

-----  
INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 9

JULY 1982  
-----

The TILC Resolution and the WSL

Minority

\*

Carolan

\*

## INTRODUCTION

This document was first drafted early in June. Its circulation has been held up because of a technical bottleneck at the centre. It is a measure of the speed at which things have developed that the interpretation of the TILC resolution has already more or less ceased to be central to the dispute in the WSL.

The minority claimed continuity with the TILC conference resolution on the basis of one sentence (and only part of that sentence). That was their starting point. What will their finishing point be, I now increasingly wonder.

The second tendency document, IB7, has moved very far from the minority interpretation of the TILC resolution and far even from the politics of the tendency's first document.

Examination of the TILC document, and of the minority's interpretation of it, has therefore now become a way for comrades to put the present stage of the discussion in the WSL in perspective. By examining the roots of the dispute, and where the minority have come from politically, comrades will find it impossible to avoid asking themselves what is now the burning question for the WSL; where is the minority headed with its current politics - with its more and more reckless substitution of "camp", block, "anti-imperialist" (meaning the sovereign Argentine state and its bourgeois rulers), "international balance of forces" concerns, for class politics and Trotskyism.

I remind comrades that the minority started out at the EC on May 9 claiming to base themselves entirely on the TILC resolution. Then and since, they have made it their battlecry that the majority reneged on that resolution (and/or practised duplicity at the TILC conference by voting for it).

Lenin wrote, dealing with the disputes about what had happened at the 1903 conference of the RSDLP (in which the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions first emerged) that comrades should study the records. "Anyone", he wrote, "who takes someone else's word for it in politics is a hopeless idiot" ('One Step Forward, Two Steps Back'). Study the record, comrades. Find out who is telling the truth.

Look at the massive political distance the minority have travelled from the positions they previously held in common with the majority. Compare the position of the TILC conference with the 'Third Worldism' of IB7, which brackets the Argentine bourgeoisie and its state in the same "class camp" as the proletariat:

"We have to determine our position according to the basic class camps, not on conjunctural events" ... "the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism..." (p.4)

Note that IB 7 declares:

"There is nothing especially genuine about a workers' struggle because it occurs in the framework of a trade union, rather than an anti-imperialist mass movement... The only thing that we can say about workers' struggles in mass reformist trade unions, and workers' struggles in mass reformist anti-imperialist movements is that they are likely to occur in mass reformist anti-imperialist movements is that they are likely to occur in different parts of the world - the former in the more advanced, the latter in the more backward... This is not in any way to suggest that independent workers' organisations are not one of the most important factors in any struggle". ( p.14) (emphasis added)

Contrast this with the Trotskyist insistence on independent workers' organisation as the irreplaceable foundation-stone of our politics - not just an "important factor". Contrast it with the TILC resolution on Central America of last December, rejecting the

perspective of 'proletarian hegemony in an anti-imperialist united front' for Central America, and insisting instead on independent proletarian politics. Contrast it with the politics of one of the foundation struggles of the Trotskyist movement - the struggle against the Stalin-Bukharin line that the "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement" of the Kuomintang in China was as good as any framework for workers' struggle.

IB7 complains:

"All he (Carolan) can see is the junta, and its victory, and its defeat. The masses are a mere shadow or mirror image..." (p.14)

Compare Trotsky:

"Bukharin asks, 'And what about the Kuomintang masses, are they mere cattle?' Of course they are cattle. The masses of any bourgeois party are always cattle, although in different degrees. But for us, the masses are not cattle, are they? No, that is precisely why we are forbidden to drive them into the arms of the bourgeoisie, camouflaging the latter under the label of a workers' and peasants' party" (Trotsky on China p.331). Or under the label of a "mass reformist anti-imperialist movement"?

And remember that the "mass anti-imperialist movement" referred to in IB7 is not the Kuomintang of the '20s, nor the FMLN-FDR, but the Peronist-dominated mass mobilisation behind Galtieri's war! Trotskyism rejects the notion that proletarian independent organisation is dispensable in "more backward" countries. But Argentina is a country which had an independent workers' party of some substance as long ago as 1894!

Read further in IB7 and see where the notion of basing ourselves on something other than the working class struggle is made explicit:

"Whatever the implications of that for the Argentinian or British proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first. This means that even if a successful defence against Thatcher did strengthen Galtieri, we would still have to call on the Argentinian workers to undertake that defence" (p.7).

Exactly what anti-imperialist struggle is referred to is made clear in the following paragraph: "The last period has seen several successes for the anti-imperialist struggle. Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Iran, Nicaragua..."

To side with the Sandinistas against Somoza, or even Khomeini against the Shah, is one thing. To say that our position must be determined by the (presumed) effect of events on such struggles, "whatever the implications... for the... proletariat", is plain popular-frontism on an international level. Yet that is what IB 7 explicitly argues.

"The international class enemy" is "the imperialists", IB7 states on p.6. And on p.8:

"With the enemy forced to become more and more desperate, the anti-imperialist masses can afford to give no ground. In the extremely tight balance of forces that exists, any shift, no matter how slight, could prove costly for the working class internationally".

This is "a genuine struggle in which the real balance of forces between imperialism and the anti-imperialist masses is genuinely being tested" (p.9).

If the document, beneath all the high-flown talk of "idealism" and "contradictions", means anything, it means here that the imperialist bourgeoisies (as opposed to bourgeoisie like Argentina's) are the 'main enemy', and in a 'tight' situation the need to defeat this 'main enemy' is paramount, 'whatever the implications for the proletariat'. Such politics, of course, have many precedents. But

not in Trotskyism!

Read the assessment in IB 7 of the invasion and the war in "defence of the invasion".

"There was an element of objective anti-imperialism in Galtieri's move - whatever his motivation. It is impossible to seize something from imperialism without that seizure having any anti-imperialist content at all. And more than that. There is an element of anti-imperialism in the defence of the invasion against imperialism which Galtieri is now, for the meantime, forced to undertake" (p.10).

Compare the firm, clear condemnation of the invasion in the TILC resolution, and even the statement in the minority's May 9 resolution that they maintained the same assessment of the invasion.

Observe the fact that IB7, despite a great deal of declamation about imperialism, nowhere replies to the arguments I presented in IB6 on the question. I argued that in a country like Argentina, which has long had political independence - i.e. has had the maximum independence economically possible in the modern world - the only meaningful anti-imperialism is the socialist working-class struggle. IB7 clearly dissents but nowhere argues. (In return, however, it takes three full pages to argue against the view, which nobody has advanced, that the character of the Argentine regime should be decisive for our line). Does this mean that the authors of IB 7 believe that the 'national bourgeoisie' can be meaningfully counterposed as a progressive force against imperialism? From the whole of their arguments - which have more in common with Maoism than with Trotskyism - we can only conclude: yes, they do.

\*\*\*

If comrades find it a bit tedious now to examine from all sides one sentence of the TILC resolution, then they should remember that it was that sentence and that sentence alone that the comrades made their credo. From it has sprouted their current politics.

It is vitally important to get the record straight. At the core of our concept of the revolutionary party is the belief that the cardinal task of the party is the ideological struggle against the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, and the Stalinist bureaucracy, for a working-class outlook. This conditions, shapes, and controls everything else that the party does, from participating in strikes through to organising an armed insurrection.

It is essential to Marxist politics that we render precise and honest accounts to ourselves. Our method in politics is to map out the terrain theoretically, to be guided by our basic class political programme and goals. We try to think things through rigorously. We derive our tactical conclusions from our principled assessments, and when we modify our conclusions in the light of practical experience, we relate back directly to our principled considerations, checking ourselves, keeping things in perspective. We practise strict political accounting. Otherwise we waver and flounder and get shifted from our class and Marxist moorings by the tides of events. We fail to fulfill the irreplaceable, fundamental task of a revolutionary party - to maintain and explain a clear class line even in the most complicated or adverse circumstances. We fail to be true to our class politics, and get taken in tow by alien class forces.

On the Falklands war we made an assessment and took a position at the TILC conference. It was endorsed at the April 25 NC with

no-one voting against. Now the minority, claiming to base themselves on the TILC resolution which they are 'developing', have jettisoned that resolution's politics, substituting for it cloudy notions and dubious assessments of "the international balance of forces". By not admitting that they have broken completely with the letter, spirit and method of the TILC resolution, the comrades have completely muddied the political water.

The minority comrades' response now to discussion of their political zig-zags is that what matters is whether they are right or not now. Comrades, with your record so far on the Falklands issue, it would be a sheer accident and a surprising one, if what you are saying now should prove to be correct!

To members who have supported the minority we say: so you believe that we should have backed Argentina? Then we have an important disagreement. But what do you think of the anti-Trotskyist, 'Third Worldist', explicitly non-proletarian politics that the tendency have now brought in to buttress that position against the arguments of the majority?

\*\*\*

The comments in this introduction are not, of course, a full reply to IB 7. The document is concerned with the TILC resolution and its relation to the positions argued in the first tendency document. Because of its length, it seems useful to give an outline of its contents and arguments here.

#### PART 1 (pages 1 to 11)

examines the sentence - the one sentence - from the TILC resolution on which the minority originally claimed to base themselves. By doing this from all sides I hope to demonstrate that there is no basis to the minority claims about this sentence; and no basis for the charge that the majority reneged on a commitment to adopt the minority's politics.

This section includes an account of the discussion at the TILC conference out of which the famous sentence came.

#### PART 2: page 12: Read the rest of the resolution!

The rest of the resolution clinches the argument. It shows that we did anticipate war, and we called for Argentine withdrawal and the right of the islanders to decide their own future in that context.

#### PART 3

discusses the politics of the resolution as a whole and the minority's abandonment of them.

Page 13: Did we see Argentina as qualitatively different from Britain?

The minority argue (tendency document p.5) that either the war between Britain and Argentina was a classic inter-imperialist war, or it was a war of an oppressed nation against an oppressor.

This document argues that the Falklands war was neither, and was assessed by the TILC resolution as neither. The minority's attempt to cram the war into one or another of two textbook categories, according to crude textbook labels, excludes all concrete analysis - including the concrete analysis of the TILC resolution.

Page 15: Argentina's national rights

"National rights are involved", the tendency document argued,

" - the right of a non-imperialist nation to recover what it thinks is its property from imperialism, without having to face attack and discipline from the military force of imperialism".

This document argues that the notion of national rights held here by the minority is non-Marxist - and arises from the drive to jam the Falklands war into the category "national liberation war" in defiance of all concrete assessment.

Page 16: Does the minority really want to preserve the state apparatus of Argentina?

The minority insists, of course, that "To stand for the defence of Argentina in the war does not imply, of course, support for the blood-drenched military junta" (tendency doc. p.2). Yet their other attempt to argue that the war was about Argentine national rights is that it could have involved "the destruction of most of the Argentine navy and air force and much of its army..." (p.6).

So the smashing up of the Argentine military machine would be a decisively bad result from the war? So we should have sided with Argentina to try to avoid that danger? This document argues that on the contrary the damage to the Argentine military machine was a positive aspect of the war's outcome.

Page 18: the minority have abandoned the TILC commitment to self-determination for the Falklanders.

The tendency document (p.7) says: "if the settlers were a distinct and viable community and were asking for self-determination, we would support them... But they are not asking for self-determination. They are militantly pro-imperialist and determined to stay so... we cannot subordinate the world political situation to the Falkland settlers and give them an imperialist veto".

If such considerations were decisive in May, then they should have prevented us in April from including in the TILC document: "the Falkland inhabitants should have the right to decide their own future".

But from a Leninist - or democratic - point of view, the right of self-determination of a community cannot be conditional on them playing the sacrificial role the minority ascribe to them in their vision of a symbolic anti-imperialist drama.

Page 20: Is Lenin on the imperialist war irrelevant to the Falklands war?

This section examines the view that the war can be defined simply by reference to the descriptions "imperialist"/"non-imperialist". Such definition replaces concrete analysis, according to a Marxist method, with labels too abstract to yield any adequate picture of what the war was about.

Page 21: Our duplicity

The minority have been free with accusations of bad faith against the majority in our interpretation of the TILC resolution. This concluding section summarises the evidence to show that it is in fact the minority that has departed from the TILC resolution without adequate political accounting.

11/7/82.