and a negotiated settlement. Both

the Argentine and British governments were informed.

At 2:15 P.M. Buenos Aires time, 5:15 P.M. London time, President Belaunde telephoned the head of the Argentine junta, General Leopoldo Galtieri, and was told by the General that at an evening meeting of the junta, the Peru mediation plan would be accepted. Belaunde made ready to inform the world that evening of peace in the South Atlantic, yet at 5:00 P.M. Buenos Aires time, 8:00 P.M. London time, the ARA *General Belgrano* was torpedoed.<sup>20</sup>

On patrol southwest of the Falklands/Malvinas, the *Conqueror* had been running deep and silent. She had several detection devices at her disposal. Electronic ears enabled her to hear ships at far distances. Her sonar was mainly a passive listening device on the bow. She had sensitive equipment to detect other ships' radar, and could make a visual search with her periscope.<sup>21</sup>

The *Conqueror*'s passive sonar detected a cruiser and two escorts. Visual sighting was made on the afternoon on May 1st. (This was at least twenty-four hours before 4:00 P.M., May 2nd, according to the *Sunday Times*; the crew refuses to be more precise.) Using photography-enlarged pages from *Jane's Fighting Ships* obtained at Faslane, Petty Officer William Guinea, in charge of ship identification, was able to identify by name the *Belgrano* and her escorts, the *Piedra Buena* and the *Bouchard*.<sup>22</sup> The *Conqueror* got astern, and deep below them, followed the group for over thirty hours.<sup>23</sup>

The *Conqueror* informed the top naval leadership of its finding the *Belgrano*, albeit thirty<sup>24</sup> to thirty-five<sup>25</sup> miles outside the TEZ. Using satellite medium to avoid self-exposure (with a two hour time-lag that would later prove critical) she commanded directly with Royal Navy fleet headquarters at Northwood, twenty-four kilometers northeast of London.<sup>26</sup> ("Conks" was the nickname the communication staff at Northwood gave the submarine.) Commander Wreford-Brown also consulted Rear Admiral John Woodward, head of the Task Force flotillas at sea, who also communicated with Northwood on the matter.<sup>27</sup>

On Sunday morning, May 2nd, armed with the information gained from those at sea, Admiral of the fleet Sir Terence Lewin, Chief of the Defense Staff in London,<sup>28</sup> went to a meeting of the war cabinet (the select group within Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's official governing cabinet which discussed and decided important questions about the conflict) at Chequers,<sup>29</sup> the country residence of the Prime Minister, to request permission to sink the *Belgrano* at her current location, outside the Total Exclusion Zone.

The war cabinet went into discussion on the matter. Debates at previous meetings had been over the conditions under which the Royal Navy should or should not attack, known as the rules of engagement. Now that a potential attack situation existed, the group had to decide what to do in this circumstance.

Should the *Conqueror* hold back and follow the *Belgrano* to the TEZ, and was this feasible? Should the *Belgrano* be crippled rather than sunk? Should the escorts be left unattacked to pick up the survivors? Should conventional impact torpedoes be used, or modern wire-guided distance explosion torpedoes? Admiral Lewin told the group that the firm opinion at Northwood was that the *Belgrano* should be put out of action,<sup>30</sup> that the *Conqueror* should "act to defend the fleet."<sup>31</sup>

Finally, all members of the war cabinet voted in favor of attacking. The decision was

taken and the order issued before lunch.<sup>32</sup> The *Conqueror* upon receiving the order, changed from following to going in for an attack. She moved several miles astern and using her speed, maneuvered into attack position on the port beam.<sup>33</sup> The *Belgrano* and her escorts were about thirty-five miles outside the Total Exclusion Zone.<sup>34</sup>

The scene on board the *Belgrano* was one of serenity (one-third of her crew members were off duty) touched with anxiety. Her crew was not aware of being followed by the *Conqueror*, but they knew well the threat that the British submarines posed.<sup>35</sup>

Commander Wreford-Brown had two weapons at his disposal. One was the modern, sophisticated Mark 24 Tigerfish torpedo, 21 feet long, 3,400 pounds in weight, a range of 20 miles, and speed of 60 miles per hour. With long thin wires attached to the ship's computer,<sup>36</sup> it could be exploded near the target, not on impact, and thus reduce the damage inflicted. Yet Tigerfish were expensive, costing \$875,000.00 each, and some submariners considered them unreliable. (During tests off Malta in 1967, a Tigerfish changed course by 180 degrees and nearly sank its launch submarine.) So Commander Wreford-Brown ordered his torpedo officer Billie Budding, to load his other weapon,<sup>37</sup> Mark 8 diesel-driven torpedoes, circa World War II.<sup>38</sup>

At 5:00 P.M. Buenos Aires time, 8:00 P.M. London time,<sup>39</sup> without warning or challenge,<sup>40</sup> at periscope depth, the *Conqueror* launched a visual attack. From 1,400 yards,<sup>41</sup> a pattern of three<sup>42</sup> torpedoes were fired at short intervals.

Commander Wreford-Brown watched through the periscope. "I saw one hit amidships. I saw a fireball. I saw a cloud of dirty smoke as the second torpedo hit."<sup>43</sup> The first torpedo hit the port bow, immediately killing eight to ten Argentine sailors there. The second hit the stern, killing or trapping at least 250 men, most of them in the canteen or their sleeping quarters.<sup>44</sup> One torpedo missed (all three were not expected to hit.)<sup>45</sup>

The crew of the *Conqueror* heard the heavy explosions as the torpedoes hit home,<sup>46</sup> and they sent up a cheer. Commander Wreford-Brown expected a counter-attack from the *Piedra Buena* and the *Bouchard* and after seeing the explosions ordered a deep dive and a fast escape.<sup>47</sup>

It was a textbook escape for the *Conqueror*. The *Piedra Buena* and the *Bouchard* immediately gave chase and repeatedly fired their hedgehog (mortar-lanced) depth charges. The crew of the running submarine heard and felt the detonations and shock waves,<sup>48</sup> which frightened them badly, yet Commander Wreford-Brown remained quite calm. The Argentine aim was erratic over the two-hour chase, and no damage was inflicted,<sup>49</sup> as the destroyers were unable to make the sonar contact.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the *Conqueror* was able to report to Northwood via satellite that the attack had been carried out. Her crew at the time felt glad for having performed a successful attack, but immediately afterward regretted the loss of life which they correctly presumed to be considerable.<sup>51</sup>

The *Conqueror* remained in the South Atlantic until the Argentine surrender at Port Stanley in June. She exercised patrol duties, looking for enemy submarines or surface ships that might have threatened the Task Force or the forces ashore on the Falklands. When she returned to her base at Faslane on the Clyde in Scotland, she flew the traditional symbol of a successful patrol, a black pirate Jolly Roger flag, the first seen since World War II. Commander Wreford-Brown was awarded the Distinguished Service Order.<sup>52</sup>



Meanwhile, on board the *Belgrano*, all hell had broken loose. Besides the deaths and wounds from explosion and flying metal, some extremely bad burns were inflicted upon a number of unfortunate Argentine sailors. Yet, according to an anonymously interviewed senior *Belgrano* officer, the burn victims were perfectly passive, with no screams or panic. So deep was their shock, they were easy to handle.

Within ten minutes, the ship had listed 15 degrees to port, and within twenty minutes, 21 degrees. Comandante Bonzo felt that he had no choice but to abandon ship. The order was passed from man to man,<sup>53</sup> as the explosion had destroyed all the ship's power and communication systems.

The crew scrambled down the portside to the large yellow life rafts,<sup>54</sup> some carrying their cassette tape players and photographs of their family members. The ship had carried seventy self-inflated rafts with room for twenty men each, yet some were punctured by flying metal, so they had to overcrowd, putting up to thirty people in a raft.

There was some risk that the ship would roll over onto the life rafts, so they had to get away quickly. But the men were covered with oil and could not row away as their hands slipped on the wooden oars. They paddled with their hands, and the rafts were only one hundred yards from the ship when the *ARA General Belgrano* went down stern first. Those with the strength sang "*Oid, Mortales, el Grito Sagrado Libertad!*" (Hear, Mortales, Freedom's Sacred Cry!), their national anthem.<sup>55</sup> It took two hours from the time of the attack to the sinking.<sup>56</sup> This was the largest ship sunk in naval action since the American attacks at the Inland Sea of Japan in 1945.<sup>57</sup>

All of the rafts were lashed together for greater mutual protection against capsizing. A gale then blew up. The surviving crew were in their rafts thirty hours, story-telling and praying, chanting (one officer had each man in his raft sing a song)<sup>58</sup> before rescue from Armada Argentina<sup>59</sup> finally arrived. By the time the rescue was completed, 368 out of a crew of 1,000 were dead,<sup>60</sup> an incredible 37% loss. It was the first major loss of life in the conflict.

For this great loss of life, the British military was later to blame the Argentines themselves. If the *Piedra Beuna* and the *Bouchard*, so this thinking goes, had stayed in the area and picked up survivors instead of chasing the *Conqueror*, the loss of life would not have been as great.<sup>61</sup> Also, some naval experts were surprised that the cruiser so rapidly listed and began sinking after only two torpedo hits. Had the watertight doors been closed and efficient damage control methods been employed, the contention is, the ship and many lives might have been spared.<sup>62</sup> The Argentine answer: The *Piedra Beuna* and the *Bouchard* were acting in self-defense, and the explosions opened up all four decks to flooding, and put the electronic onboard communication network out of commission. Sealing the watertight compartments would not have worked and delivering the "abandon ship" order was slowed.<sup>63</sup>

At 1:00 P.M. London time, on Monday, May 3rd, the sinking of the *Belgrano* was officially confirmed by the British government. John Nott, the British Defense Secretary and a member of the war cabinet, spoke on the attack at a press conference that evening. The apparent idea of the war cabinet was for the torpedoes to cripple the ship while its escorts picked up casualties, for when news of the heavy loss of life came during the news conference, Nott was visibly taken aback. He apparently realized that this would not be seen as enforcing a Total Exclusion Zone, but as an overdone aggressive act.<sup>64</sup>

Now the attack was militarily not just a tactical triumph, but a strategic one, as all Argentine naval vessels pulled in close to the mainland and did not dare venture out for the rest of the conflict. (On May 7th, the Total Exclusion Zone was extended to include all area outside of twelve miles from the Argentine coast.) This fulfilled a prediction widely offered at the time in the United States and the United Kingdom, that the Royal Navy, like the United States Navy, was a "one-shot" navy. "Sink one and you've sunk a lot," as one notable American defense expert said.<sup>65</sup>

In the Argentine Republic the government at first denied the sinking, calling it a British psychological warfare lie. Yet with large numbers of survivors ashore, no pretense was possible. The official line then became that it was a "treacherous act of armed aggression."<sup>66</sup> It was a stunning blow to Armada Argentina -- three admirals' sons were on board, and the service had lost one of its most prestigious units.<sup>67</sup>

However, for the United Kingdom it was a diplomatic disaster. It was important to the international community to appear to avoid escalation. Even a pre-emptive military act, if it was not for self-evident defensive reasons, would become an outrage. The United Kingdom had said very carefully that this was not a combat exclusion zone, but it had been understood as such.<sup>68</sup>

At the United Nations, sentiment shifted away from the United Kingdom. Particular criticism was made about the sinking occurring outside of the Total Exclusion Zone. United States Secretary of State Haig told a Congressional committee that the "sinking contributes to continue the dispute." In the European Economic Community, Italy and the Republic of Ireland asked that the earlier imposed sanctions against the Argentine Republic be removed.<sup>69</sup> The Dublin government announced its distress over "the outbreak of what amounts to open war." Its Defense Minister Patrick Mower said: "Obviously, the British are very much the aggressors now." Mower's opinion, the sinking of the Royal Navy destroyer HMS *Sheffield* by an air-launched Exocet missile on May 4th was the Argentine revenge for the *Belgrano*.<sup>70</sup> However, the *Sheffield* sinking and its attendant loss of life tended to dissipate international sympathy for the Argentine Republic over its loss.<sup>71</sup>

The controversy over whether the sinking of the *Belgrano* was justified or not hinges on two questions: Was the *Belgrano* a threat to the lives of the British servicemen aboard the Task Force, and therefore its sinking a justifiable act of self-defense, despite its being outside the Total Exclusion Zone? The author's answer to this, in the United Kingdom's disfavor is no. And, did the sinking disrupt a peace process that could have succeeded? The author's answer to this, in the Argentine Republic's disfavor, is no as well.

Just what was the Total Exclusion Zone? It was initially a blockade, as merchant and neutral vessels were not barred (until April 30th), only Argentine naval vessels.<sup>72</sup> It seems to have been a warning to them not to go near the Falklands/Malvinas.

But precisely how close were they allowed to go? The extent of the TEZ, 200 nautical miles around the islands, had never been properly defined, at least not to the crew of the *Conquerer*. Where was the center point from which to calculate the radius? Petty Officer William Guinea, in charge of navigation, had no specific orders to answer this question. In consultation with Commander Wreford-Brown, he selected a point in Falkland Sound, and just drew a circle. There was no way to inform the Argentines

of this arbitrary line. And did it matter where this line fell and where an Argentine vessel was in relation to it? Would not any enemy warship that went more than a very few short miles from the mainland have been regarded as a threat to the Task Force?<sup>73</sup>

Since a state of armed conflict had existed between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom from April 2nd, it might be argued that the naval vessels of each other would be liable to attack wherever they would be found.<sup>74</sup> And, in declaring the TEZ, the United Kingdom had said that her forces were free to defend themselves, and to attack potential aggressors outside the zone.<sup>75</sup> (The Argentine Republic declared a 200 mile TEZ of her own, but was unable to enforce it). Also, the United Kingdom had declared a 200 mile defensive zone around the Task Force,<sup>76</sup> and had informed the Argentine Republic of this. Howard S. Levie, an expert on international law, wrote: "Certainly a cruiser of a belligerent has no right to consider itself immune from enemy attack because it is on the high seas beyond the range of a proclaimed maritime exclusion zone."<sup>77</sup> But why then set a geographical limit, within which enemy ships can be attacked, only to act outside them, even if the United Kingdom was within the letter of her legal rights? The Total Exclusion Zone seems to come across as just a redundant warning to the Argentines.<sup>78</sup>

Much of the argument defending the attack on the *Belgrano* is based on the principle of self-defense, reasoning that Armada Argentina fully intended to attack the vessels of the Task Force. Therefore, a strike to negate such a threat was justified to protect British lives. Did the *Belgrano* have deadly intent? The author will argue that she did not.

The British military view claims that the Task Force was quite vulnerable, that it was thousands of miles from repair facilities. An attack from units of Armada Argentina, particularly the *Belgrano* with her big guns and her escort's Exocets, in this view, could seriously have damaged the Task Force and cost hundreds of lives.

The specific contention is that Armada Argentina was only hours away from such an attack. A three-pronged strike, including the *Belgrano* and the *Vientecinto de Mayo* was supposedly gearing up for battle.<sup>79</sup> The Argentines have admitted that the *Belgrano* was providing aircraft direction for their Air Force.<sup>80</sup> Supposedly, the *Vientecinto* and her escorts, near the mainland, were to head east when weather was suitable. Had atmospheric conditions permitted, the *Vientecinto* might have struck the Task Force from outside the Total Exclusion Zone. Had her Skyhawk bombers been launched (and had an actual Super Entendard attack on the Task Force been successful) one or both of the Task Force aircraft carriers could have been hit. The *Belgrano* would have been in position to join any surface action against remnants of the Task Force.<sup>81</sup>

Douglas Kinney, a writer on international law, stated that Admiral Lombardo, Argentine operations commander in the South Atlantic at the time, later publicly confirmed that the *Belgrano*'s orders were to search out and sink the enemy.<sup>82</sup> Rear Admiral Woodward said that he agreed with Admiral Lombardo, who effectively called it the fortunes of war, and no more or less than he would have done in the circumstances.<sup>83</sup>

Typical of Prime Minister Thatcher's remarks was: "Our job was to protect our boys. I and every one of my ministers...would do exactly the same thing again."<sup>84</sup> (In the years after the attack, she was closely questioned by opposition members of Parliament as to her motivations.)

After the *Conqueror* had returned to Faslane, Commander Wreford-Brown said he thought in the long run the sinking of the *Belgrano* had saved lives.<sup>85</sup> "We countered the '*Belgrano*'s threat to the Task Force and the loss of life that the *Belgrano* would have caused. Any other British submarine could have been just as successful. We did just what we were invited to do and I wouldn't have any hesitation about doing it again. It is a fact of going to war that you must expect losses. They (The Argentines) wouldn't have been there if they weren't accepting risks."<sup>86</sup>

The debate in Parliament on May 4th was chiefly on the *Belgrano* attack.<sup>87</sup> John Nott, Defense Minister and member of the war cabinet, said that a heavily armed surface attack group, close to the Total Exclusion Zone, was closing in on the Task Force only hours away. "The threat to the Task Force was such that the Task Force commander could ignore it only at his peril." The opposition members were not convinced. The Labor Party spokesman on foreign affairs, Dennis Healey, asked: "What does 'hours away' mean? Fifty miles? One hundred miles? Three hundred miles?" Nott evaded the question.<sup>88</sup> The leader of the Liberal Party, David Steele, asked if military action was measured and controlled. "Is there instruction to the fleet that all action must be taken only if totally unavoidable?" Nott only answered that it was clear that orders to the Argentine fleet were to sink British ships.<sup>89</sup>

But would they actually have attacked, come the moment of decision? Despite the foregoing British claims to the contrary, the author's opinion is that they would not have. The Argentine Republic had re-acquired the Malvinas in the expectation of not having to fight, and were surprised when the United Kingdom rallied and sent the Task Force. The Argentines were unprepared psychologically for a protracted struggle. They would have damaged the Task Force, but they also in so attacking could have destroyed their own fleet, thereby eliminating the Navy's internal political influence on the junta and giving other South American enemies a free hand. The Argentine Republic did not commit all of its forces to the defenses of the Malvinas; throughout the conflict, two batallions of the mountain commandoes stayed at Comodoro Rivadavia to guard against intervention by Chile, with whom the Argentine Republic was having another territorial dispute over a different set of islands.<sup>90</sup> Despite the promise on the statue of the Christ of the Andes, war with Chile was a possibility; the Argentine Republic dared not lose the bulk of its armed forces fighting against just one of its enemies. In judging how the Argentine Republic would have used its forces, the war cabinet might have considered their opponent's internal politics and mainland relations.

It should also be noted that the *Belgrano* was not an *immediate* threat to the *Conqueror* or the Task Force; the submarine had the luxury of signaling back 8,000 miles and awaiting a group decision on what to do. Also, a case can be made that the Task Force could have successfully withstood an attack without mortal harm. The Sea Harriers aboard the two aircraft carriers proved to be formidable during the conflict, and six class 42 Destroyers were along, with strong anti-air capability.<sup>91</sup>

Part of the controversy in later years concerned the direction the *Belgrano* was heading while at sea and what this signified about their intent. The *Belgrano*'s officers said that they were on patrol, forty to fifty miles southwest of the TEZ. This patrol took her on an east-to-west, west-to-east line of movement. The Argentines say that they were sailing west toward the South American mainland, with specific orders not to enter the

Total Exclusion Zone.<sup>92</sup> Jeffrey Echell and Alfred Price, authors of *Air War South Atlantic*, maintain that the *Belgrano* was simply on the westerly leg of its east-west patrol line. They state that Argentine official sources have no mention of the ship being recalled to port.<sup>93</sup>

British Ministry of Defense records, declassified in 1984, reveal that the war cabinet ordered the attack on the *Belgrano* after the *Conqueror* had reported that the *Belgrano* had changed course, taking herself away from the Total Exclusion Zone and back toward the mainland. But there was a two hour time-lag between the sending of a message and its receipt, so that before the war cabinet had the latest intelligence, the torpedoes had been fired.<sup>94</sup> Memos show that the war cabinet had not known of the course change until the attack.<sup>95</sup>

Part of the motive behind the United Kingdom's decision to attack may have been a desire to show resolve. "You have got to start something like this by showing that your bloody good and you're determined to win," said a British commander.<sup>96</sup> The opinion of John Laffin, author of *Fight For the Falklands!* is that restraint would have made the sea commanders impotent and perhaps have delayed fatally their response to threats while wondering if violence was avoidable or not, that the *Sheffield* sinking proved the military necessity of immediate and pre-emptive response.<sup>97</sup> Some navy officers said criticism of the attack decision show "witness" (unwillingness to move) or inability to appreciate war's realities. If the *Conqueror* had not attacked immediately, the *Belgrano* might have gone into the shallow water that reaches far into the Atlantic and give the slip, costing the British opportunity to demonstrate boldness.

Yet the United Kingdom had already shown its resolution and willingness to use force. The dispatch of the Task Force, the retaking of South Georgia, the long-range Vulcan aircraft bombing of Port Stanley on May 1st; all these had already demonstrated that the United Kingdom was "bloody good and determined to win" and they did not enrage the Argentine Republic's pride and passion the way the *Belgrano* sinking did. In this regard, the attack was redundant chauvinism, and, in some critics' opinions, fatally hampered peaceful negotiations. This was the Thatcher war cabinet's and British military's way of showing that the retaking of the Falklands would be supported with any force necessary.<sup>98</sup> It made the Royal Navy look strong, and on May 7th the TEZ was enlarged to twelve miles off the entire Argentine coast for the duration of the conflict.<sup>99</sup> The attack was of course a strong move for getting sea command, but it still seems remarkable, then and now, how readily the war cabinet gave permission for it. If they had delayed an initial sea attack until they had given warning of the Total Exclusion Zone extension, would the Task Force have been at risk? Were Admiral Anaya and Comandante Bonzo on that day definitely intending a concerted surface attack? It may be years, if at all, until we know.<sup>100</sup>

Did the attack on the *Belgrano* also torpedo a mediated peace plan that was about to be accepted? Argentine and anti-Thatcher sources want people to believe so. Supposedly, General Galtieri was preparing his acceptance of President Belaunde's peace plan for the evening of May 2nd, yet before this could be done, the *Belgrano* was sunk that afternoon.<sup>101</sup> Also, the timing of the attack prevented the British war cabinet from getting the input of one of its officers in time. Sir Frances Pym, the Foreign Secretary, had met with Secretary Haig early that day, the latter urging acceptance of the Peru

plan. Pym telegraphed this advice to London at 5:15 P.M. Washington time, or 10:15 P.M. London time -- two hours and fifteen minutes after the *Conqueror* had carried out the attack order. Supposedly, had the war cabinet but delayed an attack order for twelve hours, a mediated peace might have come into effect. As the sinking was an insult to the Argentine Republic's national honor, no compromise was possible after that. Within hours, on the evening of May 2nd, General Galtieri told President Belaunde that no deal was possible.

But it is still to be established that it ever had been.<sup>102</sup> The Peru plan was virtually identical to Secretary Haig's plan, which the Argentine Republic had recently and comprehensively rejected; indeed, it was referred to as "Haig-in-a-poncho."<sup>103</sup> The war cabinet's view during its discussion on the morning of May 2nd was that things seemed to be standing still in Washington -- nothing more promising than deals the Argentine Republic had already rejected were in the air. The Peru plan was seen as too similar to Haig's rejected plan, and as biased because it came from a South American source with strong Argentine sympathies.<sup>104</sup>

The subsequent diplomatic actions of the two nations should be taken into consideration. Because of the adverse world reaction, the war cabinet on May 3rd indicated a willingness to try the Haig-Peru plan again. On May 4th, General Galtieri said that, in view of the *Belgrano* sinking, no concession on the Argentine Republic's part was possible.<sup>105</sup> But it was the spectacular sinking of the *Sheffield* on May 4th that actually sank the Peru plan. On May 5th, the United Kingdom, responding to renewed efforts by President Belaunde, again agreed to negotiations based on the Peru plan. Yet the Argentine Republic, with her hopes up again, rejected the Peru plan and decided to seek mediation from the United Nations, where she thought she could get better terms. On May 18th, the Argentine Republic rejected United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's plan, which the United Kingdom had accepted. On May 21st, the Task Force hit San Carlos Bay on East Falkland. The Argentine Republic had refused the final Haig-Peru-de Cuellar peace offer.<sup>106</sup>

Throughout the sea war, Admiral Anaya thought he could win his campaign of attrition against the Royal Navy.<sup>107</sup> After the *Sheffield* sinking, the Argentines thought that they could obtain more Exocet missiles and sink more British vessels.<sup>108</sup> Admiral Anaya urged rejection of the Peru plan twice during the week of May 2nd-8th, and later he recommended rejection of de Cuellar's mediation.

The Argentine Republic's view of diplomacy was to keep talking as long as possible to slow down the Task Force -- and Prime Minister Thatcher refused to play along with this.<sup>109</sup> The opinion of Sir Anthony Parsons, the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations during the conflict, is that the Argentine Republic was determined to keep the islands. Once she had set upon this military adventure, she had no intention of peacefully implementing the United Nation's or anybody else's plans for peaceful troop withdrawal. The Argentines wanted to indefinitely plan for time. If they delayed long enough, so Parsons thinks the Argentines felt, international opinion would swing toward them. A later military move by the United Kingdom would make Britain seem the aggressor.<sup>110</sup>

Recent history is a risky field, the immediacy of events blind perspective, and later revelations make judgements close to events look naive. Nevertheless, as the events

investigated directly affect our current lives, it is a worthwhile pursuit. In studying the sinking of the ARA *General Belgrano*, the author reaches a number of conclusions.

Pitched conventional sea battles between rival fleets now seem likely to never occur. Navies plan, drill and rehearse for such occurrences with great intensity, but when the time drew nigh for such a showdown in the South Atlantic, both the United Kingdom and the Argentine Republic had too much expensive hardware on the line to risk losing it all in a sea clash. Instead, both seemed to prefer sniping at each other via submarine (a la the *Belgrano*) or aircraft (a la the *Sheffield*). In future sea wars, the fighting will probably be done by less expensive support units, with the large capital ship being used for bombardment or to escort transports.

Electronic communications, with their speed and incredible reach, do not enable quicker resolution of problems -- they instead speed the rate at which errors occur. If one accepts the view that the attack disrupted peace mediation (which this author does not), the events of May 2nd offer confirmation of this. Belaunde calls Galtieri, hears that his peace plan will be accepted, gets ready to announce it in the evening, and one of the principals' ships gets sunk in the meantime. Wreford-Brown is able to communicate with his superiors over 8,000 miles to make sure that he does what he is supposed to do -- only to have them find that his latest intelligence, and the input of one of their absent members (Pym), did not get through until after the submarine obeyed their order -- information that might have altered the order. (Those that hesitate may not always be lost).

A blockade or exclusion zone can be effective politically or diplomatically only if its intent and meaning are clearly communicated to and understood by the international community. In declaring the Total Exclusion Zone, the United Kingdom reserved the right to defend herself against any perceived Argentine threats at sea, yet the rest of the world took it to mean that only enemy units inside the TEZ would be attacked. Instead of waiting until May 7th to extend the TEZ to twelve miles off the entire Argentine coast, that should have been its initial boundary.

The official stances of all sides in this controversy may not have reflected their true motives -- expedience probably did. The Prime Minister and her cabinet said that they acted to protect British lives, yet it may be they thought it was too good an opportunity to miss. The opposition parties in Parliament sharply criticized and questioned the Prime Minister and her officers over the wisdom of ordering the attack, but this may have been just another opportunity for Thatcher's opponents. The Argentines and their friends insisted that the attack was treacherous and disruptive of mediation -- but this may have been simply frustration over one of *their* units getting sunk (note the exultation over the *Sheffield* sinking). As usual in politics and diplomacy, what is said does not always describe the true motive -- what is not said may hold the germ of causation.

Finally, neither side seemed to accept what should be axiomatic -- when you go to war you must expect that the enemy will inflict losses upon you. The Argentine Republic apparently expected to retake and hold the Malvinas without serious losses from the British. The United Kingdom, to prevent casualties, was willing to attack anything in sight regardless of the legality or consequences of this action. It is unreasonable for leaders and nations to expect to take no serious losses of their own.

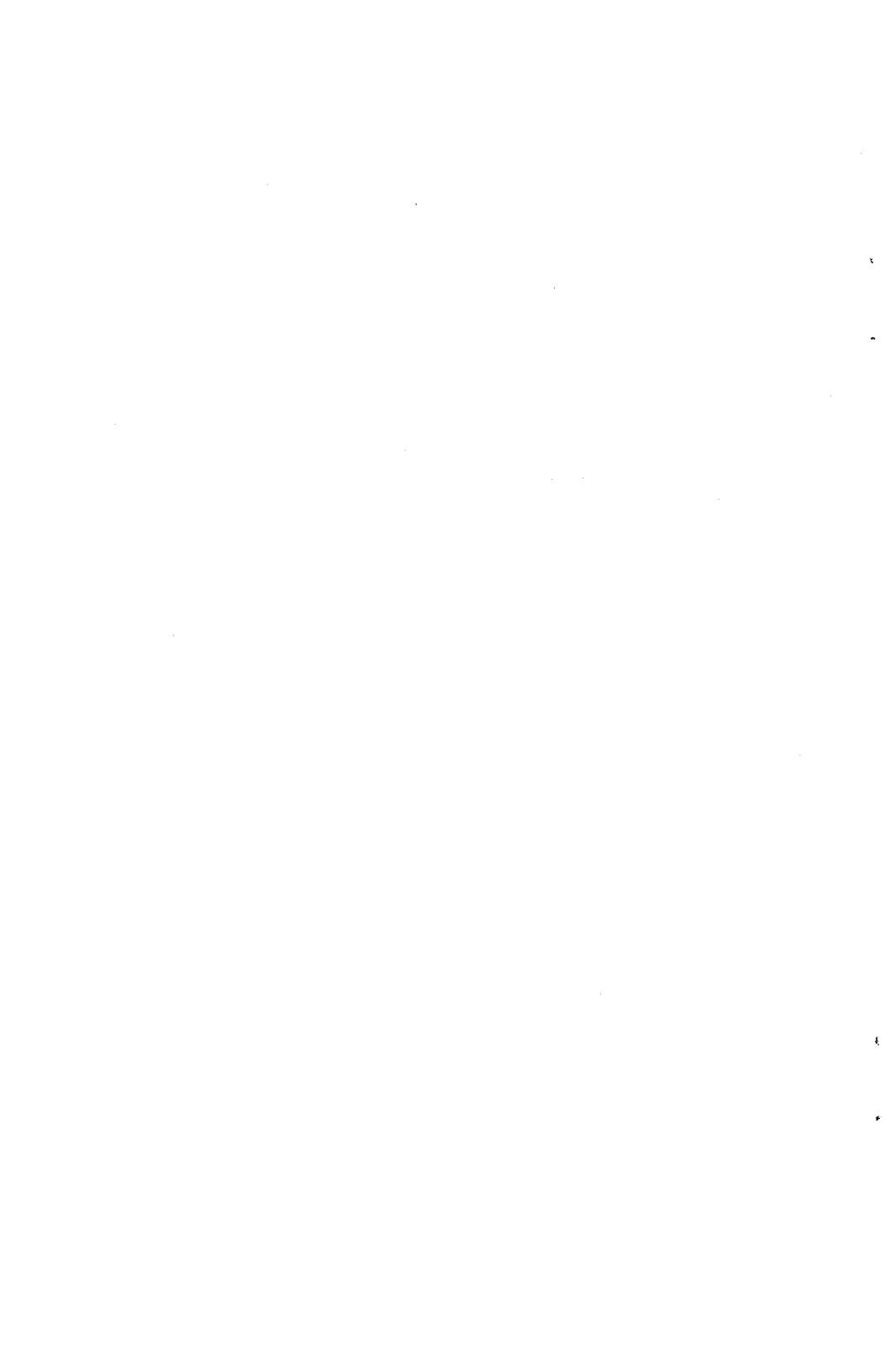
## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> Bryan Perrett, *Weapons of the Falklands Conflict* (Poole, England: Blandford Press, 1984), 36.
- <sup>4</sup> John Laffin, *Fight For the Falklands!* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 49.
- <sup>5</sup> Insight Team of *Sunday Times of London*, *War in the Falklands: The Full Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 155.
- <sup>6</sup> Perret, 36.
- <sup>7</sup> Insight Team, 156.
- <sup>8</sup> Perret, 37.
- <sup>9</sup> Perret, 21.
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- <sup>27</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 148-149.
- <sup>28</sup> Laffin, 50.
- <sup>29</sup> Kinney, 101.
- <sup>30</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 149.
- <sup>31</sup> Laffin, 50.
- <sup>32</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 149.



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- 39 Kinney, 100.
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- 47 Underwood, 16-17.
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- <sup>83</sup> Max Arthur, *Above All, Courage: The Falklands Front Line: First Hand Accounts* (London: Sidgewick and Jackson, 1985), 327.
- <sup>84</sup> North, 22.
- <sup>85</sup> Insight Team, 138.
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- <sup>91</sup> Imperiale, *op. cit.* Three residual issues over ordering the attack are the direction of the *Belgrano*, timeliness of British intelligence, and British chauvinism.
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- <sup>96</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 149.
- <sup>97</sup> Laffin, 52.
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- <sup>99</sup> Freedman, 204.
- <sup>100</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 149, 151.
- <sup>101</sup> Hastings and Jenkins, 167.
- <sup>102</sup> Kinney, 99, 102.
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# **Gustavus Augustus: The Rise of Sweden and Arrival of Modern Warfare**

*by Tracy Morgan*

The mighty kingdom of the North, Sweden from 1612-1700, was built by the framework, influences, and blood spilled by Gustav II Adolf (Gustavus Adolfus), early in this period. It is in his achievement which allowed this kingdom to ascend to its pinnacle. Even this, perhaps, was not his greatest feat, for Gustav Adolf can be coined, with all its connotations, as the "Father of Modern War."

Gustavus Adolphus was born on the ninth of December, 1594 in Stockholm. He was the eldest son of the reigning king, Charles IX. The young Gustavus was tutored and educated by John Skytte, who was appointed by his father. Skytte was to have much influence over the young Gustavus. It was from Skytte that Gustavus would learn to speak eight languages, including German, which he spoke fluently.

Skytte recognized the importance of oratory skills to a king and tutored Gustavus to a mastery of Ciceronian rhetoric techniques. Skytte was also responsible for teaching Gustavus the art and history of war. Gustavus was taught military history from Caesar to the current innovations of Maurice of Orange. Skytte approached the teaching of military thought through the study of mathematics, optics, and mechanics.<sup>1</sup>

Skytte's teaching of military thought created an insatiable drive in the young Gustavus for additional knowledge. The young Gustavus would have lengthy question and answer sessions with professional soldiers, of varying nationalities, who would be visiting the palace. They would discuss wars, battles, sieges, and doctrines of different nations by land and sea. These sessions, which would sometimes go on for days, no doubt filled in and supplemented the formal learnings of Gustavus on military thought.<sup>2</sup>

By the time he was seventeen, he was well groomed for his ascension to the throne. Suddenly, he was thrust forth into the spotlight of controversy. The Swedish constitution stated that the king must be at least 24 years of age. It was then that the first and persisting conflict with Sigismund, King of Poland, arose. Sigismund constitutionally had the right to the throne of Sweden since Gustavus was not of age. However, the Swedish nobility saw the opportunity to regain many lost privileges and obtain much more control if a minor, whom they could control, would be installed.<sup>3</sup> The result was the charter of 1 January, 1612. The charter, besides granting the nobility privileges and powers, also gave the right to young Gustavus to rise, come forth, and be king.

Gustavus Adolphus the King was ready and equipped for assumption of his duties. He quickly began applying his oratory skills to help build on his acceptance. Gustavus used his innate gift of words excellently. He infused freshness and force into his words, each of which had a precise and definitive purpose. He could change his level of speech to match his audiences, without appearing to be out of place or condescending to their level.<sup>4</sup>

Gustavus displayed an aura of aristocracy, however, his work ethic and temperament

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allowed him to be seen as removed from the light of nobility as a man who stood on achievement and work, not just birth. Gustavus had experienced the battlefield before he assumed kingship during the war against the Danes in 1611. He was ordered to lead the storming of the town, Christianople, which he did, sword in hand. So, even before his father died, he had proved himself as a soldier with courage and ability.<sup>5</sup>

Gustavus thought that elan was a cornerstone on which he could build his army. He tried to promote elan by participating in all facets of warfare. Gustavus repeatedly led his men into battle or personally supervised sighting of artillery or construction of defenses. On the battlefield, Gustavus seemed to show his real character and appeared to be in his proper element. His courage and belief in honor and contempt for death, as well as his restlessness, combined to place Gustavus in a constant state of motion, rustling from position-to-position to personally command the most critical action.<sup>6</sup> This manifested itself into an army that had great faith in their supreme commander.

It was not, however, only the realization of the importance in elan and his attempts to further it that allows Gustavus to be termed "the father of modern warfare." Gustavus also established a standing professional conscript army and adhered to the principle of maximizing fire and movement. This, Gustavus set the stage upon which the rest of military history would be played out.

Gustavus was not as much an inventor as he was an innovator, adapting existing technology to the two predominant questions of warfare. Strategically, he determined how to raise, finance, and maintain an army; and tactically, he learned how to utilize battlefield resources to maximize firepower and with it maintain a favorable balance of maneuver.

As previously mentioned, Gustavus placed much emphasis on the factor of elan. This emphasis can be seen as one of the motivating forces which drove him to the adoption of new methods and techniques, which is termed modern war. Placing emphasis on elan was not new, for much elan was previously derived from the ceremonial nature of the soldier. However, this elan was not converted into a predominant controllable factor weighing heavily upon the result of the battle until Gustavus. Gustavus recognized the importance of elan on the efficiency and conduct of his army in actual battle. This ideal would later be exposed and embraced in the future by Carl von Clausewitz in his treatise "On War" in 1832, two hundred years after Gustavus died at the battle of Lutzen. The realization of the importance of elan demonstrates that Gustavus embraced, perhaps, the most affecting factor of modern war, that of morale.

When Gustavus became king in 1612, the state of the military, as well as the social and economic climate of Sweden, was in a very sorrowful and chaotic state. Gustavus correctly deduced that he had to raise the state of morale in the nation as well as in the army to a point where he would have enough time to implement changes and improvements before total collapse arrived. Gustavus found himself at war with the Danes, Polanders, and Muscovites in 1612. The Swedish peasant conscript armies had proved incapable of standing against the Danish mercenary army, and the navy proved itself as incompetent in maintaining control of the seas. The Danes had taken Kalmar, Sweden's southern-most naval base, and tied down in Russia was the army desperately needed at home. The infantry was poorly organized and trained. The nobility failed to provide their quota of heavy calvary, and bitterly fought attempts to enforce their obligations to do so.<sup>7</sup>

First, to calm Sweden's frayed nerves Gustavus, in his Accession Charter of 31 December, 1611,<sup>8</sup> made ten points. He vowed to protect and defend and not force upon any estate a new religious order other than their current Christian beliefs. Gustavus also promised to maintain the written law of the land and to preserve all estates and their given authority, as well as, not to impose any new law or ordinance without the approval of the Council of the Realm and all the estates. Then in his seventh point, he agreed that the election of bishops, as well as their authority to ordain priests, would remain status quo under the Church Ordinance currently in force. He promised to provide officials to maintain law in areas inadequately staffed with baliffs, constables, and judges. And, finally, he safeguarded property rights and due process rights of the accused. In this charter, Gustavus tried to illustrate the stability of his impending rule in maintaining the status quo, and also to gain the confidence of the various estates, clergy and the peasants, whom he guaranteed due process and constitutional adhesion. The result was that Gustavus halted the sliding Swedish morale and had time to begin working on the rebuilding process.

Secondly, Gustavus set out to economically improve Sweden's position to be able to continue her wars. He did not wish to make changes in the military establishment amidst a critical period in the wars. He first issued a proclamation on 26 November, 1612 that became known as the Alienation of Crown revenues, in which he proposed that all grants of revenue which had been given anywhere in the country, be revoked and applied to the expenses of the war.<sup>9</sup> Also, he modernized the tax structure to raise more revenue than before, and he began encouraging foreign capital investments.<sup>10</sup> These changes carried Sweden through her time of troubles.

Gustavus signed the Peace of Knared 21, January, 1613 which concluded a less than advantageous peace with the over extended Danes, who were unable to exploit their victories,<sup>11</sup> and then turned his entire might upon the Muscovites. The war with the Danes had proved particularly disastrous because Denmark was Sweden's chief rival in the race for naval supremacy in the Baltic. The quest for naval supremacy and control of the Baltic became known as the Baltic Problem. The Baltic Problem is relatively simple to comprehend; Sweden being a maritime power, needed naval control of the Baltic to insure trade routes, and security against invasion from the continent. The Baltic Problem would be the focal point of Swedish national policy during the entire reign of Gustavus. The war with the Muscovites ended victoriously for the Swedes with the Peace of Stolbova on 27 February 1617, and the Poles, too, concluded a truce. The Peace of Stolbova was an extremely favorable one for the victorious Swedes. The peace meant that Swedish territory extended throughout Finland and connected to Estonia by a land bridge, thus completely surrounding the Gulf of Finland with Swedish soil.<sup>12</sup> Gustavus realized that he had struck a two fold policy victory for Sweden as he stated while speaking in Stockholm 26 August, 1617.<sup>13</sup> First, the Swedes could control and tax the flow of trade to Russia. Secondly, in regard to the Baltic Problem, the great power of Russia had lost all her Baltic ports, as Gustavus said in triumph, "he (the Russians) cannot now launch a single boat (let alone a fleet) on the Baltic without our permission."

Sweden, after five years under Gustavus, finally fell into a period of peace. Sweden had managed to come out of this period of wars in good shape economically, and secure in the Baltic, as Sweden and Denmark had agreed to recognize each other's right to

maintain a fleet. Denmark and Sweden had come to an agreement on, essentially, naval parity in the Baltic and agreed, together, to deny the presence of any other naval forces in the Baltic.<sup>14</sup> This allowed the ever more popular Gustavus to begin rebuilding and reforming the military into a machine designed, built, and guided by himself.

The army which Gustavus inherited was already unique in Europe, as it was manned by means of conscription, whereas, other European nations used mercenary armies.<sup>15</sup> Despite the continually poor showings against mercenary armies, Gustavus realized the potential of the national conscript army. Just as Machiavelli wrestled the idea of conscription in his 1521 Treatise, "The Art of War," so too must have Gustavus, and to the same conclusion. That being that a well trained, well drilled, and well led conscript army can be as effective as a mercenary army, equally important, and cheaper to maintain. Gustavus, also, realized that a national conscript army would have patriotism to bolster its morale and its relationship would be that of king to subject, relying on personal loyalties to the throne for discipline, as well as, their being subjected to the laws of Sweden as citizens. Additionally, payment could be made to conscripts in the form of land grants which would not burden the economic system as much.<sup>16</sup>

The new conscription techniques would include all males of 15 years being placed on the conscription roll. Recruiting provinces were set up, each being responsible to furnish three field regiments of infantry to the king's army. This system created provincial cadres, which would use localism as an added factor in providing higher elan. Gustavus was still unable to gain the help of the nobility in fulfilling their obligation to furnish heavy calvary. As a result, the calvary squadrons tended to be a volunteer force with smaller horses. Sweden, despite conscription, still could not field any army completely of national conscript, primarily due to a relatively low population, and had to retain some mercenary units. However, the elite of the Swedish army would continue to be the Swedish conscript units who would be reliable even when the mercenary units faltered and broke.<sup>17</sup>

Gustavus, also, accidentally stumbled into an innovation which would, officially, not take place in its real essences for another fifty years, that of uniforms. Gustavus issued cold weather clothing to his troops to protect them and bolster elan. What he had blundered upon was the issuance of uniforms, for in cold weather, the Swedes were all clothed the same. This, no doubt, psychologically helped unite the Swedes and bolster their morale, and probably made them appear more formidable. Additionally, Gustavus was the first to provide field hospitals and a staff of surgeons, as well as field ambulances, to attempt to help his men survive and increase their morale and belief in him.<sup>18</sup>

The next area Gustavus began renovating was the armament of his army. The chief infantry weapons of the time were the musket and the pike. New pikes and muskets were developed. The pikes had strengthened heads, and the muskets became lighter and more reliable with a slightly faster rate of fire than other contemporaries. The calvary were still equipped with pistols, but they were also issued swords. Gustavus, in order to decrease logistical problems and training problems, began a standardization of artillery types to be classified by weight of shot fired. But perhaps the most critical innovation was the introduction of the 3-pounder. The 3-pounder, called the "regiment piece," required only one horse or two or three men to move it. The ball was wired to the cartridge, and with a fire drill routine, the rate of fire was unprecedented. The 3-pounder gave the Swedish a decisive firepower advantage which proved deadly against the enemy formations.<sup>19</sup>

The armament renovations were designed to increase firepower, and allow for a greater degree of mobility. This balance and new emphasis on firepower and mobility would lead to the development of new formations and tactics. Therefore, Gustavus began to adopt new methods. In warfare of the day, large formations of musketeers and pikemen had evolved. His contemporaries felt to increase killing power, the number of musketeers continued to increase in ratio to that of pikemen. This continued to the point where there were only a minimal number of pikemen, as combatants chose to have the ever increasing musketeer ranks stand face-to-face and duel with ineffective muskets. The reliance on the musket as the offensive weapon meant that manoeuvre was sacrificed as muskets could only be discharged and reloaded when stationary. Also, in order to maintain a steady fire, a minimum of ten ranks was required.<sup>20</sup>

Gustavus, therefore, derived a new technique of application of existing weapons. In an attempt to increase the firepower of his muskets, he developed the "salvo" firing technique. He first increased the number of musketeers on a given frontage and then adopted a three rank formation. By having increased the number of muskets on a given frontage and lessening the ranks to three, the new frontage could be extended allowing more muskets to bear at any one time. The attempt here was to gain "missile shock," in essence, to create a concentrated wall of fire in order to kill as many of the enemy at one time as possible and hopefully to psychologically devastate an opponent or break his formation. The flaw with this tactical formation was that with fewer ranks the period of time without musket fire increased. To compensate, Gustavus increased the number of pikemen to an unprecedented number of one-third of the formation. The pikemen had been adopted as a defensive weapon, primarily to protect the musketeers as the bayonet had not yet been invented. Gustavus, again, changed this. With a higher percentage of pikemen than other army in Europe, he sought to use the pike offensively.<sup>21</sup>

In order to use the pike offensively, the need for smaller operational units for the purpose of maneuver arose. Gustavus adopted the company of 150-160 men as the operational unit with one-third of its number being pikemen concentrated in the center and flanked on each side by the musketeers. The musketeers were to concentrate their fire at a focal point directly ahead of the pikemen. They would then charge into the enemy's lines in the area shattered by the salvo. The charge of the pikemen would increase the enemy's disorder and casualties as the musketeers reloaded. If the enemy held, the pikemen were to retire after a duration long enough to prepare the next salvo. The procedure would then be repeated. He had combined muskets and pikes into an offensive weapon. Complex tactics as such, also required that the Swedish army have a better trained soldier, more operational units, and more and better trained non-commissioned officers. As a result, the Swedish army became superior in training, drill, and discipline, with capable NCO's. A professional army had been constructed.<sup>22</sup>

Gustavus, also, reorganized his calvary along this philosophy. His ranks were eventually reduced to three, partially due to an overall lack in numbers. His calvary would advance at a trot to a point where the first rank could eventually discharge their pistols effectively. Then the formation would charge the enemy and use swords, this utilizing a relationship similar to that of the musketeer and pikemen. Again, this was much different than calvary tactics of the day, which had evolved to a point of where the calvary formations would charge to effective pistol range, discharge their volleys, and retire, in



essence, sacrificing the weight and shock of a calvary charge itself. For additional firepower, Gustavus would sometimes attach platoons of musketeers to calvary squadrons. This, however, slowed calvary advances to a point of where a reliance developed on the firepower of the encumbered musketeers to overcome the loss of speed and shock of the calvary charge.<sup>23</sup>

Gustavus' reforms were not limited to the army. He contributed to the overall military prowess of Sweden by improving the road and waterway network and introducing copper coinage, negotiable in the same manner as silver, in an attempt to support the prices in Sweden's exporting copper industry. He brought about self-sufficiency in the production of armaments, which made possible the standardization of calibers. In addition, he rebuilt the navy to the level of strength before the war with the Danes in 1611. Its reconstruction was centered around larger ships, heavier guns, standardized calibers, and a continual supply of recruits.<sup>24</sup>

Another strong talent which Gustavus possessed was that of administration. Most all of the changes which Gustavus introduced were accompanied with organizational changes as well. Typically, Gustavus realigned or reorganized most administrative entities to allow him more control and efficient operation. His administration and organizational talents can be seen in his reorganizing and creating a functional conscription system; in his mass production as a high priority weapon, the 3-pounder; plus his creation of a profession of naval officers.<sup>25</sup> His organization and administrative efficiency can be seen manifesting itself into highly complex military operations.

Having the ability to plan and divert resources into and accomplish highly complex military operations is another requirement of modern war. Two brilliant examples of such undertakings can be seen in the operations of the Swedish army in the Thirty Years War. First, was the organization of the expedition to Germany. In this expedition, eight separate fleets sailed from points around the Baltic at coordinated times and landed their cargo and the Swedish army at their disembarkation points simultaneously. The operation was a success in conduct and effect. Another example requiring strong administration, organization and maneuver skills was Gustavus' daring river crossing at Lech on 4 April 1632. There, Gustavus found his enemy on the opposite bank of the river with all the bridges destroyed. He awaited proper wind conditions; started a smoke screen, primarily by burning dampened hay; and under its cover in conjunction with an artillery barrage, managed to throw a pontoon bridge across the river. Immediately, his awaiting pioneers crossed to establish a bridgehead, followed rapidly with a build up of other units, and he defeated his foe.<sup>26</sup>

Strategically, too, Gustavus appeared modern in thought. He conquered by occupying the field of battle then consolidating it into base areas which would be secured and fortified into a supply center.<sup>27</sup> He would then press farther into enemy territory, always being able to fall back into the base area or call for reinforcements from it, much the same as the system of firebases used by the United States in Vietnam. This was his plan of strategy advance in Germany.

From the outset, when Gustavus entered the war in Germany, he went about trying to establish base-camps for his operations. He forced a treaty upon the Duke of Pomerania. Most of Pomerania, at this time, was already under Swedish army control from the time when Sweden had been engaged in a war against Sigismund, King of

Poland, who was still unforgiving of Gustavus over the throne controversy. Therefore, with the Swedish army occupying most of his territory, the Duke of Pomerania signed the treaty with Gustavus, which was no less than Swedish annexation of the province.<sup>28</sup> He would make similar treaties under much the same conditions, although not as stringent as the annexation of Pomerania, with Hesse-Cassel, 11 November 1630;<sup>29</sup> and the Duke of Mecklenburg, 29 February 1632.<sup>30</sup>

Not only are these a continuation of his base-camp style advance doctrine, they are all a continuation of Gustavus' perseverance in concluding the Baltic Problem, as all of these provinces had ports on the Baltic. In fact, for Gustavus, his involvement in the war in Germany, the Thirty Years War, can be viewed as a move to once and for all seal the Baltic off from all states other than Denmark. This argument is often overlooked due to the more pronounced religious factors overshadowing the war. It would be logical to assume that Gustavus did not want the Catholics dominating Germany. However, he could exist with a Catholic state in Germany, so long as it had no access to the Baltic. A Catholic state in Germany, under that condition, could not threaten him, for the Catholics had forced the Danes ever closer to Sweden in an alliance that would more than offset the existence of a Catholic German state.

In Gustavus Adolphus' Manifesto of 1630<sup>31</sup>, officially signaling Sweden's entry into the war, Gustavus lingered on the fear that unless the Imperial Catholic forces were expelled from the German coast of the Baltic, they could build a fleet of size, and dispute control of the sea, and threaten Sweden herself. Gustavus also said that as the Catholic forces grew nearer and nearer to the Baltic coast, so did they intentionally draw nearer and nearer to war with Sweden. Gustavus used the ideal of upholding international law and defeating the forces of atrocity, tyranny, and misery. Indeed, Gustavus needed to appear as the liberator of the German people in order to raise new levies in Germany, for Swedish manpower was insufficient for conducting a war of such magnitude.

With Sweden's entry into the Thirty Years War, military history was written. Gustavus pursued and defeated the Imperial forces for two years, until 6 November 1632, at the battle of Lutzen, when Gustavus was killed in battle while leading a calvary squadron. The Swedes, who were pushed back from their fallen leader, vowed revenge and, with fanaticism, surged back to try to recover the body of their fallen leader. His bloodied body was recovered and the Swedes, driven by furor for vengeance, carried the day. By the end of the day more that the King of Sweden lay dead. Indeed the heart of the Swedish army had been torn out. The establishment remained, but the desire was gone. Militarily, Sweden had reached her pinnacle, and her armies would now retire to the safety of home territory. There, within her own boundaries, Sweden would rise as an economic power. The Swedish army had not been beaten by the Imperial forces, but instead by the loss of their greatest king, the Lion of the North, Gustaf II Adolf.

Gustavus was dead but his legacy, that of modern warfare, was spawned. Mass conscript armies, strict discipline, submergence of the state and individual to national policy and conduct of war, the emergence of linear formation, emphasis on training and esprit de corps, doctrine of firepower maximization balanced with maneuver: these were the legacies of Gustavus. The combination of these, we can term "modern warfare." It was under Gustavus, for the first time, that all of these combined into one mode of warfare. King Gustaf II Adolf's crown was written on it, in the blood of the centuries to follow,

“the father of modern war,” yet let us not forget that the security of his people and defense of their religious choice, and not the quest of empire, drove Gustavus, and no more nobler cause than that can there be.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden* (London, 1973), 29, 30.
- <sup>2</sup> Nils Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf The Great* (Westport, Conn., 1983), 39.
- <sup>3</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 32.
- <sup>4</sup> Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf The Great*, 100, 139.
- <sup>5</sup> Sir Edward Cust, *Warlords of the Thirty Years War* (2 vol., Freeport, New York, 1972), I, 113.
- <sup>6</sup> Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf The Great*, 115, 119, 121-123, 130.
- <sup>7</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 31, 102.
- <sup>8</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Accession Charter, 31 December 1611," Michael Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697* (New York, 1968), 7-10.
- <sup>9</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Alienation of Crown Revenues 1612," Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697* (New York, 1968), 7-10.
- <sup>10</sup> T.K. Derry, *A History of Scandanavia* (Minneapolis, 1979), 114.
- <sup>11</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 42.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., 47.
- <sup>13</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Gustav Adolf on the Peace of Stolbovo 1617," Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697*, 134-136.
- <sup>14</sup> Ahnlund, *Gustav Adolf The Great*, 246.
- <sup>15</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 105.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 105.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 105-107.
- <sup>18</sup> S.M. Toyne, *The Scandanavians in History* (Port Washington, New York, 1970), 167, 168.
- <sup>19</sup> Derry, *A History of Scandanaviana*, 112; Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 107; Toyne, *The Scandanavians in History*, 167.
- <sup>20</sup> Michael Roberts, "Gustavus Adolphus and the Art of War," Michael Roberts, *Essays In Swedish History* (Minneapolis, 1967), 66.
- <sup>21</sup> Cust, *Warlords of the Thirty Years War*, I, 218; Roberts, "Gustavus Adolphus and the Art of War," 66-68.
- <sup>22</sup> Cust, *Warlords of the Thirty Years War*, I, 218; Derry, *A History of Scandanavia*, 112; Roberts, "Gustavus Adolphus and the Art of War," 66, 67.
- <sup>23</sup> Roberts, "Gustavus Adolphus and the Art of War," 68.
- <sup>24</sup> Derry, *A History of Scandanavia*, 114; Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 99, 107.
- <sup>25</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 101.
- <sup>26</sup> Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus and the Rise of Sweden*, 102; Toyne, *The Scandanavians in History*, 169.
- <sup>27</sup> Michael Roberts, "The Military Revolution," Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History*, 203.
- <sup>28</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Treaty of Alliance Between Gustav Adolf and Bogislaw XIV of Pomerania," Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697*, 140-141.
- <sup>29</sup> Gustav Adolf, "The Draft Treaty Between Gustav Adolf and the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel," Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697*, 141.

<sup>30</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Treaty of Gustav Adolf's Alliance with the Dukes of Mecklenberg," Roberts, ed., *Sweden as a Great Power 1611-1697*, 143.

<sup>31</sup> Gustav Adolf, "Gustavus Adolphus' Manifesto 1630," Geoffrey Symcox, ed., *War, Diplomacy, And Imperialism 1618-1763* (New York, 1974), 102-113.



# Winston Churchill: Voice in the Darkness

*by Jeff Bethell*

After the terrible consequence of World War I, there was a movement throughout the world to disarm. It was the sentiment of many well-meaning people in countries all over Europe that the best, and perhaps the only way to avoid the carnage and waste that had been so evident during the last war, was to do away with weapons of modern warfare.

Britain was no exception to this way of thinking and the Labour government headed by Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald viewed disarmament as one of their major policy goals. In this endeavor, the Labour Government had wide based support including the Conservative Party. With this support, and through this coalition, the House of Commons was able to pass a Naval Treaty which set limits on British naval power. The Naval Treaty was not accepted as a positive goal by all members of the House of Commons. Winston Churchill of the Conservative Party was of the opinion that if British sea power were limited the defense of Britain would be endangered. Churchill was convinced that after the defeat and humiliation of the German people during the First World War, Germany would rearm. The rise of Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party, or Nazis, was of great concern to Churchill. As a result of the 1930 elections, the Nazis became the second largest political party represented in the German Reichstag.<sup>1</sup> After the elections Hitler began gaining control of the German government.

It was Churchill's concern that Hitler would ignore or tear up the Treaty of Versailles as he had indicated he would do. Due to this fear of Churchill, in spite of being called an alarmist, expressed grave concern and dismay over the British policies of disarmament. Not only would disarmament affect the British ability to respond to aggression, it would also upset the balance of world power. While Churchill warned against German intentions against Austria and the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia, the British government still maintained that disarmament was the path to peace in Europe.

The mounting unrest in Germany caused great concern in Europe, especially in the nations on its borders. In the depth of the Great Depression Hitler used the Jewish population as a scapegoat for German economic woes. The Nazis organized street violence to suppress any opposition and Chancellor Heinrich Brüning was forced to suspend democratic rights for the first time in twenty years.<sup>2</sup>

While Hitler contended that he was not going to extend his reign outside of Germany, Churchill was not convinced. Most people in Britain were willing to accept the word of Hitler who proclaimed that he was only interested in reviving Germany's economy.

In April, 1931 Germany and Austria announced the establishment of the Customs Germanic States. This economic alliance deeply troubled the nations bordering Germany and Austria, especially France and Czechoslovakia. France feared revenge due to her part in extracting the Treaty of Versailles from Germany, and Czechoslovakia became concerned about the security of her large German population in the Sudetenland.

Churchill could see a conflict going on within Germany between the Nazis and those

struggling to sustain life under democratic principles. Because of the danger of a growing German military machine, Churchill fought for increased British defense expenditures particularly with regard to the Royal Air Force.

In agreement with Churchill, Ramsey MacDonald, in a speech to the House of Commons on June 29, 1931, expressed his fears of an European conflict. Unlike Churchill, however, he contended that peace could only be maintained by a general European disarmament. MacDonald indicated that the fact of French armaments served as a provocation to the German state. Carrying his argument to what seemed a logical conclusion, a disarmament or even a reduction in French military power would make Germany feel less threatened thus minimizing the chances of a war involving the European nations. Churchill, in total disagreement with MacDonald, felt that security in Europe could only be maintained with France strong.<sup>3</sup>

Not only was Churchill arguing for a strong France, but also for a British buildup of its military, particularly the Air Force. MacDonald opposed this idea, not simply because he saw it as destabilizing Europe, but also for economic reasons. One must remember that these were times of depression on a scale that the modern world had never known. MacDonald expressed his conviction that the weak British economy could not sustain a military buildup since the government could simply not afford it.

Hitler continued to gain strength and early in 1932 the Nazi Party had over two million members with 400,000 of these members being classed as storm troopers.<sup>4</sup> With this many members, Hitler was able to stress his demand, not only for an end to the Treaty of Versailles, but also for the removal of Jews from German territory and for demands that Germany be allowed to rearm from the post war level.

At the Disarmament Conferences in Geneva during 1932, there was hope that all countries would in fact reduce their weapons and drastically cut back production of any new weapons. As in human nature, each nation wished the cut backs to come from the others and not their own country.

Churchill sided with France when that country felt concern about the continuing German buildup. This was especially true for two reasons. The first being that Germany's war reparation liability was to be greatly reduced, thereby leaving a larger amount of capital available in Germany to invest in heavy manufacturing, specifically an industrial base that could be used to build weapons. The second reason for concern was that after the war, the United States had provided Germany with substantial loans with which Germany was able to modernize her industry. Germany therefore had one of the most modern and efficient industrial systems in all of Europe.

In response to the reindustrialization of Germany and the potential threat therein, Churchill wrote an article that appeared in the *Daily Mail* on November 17, 1932. Contrary to the spirit of disarmament, he advised that Britain must not only be prepared to defend herself against air attack, but also be strong enough to discourage such an attack.<sup>5</sup> Churchill's ideas were rejected mainly on economic grounds. It was thought too costly by men such as Ramsey MacDonald to compete for the greatest air force in Europe. Additionally, it was felt by MacDonald and his followers that the buildup in military production would be counter-productive to the ways of peace. The re-armament of Britain would antagonize Germany and shatter the hope of peace through disarmament.

On January 30, 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and put his plans into

effect. The Treaty of Versailles was torn up; Germany was beginning to rearm; and Jews and dissenters were either driven out of Germany or they were sent to concentration camps.

The German youth took pride in the rebirth of their country. In contrast, the British youth ridiculed Churchill's idea of Britain as an Island home. In fact, in February of 1933 the Oxford Union passed a proposal stating they would refuse to fight for King and country.<sup>6</sup> Churchill was incensed at this proposal and somewhat saddened that the youth of England would think so little of their country as to pass a resolution such as this.

Early in 1933, the Labour Party proposed that all of the air forces of members of the League of Nations be reduced to the level of Britain, thereafter all the air forces would then be cut by an additional one third. Churchill, in an address to the House of Commons on Air Defenses on March 14, 1933, disparagingly pointed out that this proposal would serve to increase British air power without Britain having to make any effort since Britain was only the fifth ranked air power in Europe. Churchill pointed out that other European powers were clever enough to realize this fact and the idea would only be insulting not only to the other European countries but also to Britain.<sup>7</sup>

In March of the same year, Sir Phillip Sassoon, Under Secretary of State for Air, announced that one of the four flight training schools for the Royal Air Force was to be eliminated for "economic reasons." This cut-back smacked of a ploy to make cuts based on a disarmament philosophy. Churchill saw this as an unconscionable act considering the military buildup that was taking place in Germany. It was Churchill's opinion that not having an adequate Air Force, given the state of world affairs, would be a compromise of freedom. In short, if the government wanted to continue to be free, they must be able to protect themselves.

While Churchill did not consider war imminent and certainly did not want to raise a panic, he indicated that it was much better to be overly concerned about preparation than to be unprepared and forced into a panic by a sudden crisis.<sup>8</sup>

Most individuals in government, at least outwardly, did not think that the time was right for arming due to lack of support and direction. In fact all of Europe was unsure of the direction it was going or even the direction it should go. British foreign policy was no exception.

This lack of direction created a leadership vacuum which left most of the European powers drifting, not knowing how to get where they wanted to go or how to get there.<sup>9</sup> The voice of Churchill tried to show the way as he reasoned that British weakness would only encourage aggression rather than deter these tendencies. A number of people were of the opinion, most notably, Lord Lothian, that to prevent the chance of Germany arming and perhaps starting another war, other nations must be willing to stand together to resist any German advances whether political or military.<sup>10</sup>

Germany, having gained some military might, cast her eyes upon other nations around her, particularly Poland and Czechoslovakia. Churchill addressed this point on April 13, 1933 during a speech to the House of Commons when he spoke in defense of the Treaty of Versailles. The territories Germany wanted did not belong to her. Just because some German speaking people lived within their borders, Germany felt entitled to them.<sup>11</sup>

In July of 1933 the Nazis outlawed trade unions and declared that all political parties except the Nazi Party were illegal. This caused great anxiety among some of Germany's smaller neighbors. Churchill pointed out that Germany's fury was turned upon herself,



but he warned that it might be just a matter of time before this fury turned outward.

In July of 1934, Churchill urged substantial increases in the size of the British Air Corps. In opposition to this Neville Chamberlain who expressed the opinion that British economic problems were such that this action was possible. In fact Chamberlain felt that reserve pilots and planes should be done away with, even though only sixty planes of the British Air Force had any reserves at all. In fact it was noted that in 1934, the "R.A.F. was equipped entirely with wooden biplanes with fixed undercarriages...they were obsolete."<sup>12</sup>

Because of the continuing German buildup the Royal Air Force was expanded. This was something that Churchill had long sought, although he believed that the buildup was not fast enough. In fact, in April of 1935, Churchill charged that the British Government had deliberately misled the public in so far as the strength of Germany was concerned.<sup>13</sup>

By that year, German military production was already greater than either France or Britain. Not only could Germany produce more military aircraft per month than either Britain or France, they were also able to turn all their industry into military production which was certainly not true for either Britain or France.

Stanley Baldwin, who was once again Prime Minister by June of 1935, had promised to maintain parity with the German Air Force, but because of the increased German buildup was forced to re-define parity as "air power" rather than referencing specific numbers of airplanes.<sup>14</sup> Baldwin had to make the admission that he was misled as to the strength of the German Air Force, but still continued to state that there was no reason for panic. In fact in that same month of June, 1935, the League of Nations took a vote on a peace ballot and gave overwhelming approval of international disarmament.

On December 4, 1935 the Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, told the Cabinet in a private meeting that dispatches from the British Ambassador in Berlin confirmed the need for concern over German intentions.<sup>15</sup> This information confirmed fears that Churchill had expressed as early as May 31, 1935 in a speech to the House of Commons. Churchill indicated that Germany had an interest in controlling at least part of Czechoslovakia in order to unite the Sudeten Germans.<sup>16</sup>

There was also concern that Hitler would enter the Rhineland which would force the League of Nations to declare Germany an aggressor nation and take sanctions against her. In March of 1936, Hitler did reoccupy the demilitarized Rhineland giving credence to Churchill's concerns. The League of Nations was unable and unwilling to take any action against Germany. Members of the government were now beginning to pay attention to what Churchill was saying even while some argued that the Rhineland should belong to Germany anyway. The whole question came down to the opinion that Germany, having the arms, would not back down if challenged.

Churchill was able to keep informed about government preparedness because others, both in the government and out, were concerned about the direction Britain was taking. Men such as Wing Commander Torr Anderson, Director of the Royal Air Force Training School, and Robert Watson-Watt, the inventor of radar, found in Churchill a most able spokesman for their cause. These men and others gave Churchill secret information so that he could, more effectively, argue that England needed to prepare, if not for war, then a showdown with Germany.

While there were many in and out of government who disagreed with Churchill, even his political opponents knew that he was a man who would keep his word and would not divulge his sources. Even though Churchill was one of the most prominent members of Parliament, he was still not awarded a cabinet post when Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin as Prime Minister. There was a great deal of antagonism, between Churchill and Chamberlain as the two men took opposite points of view over the German question. Under Chamberlain's guidance there were beginnings of pro-German feelings in Britain while many even subscribed to the idea that the Germans desired to establish friendship with the British.<sup>17</sup> Because of these ideas, Churchill fought an uphill battle to convince people of Germany's true intentions. To this end Churchill published a number of articles both in Britain and in the United States in an effort to convince others of his concerns.

On March 11, 1938, Germany annexed Austria to be followed the next day by German troops entering that country. Britain was taken aback by this turn of events. Churchill, in response to these events, addressed the House of Commons on March 14, 1938. In his speech, Churchill pointed out that Czechoslovakia was now isolated due to the German advance into Austria and was now virtually defenseless. Churchill also warned that Europe was confronted with aggression that had been calculated beforehand and had been timed according to Hitler's time plan. Other countries had to submit or take action while there was still time. Churchill went on to note that now that the Germans had Vienna in their hands, they had control of Southwestern Europe.<sup>18</sup>

In response to the German incursion into Austria, Chamberlain made a speech to the House of Commons in which he seemed to have made a complete turn around in his thoughts. He said, that if "Britain is to make a substantial contribution toward the establishment of what is our strongest interest (peace), we must be strongly armed." He indicated that the day had not yet arrived when an international police force could protect the world. Therefore all nations must look after themselves.<sup>19</sup>

The events in Austria caused concern over Czechoslovakia and in May of 1938 Churchill met with Conrad Henlein, the leader of the Sweden German nationals. Henlein indicated that all the Sudeten Germans wanted was to be able to control their own local affairs.

In September of 1938, Chamberlain flew to see Hitler at Berchtesgaden in attempt to resolve the Sudeten problems. Hitler indicated he had no designs on Czechoslovakia but only wanted to unite the German peoples.

On March 14, 1939 the Germans overran Czechoslovakia. At the time of the Czech invasion Britain in her posturing to Germany indicated that if Czechoslovakia would accept the conditions of Germany regarding the portion of that country, Britain would be prepared to join other countries in international guarantees of the new Czech borders against unprovoked aggression.<sup>20</sup> As history has shown, nothing was to come of these guarantees.

There was a move afoot in Britain to get Churchill into government. As more of Churchill's predictions came true, people became more willing to listen to him and found that what he said made sense. Several prominent papers such as the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard* presented their thoughts to the government about giving Churchill a Cabinet position.

On March 31, 1939 Britain guaranteed the Polish borders. Germany, not without good cause, probably did not expect any serious reactions from England when on September

1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. This same day Chamberlain asked Churchill to join the Cabinet, but because of unfolding events a particular appointment was not made. On September 3, 1939, after receiving no reply from Germany on an ultimatum, Britain demanded a halt to the German Attack on Poland. Britain then declared war against Germany. This same day Churchill became the First Lord of the Admiralty; Churchill's fears and predictions had come true.

In retrospect one realizes that Churchill's concerns were valid. He was one of the few who raised their voices against disarmament and the threat of Nazi Germany. Britain and the other European powers were drifting, trusting the policy of appeasement. Churchill, however, saw the approaching storm and warned that British weakness would only encourage aggression. And he displayed the same uncanny perception when in his book *Great Contemporaries* he appraised Lord Haig in words that prophetically summarized his own life:

*He had fought as a squadron leader, served in the field as a staff officer, played in the winning calvary team...Lastly there was a strong religious side to his character, and he had always cherished the belief that he was destined to lead the British Army to victory.<sup>21</sup>*

And so he was.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill, The Wilderness Years* (Boston, 1982), 35.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 36.
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- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 48.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., 54.
- <sup>6</sup> Piers Brendon, *Winston Churchill: A Biography* (New York, 1984), 117.
- <sup>7</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *While England Slept: A Survey of World Affairs 1932-1938* (Freeport, New York, 1938, reprint 1971), 38-39.
- <sup>8</sup> Robert R. James, ed., *Winston Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963* (7 Vols., New York, 1974), VI, 5614.
- <sup>9</sup> Robert R. James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure, 1900-1939* (New York, 1970), 242.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 252.
- <sup>11</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill*, 60-61.
- <sup>12</sup> James, *Churchill: A Study In Failure*, 259.
- <sup>13</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill*, 130.
- <sup>14</sup> Brendon, *Winston Churchill: A Biography*, 129.
- <sup>15</sup> Gilbert, *Churchill*, 142.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 134.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 184-185.
- <sup>18</sup> James, ed., *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VI, 5924-5925.
- <sup>19</sup> *The New York Times*, March 25, 1938.
- <sup>20</sup> "Textual History of Pledges to Czechs," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1939.
- <sup>21</sup> Sinclair Lewis, "Lancelot in Khaki," *Newsweek*, November 8, 1937, 28.





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***The Americans: The Colonial Experience***  
**(New York, 1958).**

In *The Americans: The Colonial Experience*, the author illustrates how unique characteristics of colonial life affected the evolution of American life. A major theme states how different colonies succeeded or failed, to different degrees, because of the characteristics of the people that settle them. The Puritans' practicality in religious questions (being more concerned with its practice rather than theology) carried over in the new world made them rely on practical solutions rather than religious dogma which, Boorstin reports, "fixed the temper of their society, and foreshadowed American political life for centuries to come."

The Quaker's uncompromising religious principle of pacifism made them unwilling to protect the citizens of Pennsylvania, and their ban against oath taking virtually eliminated them from the powerful political offices of their colony, thus dooming their development as a political force. In Georgia, the rigidity of too much planning prevented the free exchange of land, stifled the hope of settlers to expand their fortunes and helped bring about the downfall of the colony. Further, in Virginia, planters became American aristocrats and their sense of duty to govern later led to their great involvement in the Revolution and early national politics.

Boorstin also theorizes that the practicality of the Americans concerned with survival in the new world led them to modify traditional English institutions. He states that they had no time to contemplate higher learning if it did not deal with the problems at hand, so they became learners through "natural science." In medicine, Americans were less concerned about the theoretical cause of disease than their English counterparts and concentrated on finding remedies for the diseases they faced daily. In law, as well as medicine, sparse human resources precluded them from forming the specialized professional structure that existed in England. Instead, the American lawyer or doctor was a true general practitioner of his profession.

In language, due to the lack of social distinctions in learning and practice that existed in England, a standardized English language emerged. The desire of the colonists to preserve and "purify" the English language led to standardized spelling, and teaching by a syllable learning method further served this purpose.

Another theme asserts that the vastness of the American settlement contributed to a "leveling effect" in American society. The greater opportunities for prosperity offered by a wide open country allowed for a greater degree of social mobility than was present in England and a somewhat "leveled" societal stratification.

This vastness also inhibited the formation of any one great national center for culture

or learning. The establishment of universities by several of the colonies, led to a greater spread of education geographically as well as socially in America.

The reviews by professional historians on Boorstin's book were mixed. The first that I read, was complimentary in saying, "Boorstin has read widely in the source material and has come to conclusions that represent the opinion of an informed and original mind."<sup>1</sup> The reviewer further states that the author made his most acute statements on the origin of democratic principles. He writes that while Boorstin was careless in a few details (in assigning Lyman Butterfield as editor of the Adams Papers instead of the Franklin Papers, for example) his book nevertheless "deserves a careful reading by everyone with a serious interest in colonial history. It is written with ease and clarity."

The second review that I read was not nearly as favorable. The reviewer wrote that the thesis of the book was a restatement of the frontier thesis and while it was entertainingly given it was, nonetheless, "fragmentary, sketchy and superficial."<sup>2</sup> He complains that Boorstin does not write history as such, but rather deals with the derivations of the American "frame of mind." Further, he writes that the book is loaded with generalizations which are "all too often inaccurate or misleading, practically never supported by factual evidence, and usually more ingenious and witty than historically dependable." He goes on to add that Boorstin sits in judgement of his characters and does not "hesitate to condemn." Finally, he writes, "To one reviewer, at least, it appears to be a highly imaginative contribution to American nationalistic myth-making."

In my opinion, the first reviewer is closer to the mark than is the second. The first sections of the book were a little tedious to read, however, I found it fascinating how the Quakers destroyed themselves politically by their religious dogmatism. The latter sections on science, medicine, language and law were very interesting and demonstrated how the American social and intellectual climate (practicality, etc.) contributed to the formation of institutions which differed significantly from their English counterparts. One of the strengths of the book is that it is not just history per se; its approach demonstrates a real connection of the past to the present. This is one of the reasons history is interesting - it builds a bridge between what was, and is. The second reviewer incorrectly states that there is a lack of factual evidence. Just because an abundance of statistical evidence is lacking (a fact I sometimes appreciate in reading), evidence from primary sources (letters, books, etc.) is used, often cited, and serves well to support Boorstin's theories and convey the colonists' state of mind. The book interestingly relates the attitudes of the colonists to the formation of the Revolution, offering explanations other than the European enlightenment, such as the impact the lineal handing down of self-government in Virginia had on Revolutionary origins. I do not believe the book to be "myth-making" at all, but rather an interesting look at American "evolution."

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See review in *American Historical Review* (1959) LXIV, 668 (by L.B. Wright).

<sup>2</sup> See review in *Political Science Quarterly* (1959) LXXIV, 304 (by Max Savelle).









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This publication was prepared by Northern Kentucky University and printed  
with state funds (KRS 57.375). Northern Kentucky University is  
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03L009