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## ARGENTINA - A SEMI-COLONIAL COUNTRY?

Since the build-up to World War One, revolutionary Marxists have identified imperialism as a specific form of international capitalist domination, which needs to be understood and fought by the working class movement. The question of imperialism, and its relationship to 'Third World' countries lies at the heart of the debate between us and many other Trotskyist groups and indeed among us over the Falklands/Malvinas War. To many revolutionaries it has seemed that in refusing to support Argentina in the war, by taking a defeatist position on both sides, we have broken with the Leninist conception of the anti-imperialist struggles of 'oppressed nations' which should be supported regardless of the character of the regime in power.

There is a big problem that is central to this debate. The term imperialism is never actually defined by those who support Argentina which reflects that fact that the Trotskyist movement, including ourselves, has failed to seriously analyse the character of contemporary imperialism. Instead, the arguments of people, some of whom are vehemently anti-Trotskyist, have been simply borrowed to back up accommodation to nationalism (petty bourgeois or not so petty) in countries like Argentina. Our position actually stands to the left, not to the right, as they seem to think, of groups that support (however critically) Galtieri's war.

A typical example of the 'Argentina as semi-colony' argument is to be found in an article by Will Reissner in 'Intercontinental Press', a newspaper of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, subsequently printed in 'Socialist Challenge'. Entitled 'Argentina - a semi-colonial economy', it is centred round the argument that:

"Argentine economic development has been deformed and distorted by the predominance <sup>role of</sup> foreign capital has played in the development of industry, and by the fundamental influence that imperialist companies exert on the Argentine state" (ICP, 3.5.82)

This theory, called the 'development of underdevelopment', has been the hallmark of radical sociology for the last twenty years. It should be pointed out, though it doesn't necessarily prove anything, that Lenin did not share the view that imperialism 'distorted and deformed' colonial economies. But the problem lies much deeper than a simple question of dogma.

First of all, distorted and deformed as compared to what? Theories of underdevelopment rest on the assumption that there is a 'normal' (undeformed and undistorted) pattern of development, which countries like Argentina have deviated from because of the dominance of foreign capital. The idea that capitalist development is normally wonderful and egalitarian, every sector of the population developing happily in tandem, is actually quite extraordinary for a Marxist. All that the description (not analysis) of foreign capital, uneven development etc. actually proves, is that capitalism in Argentina has developed under different historical conditions to capitalism in e.g. Britain.

Secondly, what does it mean to say that an 'economy' is deformed and distorted? Expressions to do with the 'national economy' would be avoided like the plague by Marxists if they were talking about advanced capitalist countries, but in countries like Argentina it