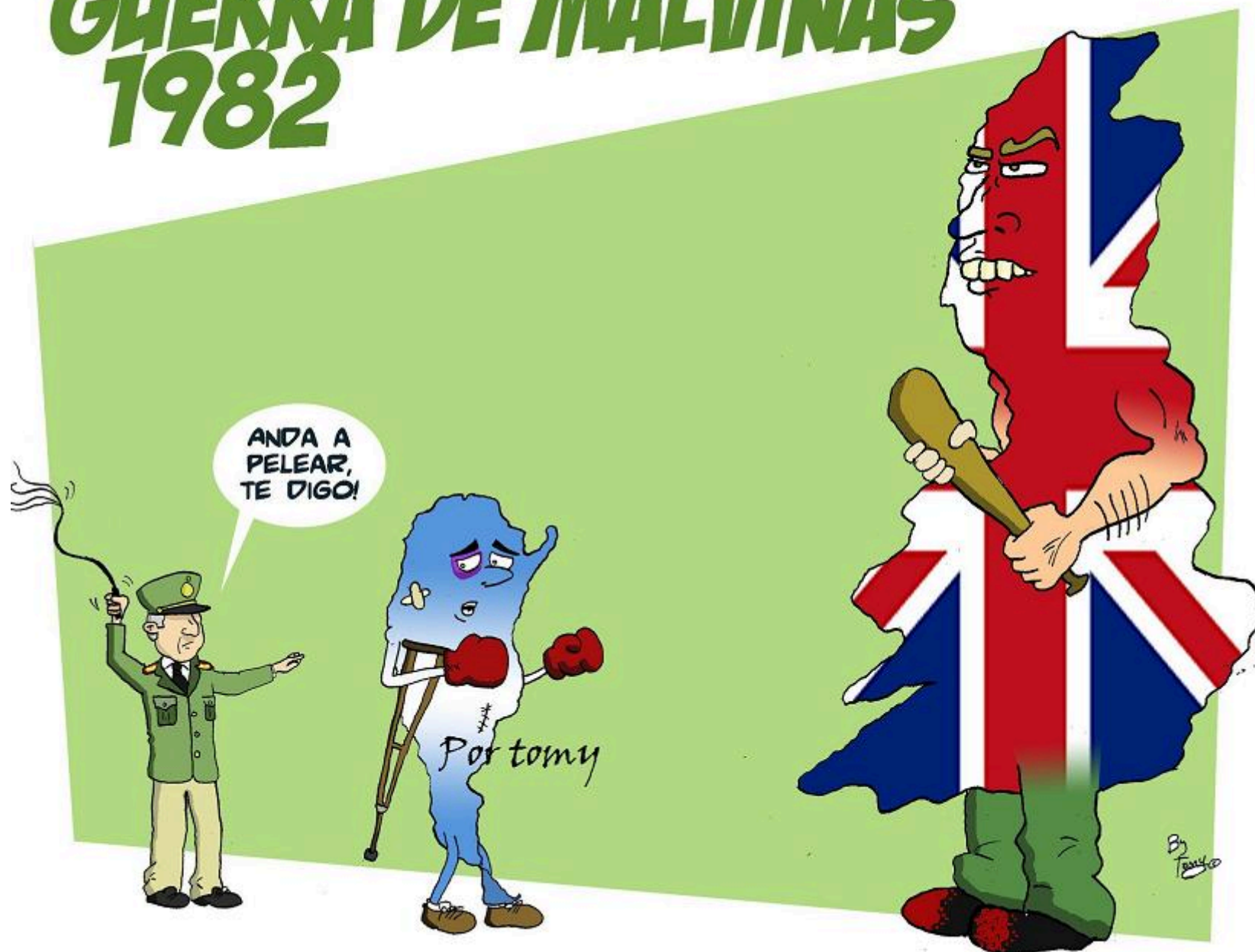




# GUERRA DE MALVINAS 1982







**No Renunciamos**

**No Olvidamos**



**Volveremos**

Dodds, K. 2008. The great game in Antarctica:  
Britain and the 1959 Antarctic Treaty.  
*Contemporary British History* 22 (1): 43-66.



**Las Malvinas Son Argentinas**

The 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War indicates the seriousness of the disputed sovereignty claims in and related to the Antarctic. The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 did not resolve the territorial issues that remain potentially volatile.



**Las Malvinas Son Argentinas**

The Treaty devoted the continent to peaceful scientific cooperation, yet that lofty goal provides a pretext for pursuing national interests. The Treaty was signed in the wake of the 1957–1958 International Geophysical Year.



**Las Malvinas Son Argentinas**



This article is largely based on the diaries of a Foreign Office adviser, Dr. Brian Roberts. His diaries have only recently been made available, and they provide insight into the rationales and motivations of the British diplomats.



**Las Malvinas Son Argentinas**

Chile and Argentina oppose the British Antarctic to this day. Roberts among others convinced the British government to invest in this region and assure that scientific activities would prevent it from erupting in conflict.



**Las Malvinas Son Argentinas**

The success of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty should not be taken for granted. Roberts noted in his diary during its negotiation, “I find myself wondering how it is that so many adults can hold so many incompatible views. In particular, the interminable Chilean and Argentine speeches about sovereignty show that they still have no real understanding of what we have come here to discuss.”



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Dodds writes that the British government “was caught in the middle of a number of opposing groups that were prepared to be extremely dogmatic over territorial claims...”



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Antarctica was viewed in terms of empire by British officials, though it was not one of the issues that they spent much time with. Events preceding the 1959 Treaty “coincided with the start of British decolonization in Africa, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East.”



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The Great Game refers to nineteenth-century rivalry between imperial powers dividing distant regions between them. Many historians view the term colonialism as inapplicable to the far south since it has no indigenous population. The FIDS, later BAS, pursued its colonial objectives through extensively mapping the frozen region.



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The British claim was formally announced in 1908 and later reiterated in 1917, and it was motivated by “the commercial significance of whaling oil, which was used for the production of margarine and as a fuel source.” In the 1920s some British officials imagined annexing the entire continent. During the First World War they extracted glycerin from whale oil and used it to make explosives.



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Roberts was active as a policy adviser in the Foreign Office and as a polar academic at the SPRI, and he paid special attention to the surveying activities of the Southern Cone nations. He and others were alarmed that the Latin Americans did not use British names on their maps. Operation *Taberin* was supposed to improve the quality of British mapping



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Maps were viewed as means of maintaining or reinforcing “the most remote parts of the British Empire.” In the process of mapping, British personnel were to “restore any British marks of occupation which are found obliterated and should obliterate any foreign emblems or marks of occupation or claims.”



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The British governor of the Falkland Islands, Miles Clifford, once remarked, “We are fighting a losing Cold War in the Antarctic. The entire resources of the Argentine and Chilean Armed Forces together with unlimited funds are at the disposal of their people in the Antarctic. Against this the UK could place only one more ship.”



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For the IGY Britain had “a scientifically active but non-political force run on little more than a shoe-string... Her presence [the icebreaker HMS Protector]... shows we mean business in the area... and acts as a counter to displays of political power practiced from time to time by the Argentines.”



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The BAS was established in 1965 to use science to reinforce the British Antarctic, but it was unable to prevent the Argentine invasion of the Falklands in 1982 “by a desperate regime.” The Falklands were “the northerly dimension of Britain’s South American Empire.” Though it did not spread to the Antarctic, or what the British refer to as the Falkland Islands Dependencies, it established a worry precedent.



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