

# A shadow of doubt hangs over the Falkland Islands

By JOHN LEONARD

Port Stanley, June 14.  
A year after Britain's victory over Argentina, the Falkland Islands are still riddled with minefields and their long-term future is littered with question marks.

As islanders celebrate the end of the Falklands war today, they are struggling to rebuild against difficult odds while 4,000 British troops stand ready to defend them against another attack.

Liberation Day — as it has been officially named — will be marked simply by a thanksgiving service at the Anglican cathedral. A victory monument which was to be dedicated has not yet arrived because the ship carrying it from England had engine trouble and was forced to return to Gibraltar for repairs.

"I believe the problems of the last year are superficial problems," said a local councillor, Mr I.G. Blake, manager of Hill Cove Farm on West Falkland Island. "The liberation laid on our shoulders the necessity to

build a better Falklands than we had before. Progress has been zero.

"But I don't believe that the faith which most people have in the future has been damaged," he said.

When the Argentinians surrendered 10 weeks after invading this barren South Atlantic outpost, there were fears that many of the 1,600 islanders would leave.

There has been no exodus. Instead, islanders like John and Marjorie Adams and their three children have returned from England to build their future here.

Mr Adams, a Royal Marine commando who helped recapture the islands, said: "It seems very hard to believe that this time last year I was up on Mount Kent under artillery fire and now a year afterwards I'm back in Stanley."

Mrs Adams, who was born in the Falklands, said she loved the sense of freedom here but admitted Stanley was a daunting sight at the moment.

Under the melting snow

and slush of the islands' first heavy winter snowfall, the roads are pitted with potholes which have become veritable craters under repeated pounding from military vehicles.

A team of workers sent to repair the road system three months ago has barely denied the problem. Adding to the present miseries, a film of mud tracked in by the military traffic now covers much of the road system as well as the pavements.

Despite a year punctuated by emergencies, the superintendent of the electrical department, Mr Les Harris, said: "Things can only get better."

He gave high marks to the Royal Engineers, who have led the hazardous mine-clearing operations that still remain a top priority. Many of the islands' beaches and rural areas are still out of bounds.

The British victory was a personal triumph for the Prime Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, boosting her political fortunes and helping pave the way for her landslide

re-election last week.

Mrs Thatcher has repeatedly said that Britain will not transfer sovereignty of the Falklands to Argentina against the will of the islanders, who are British descendants. By and large, islanders trust her commitment.

But Britain's refusal to discuss sovereignty and the estimated £600 to £800 million (about HK\$6.9 to HK\$9.2 billion) cost of maintaining the British garrison for each of the next three years has sparked controversy over that commitment.

"What we have been presented with is a short-term military victory and a long-term political retreat and dead end," the former Labour Prime Minister, Mr James Callaghan, said earlier this year.

But Mrs Thatcher maintained: "We have no option now except 'Fortress Falklands' if we are to continue, as I believe we should, to honour the wishes of the Falkland islanders."

A draft report prepared

for the House of Commons all-party Foreign Affairs Committee was quoted by several papers as calling the Fortress Falklands policy untenable in anything but the short-term.

The report, publication of which was delayed because of the election, said a lease-back arrangement with Argentina spanning several generations would "probably represent the most promising long-term solution to the dispute."

Most islanders recognise that both development and rebuilding will take time. Many would like to see the economy diversified from almost total dependence on sheep raising.

"It's only been a year," said Mr Archie McLeod (80). "It'll never be the same again, but I often think some day it'll come right."

"The roads were like this in the last war (World War II), all cut up, but they came right, didn't they? Now, they're all cut up again, but they'll come right again."

—A.P.