

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Third World supports Argentina

The Third World is in almost unanimous support of Argentina in the Argentine-British battle over the Malvinas. This not an expression of support for the Argentine military dictatorship which continues to oppress its citizens, but an outcry against colonialism and imperialism.

The current British action is seen as an extension of the gunboat diplomacy that both the United Kingdom and the United States have used to control the economies and the natural resources of Latin America. It is also a clear demonstration that the true interest of the United States in providing arms and military training to Argentina and other Third World countries is not for the security and protection of those nations but for the economic and political interest of the U.S.

The days of the Empire are gone—but the US must help perpetuate the myth. If the United States government should take a stand against colonialism for the Malvinas, Gibraltar and other British possessions—what about Puerto Rico?

The dispute between Britain and Argentina dates back to the birth of the Latin American

nations. The Argentines continuously battled the British, both on the mainland and in the islands. Before and after Argentine independence, the British attempted to usurp its sovereignty and even today its economic controls are strong.

When Argentina became independent it claimed the Malvinas, but the British took them by force in 1833. They remained British until April 2nd in spite of 150 years of Argentine diplomatic attempts to obtain their release.

The fact that Argentina is a brutal regime does not negate the right of Argentina to the islands. (It is strange that the US media — so strangely silent while the US armed Argentina — is suddenly concerned with Argentine oppression.)

The Montonero Peronist Movement, the political opposition to the current government, pointed that out that although the islands were recovered by representatives of a military dictatorship, "regardless of who carried out the operation or their intentions, the recovery of full national sovereignty over the territory is still a genuine demand of the Argentine people."

## Errors blur district statistics

The Portland School District is in the untenable position of justifying its decision to close Jackson High School yet retain the residential neighborhood served by Jackson in the Portland district. Jackson residents — in light of the closure of their school — are asking to withdraw and form their own district.

The closure of Jackson has been justified on financial savings — decreasing enrollment, ever increasing difficulty in finding adequate funds. The problem with this justification is the shifting sands of school district statistics.

Remember the long struggle over the desegregation plan — when every night the numbers provided by the district were different? Remember the "slight" budget error that caused pain to every school district in the state as budgets were adjusted downward to make up the difference? These are only two recent

examples of the school district's seeming inability to keep its numbers straight.

The Jackson residents say there are discrepancies in the revenue figures provided by the district staff to justify the closure. These discrepancies could all but erase the supposed savings. These, together with the loss of \$20 million in school property and educational considerations, could make the closure of Jackson a loss rather than a gain.

Whatever the outcome of the Jackson issue, Superintendent Matt Prophet must free himself from the district's earlier errors. These were not his mistakes and he can only harm his own credibility by defending his less competent predecessors. His job now is to insure that the staff provides accurate information so that he and the board can make informed decisions.

## The political economy of black murder

by Manning Marable

Since the arrest and subsequent conviction of Wayne Williams, the national media has all but forgotten the tragedy of Atlanta. The unresolved murders of more than two dozen black youths have been safely relegated to the obscurity of the newspapers' back pages. The green ribbons of last spring are now ancient history.

Yet large unanswered questions remain. The Atlanta tragedy was often presented narrowly as a "homicide case," devoid of the political and economic dynamics of black life in that city. In retrospect, what many observers failed to grasp was the fact that the pattern of racial violence against black youths was only one specific aspect of a larger and even more devastating process—the underdevelopment of the black population as a whole. We can see this process clearly by reviewing a few basic facts about Atlanta.

Modern Atlanta is the product of the infusion of monopoly capital into a rapidly changing racial and political milieu. Until the Civil Rights Movement, the piedmont and Black-belt South's central means of production was predominantly agricultural, construction and light industry. During the 1950s and 1960s Georgia experienced a massive economic transformation. The number of black-owned and operated farms in the state dropped from 12,049 to 4,450 between 1954 and 1969, as agribusiness increased. Atlanta became a glittering convention center, and headquarters for virtually every major corporation in the Southeast. Jim Crow was gradually abandoned as blacks comprised 51 per cent of the city's population by 1970. Atlanta's black elite, allied with liberal elements of the city's white private sector, successfully challenged the older racist hierarchy to become the new managers of the political apparatus.

Maynard Jackson was elected mayor in 1973. By the mid-1970s the city projected the image of a successful pro-business, biracial community.

Unresolved socioeconomic tensions created by the new realities of modern capital expansion and the older patterns of white Southern racism finally exploded in the late 1970s. Almost one quarter of Atlanta residents exist below the poverty level. 26 per cent of all household heads were unemployed in 1978. In recent years large numbers of middle-to-upper income whites fled to the suburbs. Between 1970-1980 102,000 whites left Atlanta, and blacks became two-thirds of the city's population. Incidents of violence between the remnants of the old segregationist police force and blacks became more frequent. In 1973 and 1974, 23 blacks were gunned down by police; twelve were under 14 years old. In the mid-1970s, Atlanta had the highest per capita police killings of civilians in the U.S. By 1979, Atlanta surpassed Detroit as the city with the highest murder rate in America.

Black Atlantans were poorly prepared to deal with their children's murders. Many black ministers and religious leaders, the backbone of the black community's Civil Rights Movement, at first showed little concern in the case. Community groups did little to help resolve local tensions until the summer and autumn months of 1980. As the number of victims mounted, criticisms were raised against the black middle class, and observers commented that only poor black children were being singled out by the killer or killers.

The local white-owned media branded the Jackson Administration hopelessly inept and promoted the racial slur that blacks were intellectually incapable of governing a major metropolis. Television stations competed with each other to project tactlessly the anguish of black parents, turning funerals into circus side-

shows. One group of white patrolmen leaked to the media their view that black police and government officials were simply "too stupid to solve the case." By the winter of 1981 Atlanta was by all accounts "a city under siege." Small school children from poor and middle class black neighborhoods were actually arming themselves in school with homemade weapons. The white business community was convinced that a "racial blowup would occur if a white was charged with the murders." Promising over 8,000 more jobs for inner city youths, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce actually delivered only 2,000.

Police repression escalated everywhere. 1,500 children in February, 1981, and 4,670 children in March, 1981, were stopped by authorities for violating a 7 p.m. citywide curfew. Ordered to cooperate with local officials, the FBI promptly infuriated blacks by suggesting that some of the victims' mothers may have been the killers. With the arrest of Williams, the FBI left the city, and the attention of white capitalist America moved elsewhere.

Since the arrest of Williams, the murders have continued. On February 10, 1982, the body of Frederick York was found hanging from a tree at Piedmont Avenue and Renaissance Drive. As of this writing, two more Black youths have disappeared—21-year-old Michael Phillips and 22-year-old Chester Gaston. Both young men had some of the physical characteristics of the black males who were murdered since 1979.

The political economy of black oppression continues in Atlanta, as well as in virtually every other American city. The lives of black youth are still endangered, because we have failed to recognize that the murders are in the last analysis a product of black underdevelopment and systematic exploitation.

Dr. Manning Marable is director of the Race Relations Institute, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

## Short circuiting the global village

by Frank Viviano  
Pacific News Service

As the war in the Malvinas moves into a second month, it raises two deeply disturbing questions: What is really going on there? And what longterm significance does it have?

In a sense, the lack of a reliable answer to the first question offers an answer to the second. There is something quite striking about the fact that, in an age of instant electronic communications, we cannot see or hear the Malvinas war.

Since the very dawn of that age 35 years ago, its ultimate impact on society has been a matter of intense debate, focused on two contradictory scenarios. One, pictured by George Orwell in "1984", foresaw a world in which electronic media served only to isolate individuals from the truth and render them powerless. The second emerged from Marshall McLuhan's "Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man" which predicted that the electronic age would instead give birth to a "global village", a world united by the rapid and continuous exchange of information.

If the past few weeks are any guide, it is Orwell's dark scenario that may be taking shape.

Outside of the islands themselves and the ministries in London and Buenos Aires, no one really does know what's going on in the Malvinas. The governments of Argentina and Britain alike have seen to that, establishing a virtual blackout on the flow of images and information from the battle scene. While reporters and cameramen direct their attention to ministerial press conferences and man-on-the-street interviews (what Daniel Boorstin once called "non-events"), the

actual struggle in the South Atlantic proceeds in strangely silent and invisible realm, a kind of government engineered warp in the electronic universe.

Unlike US involvement in Vietnam, which flooded American living rooms almost nightly with a compelling military horror show, the action in the Malvinas is all off-screen.

The longterm significance of the Malvinas war, in other words, may be its suggestion that governments have learned the potent lesson from Vietnam: Modern war must be fought in the communications dark, even by democracies.

No less an authority than Major General William Westmoreland, the commander of US forces in Indochina 15 years ago, confirms the importance of that lesson. If he had to fight another war, Westmoreland recently said, the first thing he would do is censor the press.

Indeed, he is but the latest in a long line of American officials, stretching back to Richard Nixon and including President Reagan, who have implied that the press — and television coverage in particular — helped "lose" the war in Vietnam.

The issue of censorship has, of course, been raised in the context of the Malvinas, most notably when the British Broadcasting Corporation was attacked by Prime Minister Thatcher for its efforts to treat the Argentine position with fairness and objectivity.

But censorship, in the sense that it is usually understood, may not be the true crux of the matter. Despite the assault on the BBC, its analytical work goes on unimpeded. The superficial appearances of a functional

democracy, served by a freely critical press, have been maintained.

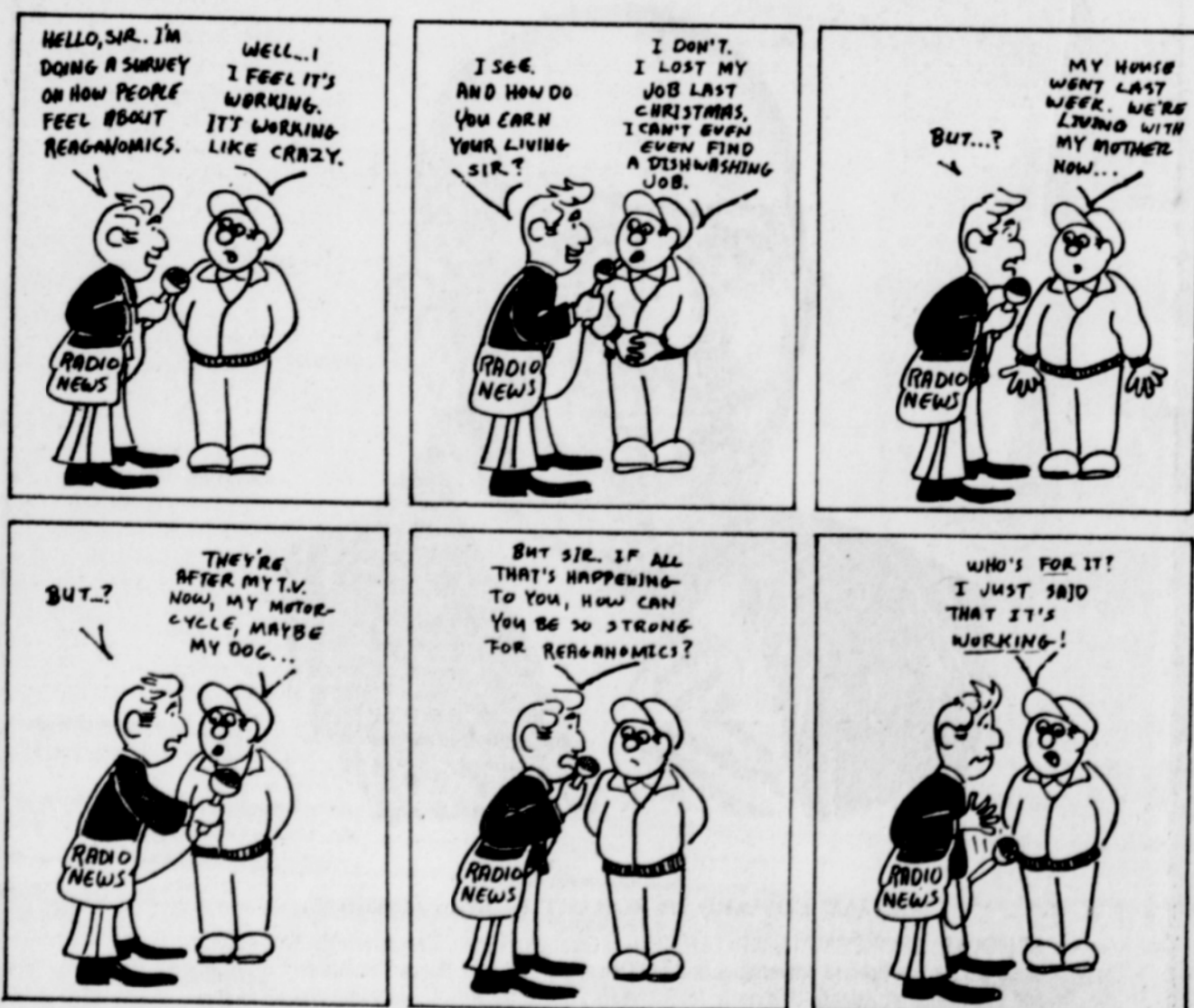
The deeper problem is plain access. By tacit mutual consent, the British and their Argentine foes have simply short-circuited the global village — yanked the plug out on the form of journalism to which millions look today for some semblance of the "texture" of events: their look, sound and feel.

As Vietnam clearly demonstrated, the images that convey this texture have a power all their own, and one which operates on a level totally different from that of cool, dispassionate news analysis. Erik Barnouw, the dean of American broadcast historians, has argued that the collapse of popular support for the Indochina war owed much more to such images than it did to explicit criticism of US policy from news analysts. In fact, even when voice-over narration offered a rationale in favor of American military actions, the sheer sight of American boys burning villages — or American boys in plastic body bags — worked to counter-purpose.

Hence the ominous character of the naval battles off Argentina's coast, which their unseen aerial dogfight and their doubly anonymous dead. It is difficult to avoid concluding that televised images of the HMS Sheffield exploding into flames, or of the General Belgrano sinking into a watery grave, would not have influenced the public opinion which makes military conflict possible.

Instead, Argentines, Britons and the larger world that their war concerns must settle for analytical speculations, and a landscape empty of all but non-events.

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