

# Comment

Please God that by the time this Comment appears in print rationality has somehow vanquished the folly and phoney patriotism of General Galtieri and Mrs Thatcher and their supporters, as they head Argentina and Britain for a war which would be immoral in its murky motivations and grimly tragic in its consequences. Peter Jenkins' summary of his case against war in the Falklands, (*Guardian* 12 May), is well worth repeating:

It will be a war between two ailing economies and which in no way can serve their national interests. It is a war quite disproportionate to the principles held to be at stake. It is a war brought about by the aggression and intransigence of a military dictatorship and the negligence and self-delusion of a once imperial power. It will neither save nor serve the world. It is a war not worth fighting, no more than it was when the fleet set sail from Portsmouth. It is a war made immoral by its futility.

Even should the inevitable carnage of open conflict be mercifully avoided, enough has happened already to ensure that the folly has ended in tragedy. Blood has been spilled; Argentinians and Britons have been killed; Argentinians and Britons have been maimed for life; Argentinian and British families are *now* suffering the searing sorrow of bereavement. *That* is tragedy which no amount of blimpish bluster and pseudo-patriotic speechifying can alter or justify.

And if all that isn't ghastly enough, we've had the added squalor of the popular British Press's so-called reporting, managing somehow to argue the interesting position that in this heroic and glorious struggle for democracy and freedom against the fascist thug, no dissent, no protest, no questioning, no criticism is consonant with being truly British. (Needless to say, it has been coolly forgotten that the same fascist thug and his merciless regime, responsible for an estimated 15,000 'disappeared people', has been propped up by British business and British arms-sales). Dissent, criticism, protest in the tabloid newspeak become unpatriotism,

cowardice, letting the country down, even treason. "Our neighbours over the Irish Sea deliberately and with malice plunge a knife into our back", (*Sunday Express* on the Irish Government's criticism of violence as a way of solving the crisis). "He might be considered as preaching something very like treason" (*The Star's* solemn verdict – after consulting no less than a *lawyer* – on Tony Benn's disassociation from sending the Task Force). "Michael Foot stands today accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy" (*The Sun*). And so on . . .

Coupled with this noble crusade for free speech, (a characteristic, as everyone knows, of the British Press which has always been the envy of the world), has been the no less noble concern to propagate that wholly christian sentiment towards the enemy, (Britain after all is a christian country): "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, Love your enemies". 'Up Yours, Galtieri!' was *The Sun's* charmingly sympathetic response to the first Argentinian plane blown up by a missile sponsored 'with love' by that paper – pilot killed, family bereaved. 'GOTCHA!' – again *The Sun*, this time compassionately regretting the sinking of an Argentinian cruiser – hundreds killed, even more bereaved and broken-hearted families.

Tolstoy once wrote (*Resurrection*): "If we once admit – be it only for an hour or in some exceptional case – that anything can be more important than a feeling of love for our fellows, then there is no crime we may not commit with easy minds, free from feelings of guilt". If the hate and the loathesome blood lust that most of the popular press has been screaming over the past few weeks is a true reflection of the nation's attitudes then we are in a sorry, unchristian mess. Should the Pope's visit to Britain be cancelled, because of an Argentine-Britain war, (despite the puzzle that it's OK to visit the Philippines and Poland – governments not exactly noted for their high moral tone – it's not OK to visit Britain), those disappointed can take heart. His *not coming* could be seen as an act of christian witness against the whole disgraceful business.

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