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## Oil in them thar seas?

Beyond free publicity for Meryl Streep, what are the main benefits from the current escalation over the Malvinas and what are the motives and issues lurking behind the rhetoric and the protests? Perhaps these questions are best answered by identifying the trigger beyond the immediate spur of the Duke of Cambridge's arrival for search-and-rescue training on the disputed islands. Does the tension stem from a compulsion to react to the upcoming 30th anniversary of the 1982 South Atlantic war, true to a feeling that 20 years might be nothing (in the words of the tango) but after 30 years it is high time that this last vestige of 19th century colonialism be buried? Or (apart from the need to seek a political distraction from economic difficulties in both countries, as explored in Thursday's editorial) are we missing the real substance of the conflict if we focus on the sovereignty hackles and national pride aroused by this year's anniversary — did not the current tension really begin half a decade ago when speculation as to South Atlantic oil intensified (it is perhaps no accident that the Royal Navy's only other destroyer as ultra-modern as *HMS Dauntless* to be dispatched this year has been sent to the Persian Gulf)?

South Atlantic oil might seem a far more rational motive than nationalistic bravado (especially with the increasing need for energy imports) but there could be a case for arguing that such lines of geo-strategic thinking are not very much less outdated than colonialism. If the government is genuinely interested in boosting its fossil fuel potential, it would have much more immediate prospects in really developing the almost billion barrels of shale oil in Vaca Muerta, Neuquén, announced by YPF only three months ago (not the first announcement of this kind) rather than offshore South Atlantic oil. There seems an insufficient appreciation of how much "fracking" stands to revolutionize global energy equations — thus the United States is rapidly moving from near exhaustion to being the world's third oil producer (so much are we back to the future here that some of the most intense shale oil activity is close to the long-exhausted Pennsylvania conventional oilfields where John D. Rockefeller began his career over 150 years ago). "Fracking" shale oil might end up triggering the same environmental protests recently stalling Andean mining from those unconvinced that the threat to the water table has been resolved but at the very least it is worth a closer look.

Yet regardless of whether patriotic nostalgia or economic motives underlie this dispute, the most important thing is that everybody keeps their heads.

## Petróleo profundo

Más allá de aportarle publicidad gratuita a Meryl Streep, ¿cuáles son los beneficios principales de la escalada actual en torno a las Malvinas, y cuáles son los motivos y problemas que subyacen esa retórica y protestas? Tal vez se pueda responder mejor a estas preguntas si identificamos el detonante, más allá del impacto inmediato de la llegada del duque de Cambridge para un entrenamiento como piloto de rescate en las islas disputadas. ¿Las tensiones provienen de un impulso por reaccionar ante lo que pronto será el 30º aniversario de la Guerra del Atlántico Sur, respondiendo a la idea de que quizás 20 años no es nada (como dice el tango), pero que después de 30 años, llega la hora de enterrar este último vestigio de colonialismo del siglo XIX? ¿O puede ser que (además de la necesidad de buscar una distracción política ante las dificultades económicas en ambos países, aspecto que abordamos en el editorial del jueves) estemos ignorando la verdadera esencia del conflicto cuando nos concentramos en los reclamos de soberanía y el orgullo nacional suscitados por el aniversario de este año? ¿Acaso la tensión actual no comenzó realmente más de media década atrás, cuando se intensificó la especulación por el petróleo en el Atlántico Sur (quizás no sea casualidad que el único otro destructor tan ultra-moderno como el *HMS Dauntless* despachado por la Marina Real este año haya sido enviado al Golfo Pérsico)?

El petróleo en el Atlántico Sur podría parecer un motivo mucho más racional que la bravuconería nacionalista (especialmente con la necesidad cada vez mayor de importaciones de energía), pero podría haber argumentos que indiquen que esta clase de pensamiento geoestratégico no ha caducado mucho menos que el colonialismo. Si el gobierno realmente tiene interés en aumentar sus reservas de combustible fósil, tendría posibilidades mucho más inmediatas en el desarrollo de los casi mil millones de barriles de petróleo de esquisto en Vaca Muerta (Neuquén) anunciado por YPF sólo tres meses atrás (y no ha sido el primer anuncio de este tipo), en vez del petróleo submarino del Atlántico Sur. Parece haber poca comprensión de cuánto el método de fractura hidráulica podrá revolucionar las ecuaciones energéticas globales; en este sentido, Estados Unidos está superando rápidamente la amenaza del agotamiento para convertirse pronto en el tercer productor mundial de petróleo (hemos vuelto al futuro hasta tal punto que algunas de las actividades más intensas para extraer petróleo de esquisto se desarrollan cerca de los campos petrolíferos convencionales de Pennsylvania, agotados hace mucho tiempo, y donde John D. Rockefeller comenzó su carrera hace más de 150 años). El método de fractura hidráulica para la extracción de ese petróleo quizás termine provocando las mismas protestas ambientales que postergaron recientemente la explotación minera andina entre aquellos que no están convencidos de que la amenaza a las napas acuíferas haya sido resuelta, pero merece al menos un análisis más detenido.

Sin embargo, más allá de que la disputa sea impulsada por la nostalgia patriótica o los motivos económicos, lo más importante es que todos mantengan la calma.

## Your View

### MALVINAS I

Concerning Tony Merkin's letter published on January 28, entitled "Malvinas," firstly I believe that there is not a single piece of land in the planet worth losing lives for in a conflict. Another thing could be fighting for your freedom and for the freedom of people for whom you care. Also to defend the place where you live and your ancestors lived and your children and grandchildren would want to live under their own rules in the future.

And just for that reason I think Mr. Merkin is completely wrong when he concludes that the solution to the problem is not as simple as deciding to respect the self-determination of the island inhabitants. On the contrary, I believe the only possibility under the international law of human rights is to ask the islanders what they really want. They are the only true subjects to decide their present and their future.

Even United Nations resolution 2065, which Argentine authorities invoke to claim negotiations about the Malvinas/Falkland issue, states very clearly that the "invitation" to the governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to find a peaceful solution to the problem is "bearing in mind the provisions and objectives of the United Nations Charter and General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) (Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples) and the interests of the population."

I know perfectly that my country (Argentina) differentiates between "interests" and "wishes" but this is not consistent because it is impossible to care for the rights of individuals without asking where they think their interests lie. Sadly, I must add that the presidential assertion last Wednesday 25 sounds very cynical when we hear "discussions over the Malvinas do not mean the islanders have to cease to be British."

My quick answer is: Of course, it is against international law to modify the citizenship of any person! The question to resolve is that the islanders do not want Argentine authorities in their land and they prefer to remain under British rule. The international law of human rights protects them to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." (UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV)).

So if the government of my country really has honest intentions for the benefit of the individuals who compose Argentina and does not have the unrealistic aim to achieve geo-strategic objectives to position the country in a better rank of regional leadership, it would face the Malvinas/Falklands situation in another way, trying to find a solution under the modern rules of international humanitarian law.

City

Alejandro G. Cowes

### MALVINAS II

Some years ago then Radical Senator Rodolfo Terragno published a piece in a local newspaper commenting on a number of memos,

notes and opinions on file at Britain's Foreign Office referring to the extreme doubts which British diplomacy held regarding the situation of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands. In fact one memo almost went on to say that the British sovereignty stance was indefensible. The blanket refusal of the United Kingdom to sit down to talks as the whole world (and now the United States as well) is demanding, is probably to avoid the airing of this damning documentation.

As for the Kelpers' seeming confidence in the UK promise to defend them against all odds, they perhaps should recall what happened to the islanders of Diego Garcia. During the Second World War the United States Air Force decided that this Indian Ocean colony of Britain was useful for its purposes. However, they wanted the island without natives of any sort. Britain obligingly exported each and every islander without a single effort to listen to their opinions on the matter. Their desires didn't mean a thing. Most are still endeavouring to return to their ancestral homes.

San Isidro

Howard Nelson

### MALVINAS III

How nice it is to have well-intentioned people such as Mr. Merkin from Canada take their time to write to the *Herald* on the Falklands/Malvinas issue.

Mr. Merkin, for the fun of it, let's pretend that you live on the islands. How would you feel if you read in the papers such gems about Argentina as: The country has a long history of not respecting the international treaties it signs. The governments freely and repeatedly disobey their own laws and Constitution. No surprise that they defaulted on their international debt six times: 1830, 1890, 1915, 1930, 1982, 2002. How would you feel if your government "nationalized" your private retirement fund and then replaced the money in it with government bonds?

Would you feel comfortable if the government cheated on practically all its statistics? Just take one sample: INDEC, the government statistics bureau, once highly respected, has announced that 2011 inflation was 9.7% while private consultants say it was 23%. The Argentine economy is based on agriculture, right? Well, in November, when the planting of the soy and corn crops was beginning, they prohibited the importation of fertilizer and agri-chemicals.

Want to urgently import a spare part for a key machine in your factory? Oops, sorry, you have to file in the forms, justify the origin of the money and, hopefully, who knows with what delay, you can bring in the spare. If in the meantime, you can't produce anything, well that's your fault. I could go on for hours listing things the government has done but you get the point, don't you? Would you want to be under such a government? Should the islanders have to? The islanders have a remarkably democratic government which seems to be doing its job well. Would you be willing to change it for the type of government Argentina has, knowing that whatever they promised you, they could change at any moment?

Rio Gallegos

P. Davis

### BELOW THE BELT DOWN UNDER

Your article on Saturday January 28 on the Australian Embassy's Aus-

tralia Day celebrations reported that guests enjoyed Australian favourites such as Vegemite rolls and that a local band played covers by Midnight Oil, INXS and Crowded House.

As a New Zealander I am long accustomed to the appropriation by our Aussie cousins of our national icons and heroes and now it seems they are coveting our music too as Crowded House's lead singer and songwriter Neil Finn and his principal collaborators (his son Liam, brother Tim and Eddie Rayner) are all Kiwi to the core and live in New Zealand. It's true Crowded House has some Australian members and that it has enjoyed much success in Australia but its artistic heart and inspiration are firmly rooted in New Zealand.

The Aussies have long since appropriated our delicious national meringue-style dessert the Pavlova (invented in NZ in the 1920s when the famed Russian ballerina visited there), the Jandal/Thong/Flip Flop (a Japanese-style plastic sandal patented in NZ by Morris Yock in 1957), that picnic essential the polystyrene "Chilly Bin", our actors Sam Neill & Russell Crowe and the most famous racehorse of all time Phar Lap but to imply Crowded House is Australian as your article does is a bridge too far!

To get the jump on those tricky Aussies before they get around to claiming them too, I'd like to take the opportunity to state for the record that the man who first split the atom, Ernest Rutherford, the conqueror of Mount Everest Edmund Hillary, opera diva Kiri Te Kanawa & Frances Alder, film-makers Jane Campion, Peter Jackson, Lee Tamahori & Roger

Donaldson, actresses Lucy Lawless and Oscar-winning Anna Paquin, writers Katherine Mansfield & Janet Frame, rocket-scientist William Pickering, the aviation pioneer who arguably flew a year before the Wright brothers, Richard Pearse, the man who saved London in the Battle of Britain, Keith Park, aviatrix Jean Batten, the first man to run a mile under four minutes Peter Snell, the inventor of jogging Arthur Lydiard, Whitbread & Americas Cup winners Peter Blake & Russell Coutts, supermodel Rachel Hunter, twice winner of the Victoria Cross, Charles Upham, champion golfer Bob Charles, painters Frances Hodgkins & Colin McCahon, Formula One champion Denny Hulme, rugby legends Colin Meads & Jonah Lomu, cricketer Richard Hadlee and the inventor of bungee jumping AJ Hackett are New Zealanders and we are very proud of them all.

I hope this letter will serve as a shot across the bows and stop those Aussies claiming any more of our heroes. Heaven knows Australia has enough worthy heroes of its own and it's just pure greed that they want all ours too!

Wellington, New Zealand

Thomas Stewart Manning

Ed. Weren't kiwi fruit once known as Chinese gooseberries but who are we to gainsay New Zealand with Waitangi Day the day after tomorrow? May we take this opportunity to greet all Kiwi readers ahead of their national day and ask them to accept Mr. Manning's letter in lieu of a fuller article which holiday staff shortages hindered but which New Zealand undoubtedly deserves after last year's magnificent Rugby World Cup.