

## THE SUMMARY

The conflict over the Falkland Islands between Argentina and Great Britain is without a doubt one of the longest conflicts of this nature in the history of the world. It is difficult to establish who discovered the islands which makes it even more difficult to decide who they belong to. If we asked different sites of the conflict, we would be given different answers regarding the person who was the first one to set foot on that rocky land. According to the British people, the first person to reach the Falklands in 1592 was John Davis and the islands were named after Lord Falkland who was the sponsor of the whole expedition. The Spanish historians believe that the Falklands were discovered in 1520 by Esteban Gomez, the headstrong captain of one of the ships taking part in the Ferdinand Magellan's expedition. The French reached the islands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and – as they believe they were the very first there – gave them the name of Les Iles Malouines (after the Saint Malo harbor from where their expedition set off).

In the beginning only France and Spain fought for jurisdiction over the islands. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also the Great Britain claimed them. After the negotiations and as a consequence of those countries taking part in the Napoleonic war, the archipelago was given to Spain. In 1810 as a result of the May Revolution, United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata – to simplify, the modern Argentina - decided to detach themselves from the Spanish kingdom. Controlling the area of this size turned out to be extremely difficult during fights for the power within the country and the creating of Argentina's statehood. It was only in 1828 when the Argentinian governor Luis Vernet arrived in the Falklands. He did not hold the power for long – on 2nd January 1833 the British frigate HMS Clio reached the banks of the islands. The British dismantled the garrison there and sent the governor to Buenos Aires. According to the Argentinian historiography, on that day began the illegal occupation of the islands by the British.

The Argentinian government started the protest against the situation immediately; however, they did not decide to regain control over the islands by force. Manuel Moreno was the Argentinian ambassador in London who was one of the most important people taking part in the negotiations in between the two countries. His mission to reclaim the islands failed. His actions however started a series of demonstrations by Argentinians which were supposed to force the British to leave Falklands. The bilateral exchange of letters and notes ended when the

United Nations were created in 1945 – the case of the Falklands islands was considered by then an international issue.

In 1960, Argentina was given a chance to repossess the Falklands in accordance to the resolution of United Nations General Assembly regarding the decolonization. The resolution introduced two rights connected with the whole process: the right to self-determination and the territorial integrity. The Assembly issued the very first resolution regarding the conflict between Great Britain and Argentina in 1965. It was numbered 2065 and it was calling both countries to start a peaceful dialogue in hope to solve the issue quickly and permanently. The Falklands were still a colonial enclave and that alone was against the politics of the United Nations.

A few negotiations rounds between London and Buenos Aires took part in 1960s and they were strictly connected with the Falkland Islands issue. The United Kingdom started laying down two following conditions: the negotiations should be conducted only with the residents of the islands and they should concern every subject but the ownership of the land. The negotiations were fruitless and the United Nations issued two further resolutions. The one number 3160 was published in 1973 and it was calling Argentina and Great Britain to proceed with the discussion. In 1976 the second resolution was issued (number 31/49) and it was calling both countries to stop and restrict themselves in the future from conducting any kind of military actions on the Falklands.

The situation in Argentina changed on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1976. The military junta managed to gain control of the country as a result of coup. The rule of the junta is considered the most tragic period in the history of the country. Six years later, the junta started having problems with keeping the power. The people started rebelling, more protests and demonstrations would happen on the streets and it all was considered a threat to the rule of the military. To avoid an open uprising, the junta began searching for a factor that would strengthen their rule by uniting the nation against a common enemy. The Falklands presented a perfect opportunity. The generals started planning the attack on the archipelago as early as 1980s. In the end it was decided the invasion would take place in April 1982. Operation 'Rosario' started in the night of 1<sup>st</sup> April and even though it was successful at start, it soon turned out to be one of the most dramatic events in the history of Argentina.

Having secured the most strategic points on the archipelago, dismantling and sending away the garrison of the Falklands (including governor Rex Hunt) to Montevideo, the Argentinian troops started strengthening their positions. They made a serious mistake: they have been idly waiting

for the British to make their move. Prime minister Margaret Thatcher decided to send British troops to regain control over the Falklands. The unwelcoming climate and the fact the commanders of the Argentinian troops had no strategies regarding the defending of the islands meant they were no match for the British soldiers (who were better trained and equipped). Most of the Argentinian ones were completely inexperienced, very young and trained in a rush.

After fighting on the sea and in the air, when the British troops won in every case, the last phase of the reclaiming of the Falklands was implemented. On the night between 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May the British special forces managed to take over and hold the San Carlos bridgehead. This is when the British march into the islands began. It was completed with the bloody battle of Puerto Argentina on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> June. Eventually, on 14<sup>th</sup> June after 74 days of conflict, the cease-fire was declared. The Great Britain took over the archipelago once again.

In the same time when all the military actions were taking place, the negotiations started again to prevent any further blood spill. The main mediator this time was the American general Alexander Haig who spent a couple of week travelling between Buenos Aires and London, trying to persuade both sides of the conflict to remove their armies from the Falklands.

However, none of the sides could accept the offer of general Haig and his mission for peace failed. Naturally the United Nations also got involved in the conflict by issuing two resolutions calling Argentina to retreat from the Falklands. The last round of negotiations took place on 19th May 1982 by the UN Secretary-General and it also failed. Pope John Paul II engaged in the mediations by visiting both London and Buenos Aires.

The war for the Falklands ended with the total defeat of Argentina. The Great Britain became even stronger and more sure of its international position and meaning from this conflict. Ironically, the Argentinian loss turned out to be a blessing for domestic situation of this country. General Leopoldo Galtieri who was directly responsible for the conflict, resigned. He was replaced by Reynaldo Bignone, who soon announced the new election. The first democratic elections in Argentina in years were won by the representative of UCR (the Radical Civic Union) Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989).

The new presidents had three main priorities: the stabilization of the economy, the introducing and the consolidation of Argentinian democracy and getting back the trust of the people for the government. His most important foreign policy goal was rebuilding the image of Argentina. The problem of the Falklands was to be carefully analyzed and used to plan a new way to reclaim the islands, this time peacefully and accordingly with the law. To do that, Argentina

had to be seen as a democratic country that had a friendly (or at least proper) relationship with the Great Britain.

The case of the Falkland islands returned to the discussion of the international organizations and it was used by the Alfonsin to pressure the Great Britain. It was not easy though as London – as the winner of the war – did not want to have any dialogue with Argentina. During his first term of notice, the president managed to persuade UN to issue two further resolutions (in 1985 and 1988), which were calling both of the countries to start the discussion. Officially however, during the reign of Alfonsin there were no negotiations in between Argentina and the Great Britain. In 1987, the president of the United States of America Ronald Reagan offered his mediation during the meeting between the two countries. The main reason for the meeting would be to invent the rules of further cooperation and communication in the region of the archipelago. This meeting never took place.

Nevertheless, Argentina had some international success during the rule of Alfonsin. It managed to strengthen its position, regain the trust of other countries, bring back the issue of Falklands to international attention of organizations like OPA (Organization of American States) and United Nations and – most importantly - get their support. A couple of new issues resurfaced and all of them had to be included in the dialogue with the Great Britain, one of them was the issue of the fishing by the archipelago and the other was connected with exploration and exploitation of the sea bottom surrounding it.

The next president of Argentina, after Raul Alfonsin, was Carlos Saúl Menem (1989-1995, 1995-1999). He was a Peronist. He was elected twice to be the president and during his rule, the bilateral relationship between Argentina and the Great Britain improved. It is worth mentioning that he was the very first Argentinian president who officially visited the Great Britain in 1982. In 1998 he met with Queen Elizabeth II and British industrialist, who were allowed since then to invest in Argentina on very good conditions. The politics of Guido di Tella (the Minister of Foreign Affairs) towards the residents of the Falklands, resulted in the growth of the Argentina's ratings in the area. The residents are still speaking about Di Tella with utmost respect and admiration. They strongly believe other Argentinian politics should take inspiration from him.

Menem and his office managed to fix the economic relationship between Buenos Aires and London. During his rule, a couple of important deals were signed, regulating the case of the natural resources in the Falklands. In 1995, the agreement regarding searching for and

extracting of oil on the international platform nearby. The Madrid Agreement of 1989 was without a doubt the biggest success of the president. It also influenced the bilateral relationships between Argentina and the Great Britain. Both of the countries committed themselves to having a peaceful discussion about the Falkland islands and to looking together for solutions. The Madrid Agreement was a factor that enabled the two countries to reopen their diplomatic relations in 1990.

Fernando De La Rúa was elected to be the next president and he performed this function in between 1999-2001. He was a social democrat. During his very first presidential speech he announced that reclaiming the Falklands was his priority. One of his aims was also analyzing and changing the deals regarding the fishing and exploitation to make them more profitable for Argentina. He resigned from the politics towards the residents of the islands.

He wanted to meet with British PM Tony Blair and he got a chance to do that in 2001 when Blair was visiting Brazil. The meeting was fruitless and the only outcome of it was the invite De La Rúa received to visit London in 2002. Even though the visit was carefully planned and very anticipated, it never happened because De La Rúa resigned at the end of 2001 due to the financial crisis that hit Argentina.

The financial crisis affected the politics inside the country. During two weeks from 21<sup>st</sup> December to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002, Argentina had five different presidents. Eventually, in the beginning of 2002, Eduardo Duhalde became one and he remained the president to the end of the May 2003 (when De La Rúa's rule was supposed to end) It's safe to say that during his rule, the case of the Falklands was not the greatest priority He had other issues to take care of: he need to stabilize the situation inside the country and start working with the biggest international financial institutions (where the British had a very strong position. The reclaiming of the archipelago became a priority once again during the rule of president Nestor Kirchner and his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

He was elected the president in 2003 and held this function until 2007 and was a Peronist. Both of his policies (internal and foreign) could be described as lacking respect towards diplomacy and compromising. He was a 'tough' and 'dry' politician and he was followed by the same politics of his wife. He would present his claims very precisely and do whatever it took to fulfill his political plans. The Kirchners were known for their sharp tongues and a lot of politicians had the chance to learn about this, including the British. On the other hand, they were fully supported by the Argentinian people and the best proof of this was their three presidencies

together. They shared the same attitude towards the foreign policy and during their bilateral interactions with Great Britain

During his inaugural speech, Nestor Kirchner announced that his priority when it came to foreign policy was reclaiming the Falklands. He wanted to achieve his goal through negotiations between Buenos Aires and London according to the guidelines issued by the United Nations. Kirchner also wanted to present the conflict to various international organizations (regional and trans-regional) and through bilateral relationships with foreign countries. His concept of politics towards the residents of the Falklands was different than Menem's. Minister Guido di Tella was trying to be 'seductive' in his politics towards them whilst the Kirchners considered them invaders of the land.

Argentina was pressing the Great Britain to start the dialogue regarding the islands, being supported by the United Nations and its resolutions. That is why both Nestor and Cristina focused on getting the attention from the international community. The Argentinian diplomats were extremely active in the United Nations and its Special Political and Decolonization Committee. They were also trying to get the support from the Latin America.

This tactics turned out to be very effective, especially in organisations like OPA, MERCOSUR, the Rio Group and UNASUR. The trans-regional organizations supported the Kirchners' claim: Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Community of South America and Africa, Community of South American and Arabian states, Group 77 and China. The topic of the Falklands was mentioned even in the European Union Everything was aimed to force Great Britain to join the negotiations.

The Kirchners were also trying to fulfill their plan by using the bilateral relationships with the United Kingdom. Their predecessors maintained very proper contacts with London which could have been used as a platform to push their claims. Even though it was very different in the beginning, that relationship started to worsen very quickly. One of the factors causing that was the issue regarding the number of the flights from the continent to the Falklands. One of the Argentinian air carriers was refused the right to operate those routes, Kirchner refused to accept the increasing numbers of flights by Chilean LAN air lines.

Another issue in the relationship between Buenos Aires and London were the fishing licenses. The British planned to issue twenty-five years long fishing licenses for countries which wished to fish there. Argentinians opposed strongly to this idea. It was considered not right according to the UN guidelines and as abuse of the Argentinian zone on the Atlantic.

The politics towards the United Kingdom became more strict at the end of Nestor Kirchner's presidency. The culmination point was the day of 27<sup>th</sup> March 2007 when the Argentina denounced the treaty of 1995. It was signed by Carlos Menem and regarded exploration and exploitation of the continental shelf by the Falklands to find the sources of the hydrocarbon. Great Britain replied they were surprised with this but are calmly accepting it fully. They also added that the British activity in the area would not be affected by this and would remain exactly the same.

Even though the relationship between Great Britain and Argentina deteriorated in 2003-2007, there were still some platforms the two countries could cooperate on. The first one was the process of demining the Falklands from the mines planted there in 1982. The second issue was connected with the transport and building of the monument dedicated to the memory of fallen Argentinians. The monument was to be erected on the Argentinian cemetery in Puerto Darwin. The veterans of the wars and the families of the fallen people were to be invited to the opening ceremony.

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2007, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner became the president. She was a skilled politician, a former senator and a born speech-giver. She spent last few years observing her husband Nestor and accompanying him in the most important events as the first lady. She was well prepared to rule the country. The style of her politics, both internal and foreign, was a continuation of the one of her husband's. Her biggest priority in the foreign policy was the Falklands. The relationship between Great Britain and Argentina deteriorated even further. More issues appeared and most of them were connected to the Falklands – they regarded the exploitation and militarization of the Southern Atlantic by the Great Britain.

Christina inherited a lot of unsolved issues after her husband. The questions of the flight and fishing were still opened. The residents of the islands started to be very hostile towards the Argentinians. In the referendum of 2013 concerning the future of the islands, almost 100% of the residents supported the Great Britain.

Fernández and her administration continued the politics of bringing up the issue of the Falklands on international forums. She was the first president to speak in front of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. She succeeded in that just like Nestor – she received support from many countries on different continents.

Christina Fernández finished her presidency after two terms of office on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015. Her successor Mauricio Macri inherited the horrible relationship with Great Britain and the fact the residents of the Falklands did not approve the Argentinian administration. The 'tough' politics did not result in anything good and – ironically – moved the perspective of reclaiming the islands even further away from Argentina.

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