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INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 12 ..... JULY 1982  
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POINTS ON THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS DISPUTE ..... Traven\*

1. The line of this document

This document is written in general support of the line followed by the paper during the South Atlantic war and thus against the line of the tendency. I do not agree with some of the theoretical positions which have been used by members of the NC majority to defend the paper's position. And, as will become clear, my position is based on some arguments which are unlikely to be accepted by either the tendency or most supporters of the majority.

2. The long-term origin of the dispute: sovereignty

The sovereignty of the Falklands/Malvinas has been disputed since 1833 when the British seized them from the Republic of Buenos Aires. In general territorial sovereignty should be an unimportant issue for socialists who are supposedly concerned with issues of human liberation. Sometimes - e.g. in the case of colonial occupation where people are ruled by an alien power - then the struggle for human liberation involves the struggle for territorial sovereignty. In the F/M dispute nothing of the kind is involved today. It is even doubtful that the original British occupation of the islands reduced human freedom, since the Republic of Buenos Aires then used the islands only as a prison colony and the British freed the prisoners. Today Argentinian sovereignty is clearly against the wishes of those who inhabit the islands, who believe, almost certainly correctly, that Argentinian sovereignty would today lead to their greater oppression.

Hence there is no general reason why socialists should support Argentinian sovereignty of the F/M; and at present there is a specific reason why we should oppose it. Hence Argentina's claim to the F/M should not be regarded as an anti-imperialist demand.  
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\*I do not think that anti-imperialism requires using the name for the islands given them by the original French settlers, so I will refer to them as Falklands/Malvinas.

### 3. What are the rights of the Falklanders?

We have rightly defended the right of the Falklanders to self-determination. The objections put forward to this (by the tendency and others) are invalid. First, it has been argued that the Falklanders are pro-imperialist. That is hardly surprising, since they see British imperialism as their only defence against Galtieri's oppression. Our support for their rights to self-determination, however, does not involve support for its imposition by the British military power. There is nothing original about that. We support many people's rights to self-determination (and other rights) without supporting their imposition by military power. Our demand in relation to the Falklanders involves arguing that it should be defended by the Argentinian labour movement, which has for the most part so far maintained a reactionary chauvinist position on this question.

It has also been argued, alarmingly, that the small numbers of the Falklanders, the fact that they are as numerous as the inhabitants of three streets in Islington, in some way devalues their rights. I am astounded by this argument, since it implies that only large numbers of like-thinking people have rights. That view has in the past led socialists to accept much oppression.

It has also been argued that the F/M are too small to be 'viable' as an independent country. There is absolutely no reason at all to believe this. There is no reason, political or economic, why countries 'need' to be of a certain minimum size.

So we should defend the Falklanders' right to self-determination, but not its enforcement by imperialist military might, and demand support for this right by the Argentinian labour movement.

It is worth noting that revolutionary socialists have generally supported the right of self-determination, but frequently found reasons to oppose it in the specific case when it arises.

In the case of the Falklanders there seems no reason at all to believe that their right to self-determination would reduce the rights of anyone else.

### 4. The immediate reasons for the conflict: the Argentinian invasion.

Everybody in this controversy seems to agree that Galtieri's invasion was reactionary. This was because it was an attempt to deflect the mass opposition to the dictatorship, and (this is less frequently acknowledged) because it imposed the dictatorship on the Falklanders.

If it was reactionary, we were right to oppose it and to demand the withdrawal of Argentinian troops. It was a disastrous failure of the Argentinian left that it did not in general do this even though it analysed correctly the reasons for the invasion.

The tendency argue that the sending of the task force changed this, and meant that it was wrong to continue to call for the withdrawal of the troops because that would have meant a victory for Thatcher.

That seems to me a terrible argument. It means supporting an acknowledged evil to combat what is regarded as a greater evil (an imperialist victory). Anti-imperialism can only be weakened by the defence of reactionary, evil actions. It is right therefore for socialists to maintain the demand for the withdrawal of Argentinian troops.

### 5. Defence of Argentina, and defence of the military dictatorship

Those on the left (in Britain and Argentina) who have argued for the defence of, or support for, Argentina in the war, have taken two

distinct positions. One is that the struggle against Galtieri and the dictatorship should be suspended during the war and taken up again afterwards (this seems to be the position of the Peronists and the PST) and another which seeks to combine the struggle against Thatcher and Galtieri (e.g. the *Politica Obrera*) or support the struggle against the British military without any support for Galtieri (e.g. as I understand, the tendency).

The second position is a difficult one. In what way can a struggle against the military dictatorship be carried on alongside a struggle against the British military- What is the position of the tendency on the mutinies which evidently took place in the Argentinian army- I do not think these questions have been answered.

Also, it has been argued that a victory for Argentina would have intensified and assisted the struggle against the military dictatorship. I have seen no convincing argument for this, and it seems to me to be largely wishful thinking. It has been argued that the new regime is to the right of Galtieri and that proves the point. But that argument ignores the obvious loss of authority of the regime since the war.

## 6. War and peace

Socialists cannot lightly support war, given the destruction and death it causes. Sometimes violent means are the only ways to defend against attacks on human liberties. In this case the violence arose in defence of something reactionary. I do not see how socialists could be anything other than against war in this case - i.e. in favour of an Argentinian RETREAT because the 'gain' (occupation of the Falklands) was not one worth defending from the point of view of socialists.

Sometimes socialists have no alternative but to support violent resistance to oppression. But this must surely be a position of last resort in defence of a real gain or to avoid a serious defeat.

## 7. Argentina: an oppressed nation?

At times both sides seem to have attached importance to the position of Argentina in the hierarchy of nations. This has raised important theoretical points which, however, have nothing in my opinion to do with the point at issue.

Argentina cannot be considered either an imperialist country or a semi-colonial country. Such divisions are too crude to describe reality, and Argentina occupies an intermediate position somewhat unique, though perhaps with more in common with South Africa than anywhere else. (Note: the old WSL analysed that South Africa was not a semi-colonial but an advanced industrialised nation.)

The category sub-imperialist has been used to describe Argentina and has, I believe, some validity, though it is far from complete.

Members of the tendency have said that as long as it is acknowledged that Argentina could in some circumstances be defended against Britain, then their point is established - i.e. that Argentina is qualitatively different from Britain, that is to say, non-imperialist. I think that is wrong because support of revolutionaries in a war would not necessarily depend on the type of country involved. For instance, if a French socialist government nationalised British capitalist property, would we not side with France even though it might be still imperialist-?

The fact is surely that the revolutionary position cannot be decided independently of the origins and content of the war.

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The oft-used quotes about Vargas in Brazil are against the background of a government which though semi-fascist was taking measures against imperialist property in Brazil. Nothing remotely like that was involved in the F/M dispute.

## 8. The theory of two camps

But it is the contention of the minority that, regardless of the initial content of the dispute, the sending of the task force converted it into a battle between imperialism and anti-imperialism.

For many reasons this is wrong. First, why not support Argentina in that case before there was a South Atlantic war?

Second, the British war aims were limited to regaining the F/M - though of course they went very far in doing so, and will undoubtedly take advantage of the victory to increase financial and political domination of Argentina. But the point is that the war and defeat could have been avoided by Argentina withdrawing from an unambiguously reactionary action.

Yet the tendency oppose them doing so. And seemingly on the grounds that the specifics of the dispute (the rights and wrongs of the occupation, the rights of the Falklanders) all became secondary compared with the role of the struggle between two camps in the world.

This disastrous theory of two camps has led revolutionaries over and over again in recent struggles to suspend struggle against specific injustices and reaction in favour of critically supporting the (relatively) progressive against the reactionary camp in the world. It has led revolutionaries, not always consistently it is admitted, to support the Vietnam Stalinists against Cambodian stalinists, Iran's reactionary regime against Iraq's, General Jaruselski against Solidarnosc, and the Soviet Army's murderous occupation of Agghanistan, etc. etc.

An independent socialist vision of the world is submerged beneath a perceived need to support the lesser of today's evils. This in the long run is the death of socialism. It means socialists will always be outmanoeuvred by those who pose as progressives but act as reactionaries - be they the Soviet Stalinists in Afghanistan or Argentinian generals in the F/M.

In such a dispute socialists should surely put forward a view, utopian as it may sound in the short run, which meets the real needs of the oppressed workers of Argentina, Great Britain and of the inhabitants of the F/M, instead of supporting fake anti-imperialist demands and playing into the hands of reactionaries.

That will, as the tendency says, mean at least in the short run being isolated - not the first time for revolutionary socialists! Better than in the long run being irrelevant.

In passing, one point of their first document which I hope the tendency will self-criticise is that which implies that British Trotskyists should say something different from Trotskyists in Argentina. The programme we have to present should surely be an international one.

## 9. The Falklands/Malvinas dispute and the WSL

This dispute should not divide the WSL just when it is in desperate need of pulling together. It should be recalled that the fusion took place notwithstanding differences at least as wide as that on the F/M (in particular on Afghanistan) which all believed then should not be obstacles to unification.

10. Defeatism in Britain: It should be obvious that none of the above detracts from the cardinal importance of the defeatist position in Britain. That means not defeat by the Arg. military, since we oppose the war and believe that Arg. should have refused to fight it. Defeat of the British means defeat by mobilisation of massive opposition in Britain. We should not in my view underestimate the bad political and ideological consequences which the British action and victory have had in the British working class. We should redouble our fight against chauvinism and militarism. This position is characterised by some as pacifism, not revolutionary defeatism. That, I suggest, is due to the degeneration of revolutionary socialist traditions. Socialists are surely very reluctant non-pacifists. One of the main slogans of the Russian revolution, after all, was 'peace'. We should not fail to use it because it has been so besmirched by Stalinism.

RESOLUTION ON THE LEBANON WAR (NC, July 10-11)

The line of the paper should be such as to stress that:

1. Solidarity with the Palestinians and the Lebanese Left is an urgent task for the British working class movement. The outcome of the present confrontation in Lebanon will shape Middle East politics for many years to come. A crushing setback to the PLO and the Lebanese Left will substantially strengthen imperialism and Zionism throughout the region.
2. US imperialism is not simply a supportive bystander in relation to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. It is a co-aggressor, acting through Israel whose own interests in this case, as is the general rule, are completely in line with US imperialism.
3. The Palestinians and their struggle have been the axis of politics in the region. The roots of the present slaughter must be explained as deriving on the one hand from the establishment of Israel as a racist state, the dispossession of the Palestinians, the constant expansionist drive of Zionism, its need to liquidate the Palestinians as a political force, and its role as an agent of imperialism; and on the other hand from the threat to imperialism and Zionism posed by the strength of the Lebanese Left. The immediate background is the alliance established between the Palestinians and the Lebanese Left. The target for the Zionist attacks is not only the Palestinians - though they are the central focus - but necessarily, from the point of view of imperialism, Zionism and the Lebanese Right, the Lebanese National Movement whose advance has created the possibility for continued Palestinian militant presence in Lebanon.
4. While communalism plays a very significant role in the political life of Lebanon, the origins of the civil war lie in a radicalisation of a section of the Lebanese masses; this radicalisation was and is far deeper among the Muslim masses, but not confined to them.
5. Despite the very serious blows dealt to the Palestinian and Lebanese Leftist movements, neither is yet completely defeated nor is defeat certain. Consequently we should avoid any tendency to pronounce the death of either of these movements unless such a defeat has become an indisputable historical fact. Apart from other considerations, any premature "defeatism" will lessen the urgency with which we can carry out a political solidarity campaign.
6. Insofar as the Palestinians are the target of the Zionist invasion this is in no way as a result of their "militarist" strategy. PLO guerilla operations across the border from Lebanon had for some time virtually ceased. Instead, it is the success of the PLO's turn towards the Left and oppressed masses and its active alliance with them - dealing blows to the Phalangist Right and establishing effectively their own dual power in many areas - which have thwarted Zionist and imperialist hopes of consolidating a stable, reactionary government and state machine in Lebanon.
7. The Arab regimes have no wish to see the victory of the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement. At present the victory of this alliance would be incomparably more threatening to them than a strengthening of imperialism in the area. To the extent that they are "forcing concessions" this does not represent their desire to increase their own power relative to imperialism, but represents rather the pressure of the masses on these regimes.

8. The EEC states, while continuing to supply arms to the Zion-ists, have roundly condemned Israel's invasion. There has even been dissent within the US ruling class - possibly reflected in the replacement of Haig by Schultz who has big business interests in "Saudi" Arabia.

But whatever differences there may be between different imper-ialists (in particular between the imperialism of the EEC and US imperialism) and between different sections of US imperialism, none of the imperialists wish to see a solution which is not based on the defeat of the Palestinians and the Lebanese Left. and a "restabilisation" of Lebanon on the basis of the rule of extreme Rightist reaction.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
JULY 10-11, 1982

Present: Armstrong, Booth, Carolan, Collins, Cunliffe, Fraser, Gardiner, Grassac, Gunther, Hill, Hunt, Jagger, James, Johnson, Jones, Keith, Kendall, Kinnell, Levy, Maddox, Matthews, Morrow, Noonan, Smith, Stevenson, Traven, Whettling.

Apologies: Chorley, Harding, Hotchkiss, McVicar, Oliver, Parkinson, <sup>Parsons</sup> Piggot, Wheeler; (Sunday) Lewis, St John.

Absent: Gable, Harrison, Lewis, Macdouglass, O'Toole, Pearson, St John, Wolf.

1. Political report

Kinnell introduced. It was agreed to continue the discussion after further specific introductions on rail and NHS.

2. Lebanon. (A comrade from the Workers' League of Palestine was present for this and some other parts of the agenda.)

Keith introduced a resolution, and the comrade from the Workers' League gave a supplementary report.

Discussion:

Kinnell - too much of a 'broad brush' approach in the resolution, simplifying everything to 'imperialism' vs. 'the masses', without analysing specifics of Zionism, conflicts among imperialist states etc.

Johnson - underestimates centrality of Palestinian question. Analysis of Syria dubious.

Booth - the current war not a continuation of Lebanon's civil war. Has to be located in designs of US imperialism. Timing of invasion linked to world events like Falklands war. Resolution should say more about character of Zionism and the world context of the war.

Carolan - a very bad resolution, no concrete analysis. Israel is a stooge of imperialism - but not only that. The Falklands war was only the opportunity for the Lebanon war, not its cause. Arab bourgeoisies have substantially renewed their links with imperialism - it's not like the '60s, when imperialism had to rely much more narrowly on Israel.

Morrow - agreed with Booth. But the Zionists do have some autonomy. Through pre-emptive actions like this war, they can shape the way that imperialist interests are defended in the Middle East according to their own autonomous designs.

Cunliffe - resolution oversimplified, e.g. on the Palestinians and the Lebanese left. Goes 'over the top' on the link between imperialism and Zionism, blurring over the differences within the imperialist camp.

James - starting point of the resolution should be the position of the Palestinians, not the war.

Procedural proposals:

Kinnell - (a) A brief solidarity motion to be drafted for next day of NC;

(b) EC to redraft existing motion for presentation to TILC.

Jones/Keith - A shorter 'guidelines' resolution to be drafted for next day of NC.

Jones/Keith proposal carried with 3 votes against (Carolan, Hill, Kinnell).

Kinnell - A drafting commission should be appointed for this guidelines resolution  
Levy - Keith should do the draft

Levy proposal carried by a large majority.

3. Polish solidarity work.

Jones reported. Proposed that we take and distribute PSC News centrally. Agreed.

4. Statement from Workers' League comrade

FIT is keen to develop relations. There has been a lack of written material, but now we have agreement on a joint IB. We feel the WSL maybe underestimates the question of imperialism in backward countries - e.g. over Malvinas, Lebanon.

## 5. Labour Party witch-hunt

Hill reported. Discussion.

## 6. Rail dispute. NHS dispute

Steve G. reported, on rail. Kinnell reported on NHS dispute.

Discussion.

Agreed that we should raise the call 'prepare a general strike', and the direct call for a general strike if BR sack ASLEF.

## 7. Khan resignation.

Carolann proposed a resolution to formally expel Khan.

Discussion.

Resolution defeated - 7 votes for (Carolann, Cunliffe, Fraser, Gardiner, Hill, Kendall, Kinnell), 14 against, 4 abstentions (Gunther, Hunt, Morrow, Whettling)

Collins/Smith proposed an amendment to the expulsion resolution, to delete reference to expulsion and insert 'condemn resignation' (see text in branch circular no.22).

Amended resolution carried, with just 1 vote against (Booth).

## 8. Minutes and matters arising.

a) Women's March for Jobs. Collins asked if we had definite policy to support this. Kinnell reported that the EC on 9.5.82 had taken a decision to that effect. Some discussion.

b) Vote at May 16 NC on Nottingham resolution (to support Argentine claim to the Falklands/Malvinas) - full list of those voting for should include Grassac and Smith, making 6 altogether.

c) OC 9.6.82, item Hunt's letter: 'defend the IMG against our criticism' should read 'defend the IMG against criticism'.

d) OC 9.6.82, OC 27.6.82, EC 1.7.82: item Hunt's letter. Hunt said he would take the matter further.

e) Executive Committee. Hill proposed Collins for the vacancy created by Khan's resignation. Agreed after some discussion.

## 9. Special conference

Resolution from Liverpool WSL: "This branch notes the divisions on the NC over the Falklands and calls for a national aggregate to allow a full discussion by the whole movement; and a fortnightly internal bulletin to allow space for continuing debate over this crucial subject".

Smith said he would move the resolution, understanding 'national aggregate' to mean a special conference under the terms of the WSL constitution, and the reference to a fortnightly IB to be superseded.

Discussion

Armstrong - It's a dangerous enterprise, but perhaps will minimise the damage. There should be 3 resolutions at the special conference - majority/minority/an anti-split resolution.

Hill - Authority of existing NC position should not be downgraded. A special conference can't be had on the cheap.

Smith - Fears are false. It is a completely legitimate and healthy discussion. It is very wrong for majority comrades to say that the minority is creating dangers by pushing the discussion. The leadership of the tendency will fight for unity.

Carolán - There are dangers because the polarisation is roughly on the lines of the pre-fusion organisations, and instead of following the fusion method of focusing on concrete tasks we are developing a general culture-clash, despite the comrades' best intentions. The tendency has every right to a special conference, but it would be better to shift to an educational discussion - given the war is over - and consideration at the regular conference.

Stevens..on - we should rejig the summer school agenda to allow more discussion on the Falklands.

Kinnell - Calling a special conference on a past issue is unprecedented in the Marxist movement, and must be dangerous. But the comrades have the right.

Jones - Carolán's method is reminiscent of Healy - using the split danger to blind comrades to the issues in the debate.

Hunt - The war is not just a historical issue. British troops are still on the Malvinas.

Whettling - A lot of people see this debate as a symbolic confrontation, and link it up to all sorts of other issues. Better to set up a commission to do theoretical work on the question of imperialism.

Johnson - We must keep in mind the TILC aspect.

Kendall - The debate is actually about the nature of imperialism.

Carolán - The tendency as a bloc has changed its position substantially, without accounting. That's bad - it's different from individuals changing their views in discussion.

Smith - Carolán has a funny way of lowering the temperature. He is using an alleged split danger as a blackmail against the minority. The Falklands is a live issue, not a past one. After the conference, the tendency will accept whatever is the majority view, and dissolve.

Liverpool resolution carried, no votes against, 8 abstentions.

#### 10. Lebanon

Keith introduced a re-draft resolution.

Several amendments were presented and accepted. Two amendments from Kinnell were not accepted, therefore voted on:

First amendment, on the relative autonomy of Zionism - defeated, 8 votes for, 11 against.

Second amendment, on the stance of the Arab regimes - defeated, 5 votes for, 12 against.

Resolution as a whole, with the accepted amendments - carried, 2 votes against (Carolán, Kinnell), and 1 abstention.

(Text of resolution is circulated separately).

Comrade Cunliffe says that the Falklands are, and have been for 150 years, a British colony offshore from Argentina (IB 10). If this is correct, the question we must then ask is, who are the colonised people and what are their demands. The only answer that can be given to this is that they are the Falkland Islanders, and their demand is for self-determination, expressed in their desire to remain tied to Britain rather than be annexed by Argentina.

Does this demand infringe the rights of any other community? No. But Cunliffe objects, "The reason why the islanders 'oppress nobody' on the islands is because of the rigorously chauvinist policy of excluding non-British people". This is really tautological. The reality is that because of the size of the population the islanders' right to self-determination could be over-ridden simply by Argentina settling enough people there to outvote the present community. Moreover, whilst we are opposed to immigration laws, their existence elsewhere has not prevented us from defending nations' rights to self-determination, except in the case of Israel where they are used against the Palestinians who were thrown out of their own country.

Cunliffe could no doubt retort that this is what happened in the Falklands. "The colony was seized from the young Argentine nation in 1829. The Argentine garrison was evicted by British military force..." Are we to take this seriously? That the stationing of a few dozen Argentine troops, whose permanent homes would have been in Argentina, for four whole years, gives Argentina a claim on the Falklands against a civilian community who have lived and worked there for 150 years with, until now, no real challenge from Argentina of their right to do so?

But comrade Cunliffe assures us that it is not the islanders' territory at all, but a British outpost, secured by military force. The islanders are mere caretakers for Coalite. Suppose we extend this logic to Argentina itself. Cunliffe himself refers to the native Indian population of Argentina, dispossessed and oppressed by the European settlers who now make up the majority of the Argentine nation. He also tells us that the property in Argentina belongs in large part to imperialism. Following Cunliffe's argument, therefore, are the Argentines really just caretakers for the imperialists? Should we be calling for an anti-imperialist struggle against them by the native Indians? Who knows, some archeologist may discover evidence that the Indians once landed on the Falklands and they really belong to them!

#### Lenin and self-determination

On page 3 Cunliffe says, "For Lenin the demand of the right to self determination was an anti-imperialist demand. To be applicable it required first and foremost to be addressed to a genuine nation - a national minority oppressed by imperialism".

This is clearly wrong. Lenin recognised that there were all kinds of fears and prejudices inherited from the past which separated workers in one nation from those in another. It is this which lies behind the Bolsheviks' policy on the national question within the USSR. As Trotsky states, "... the Bolshevik Party wrote into the constitution the right of nations to complete separation, indicating thereby that the party did not at all consider the national question as solved once and for all" (Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads, Writings 1939-40).

Now, unless Cunliffe wants to say that the USSR was imperialist, his interpretation of Lenin is clearly false. Nor does this apply just to the Soviet Union. "In order to draw together more closely and honestly it is sometimes necessary first to separate. Lenin often used to cite the fact that the relations between the Norwegian and Swedish workers improved and became closer after the disruption of the compulsory unification of Sweden and Norway" (ibid).

Cunliffe goes on to tell us that the islanders are not a nation, and that they do not wish to sever their ties with Britain (i.e. they wish to exercise the right of self-determination by adhering to the state of their choice). Then we are told they are among the strongest advocates of British colonial rule. But isn't the reason for this obvious? They fear that their right to self-determination will be terminated by Argentina, a state to which they have no desire to belong (and who can blame them?). With the Argentine workers lining up behind the bosses to deprive them of that right, who else are they going to look to, other than the British state?

It is precisely for this reason that Argentine socialists should have opposed the invasion and called for self-determination for the islanders. This would have opened the way for the Argentine and Falkland workers to unite against the junta, and the imperialists who exploit them both. It would, especially in the light of the Nationality Act, have given the Falklanders a force, other than the British state, to which it could turn for its defence of its rights.

### Sub-imperialism

Sub-imperialism has been used to dodge the question of whether Argentina is imperialist or not, Cunliffe says (p.3). This search for black and white categorisation belongs in the realm of formal logic rather than Marxist dialectics. It belongs with those who want a world with nice clear labels on everything where revolutionaries can just go along to a Trotskyist Tableau and read off the appropriate slogan rather than get their hands dirty analysing the concrete situation themselves.

But even granting Cunliffe the definition of Argentina he wants, it does nothing to advance his argument. "If Argentina is an oppressed rather than an oppressor nation, then we are obliged to defend it against imperialist attack". But the majority has said just that, if Britain attacked Argentina, we would defend Argentina, but it didn't, nor was it likely to. Nott went out of his way to oppose bombing even Argentine airstrips, let alone an invasion.

Cunliffe's logic is exposed on page 4. After quoting Lenin that we are for the "oppressed, dependent and unequal states" when they enter a struggle with the imperialists, he says that because Argentina is not an oppressor, is dependent on imperialism, and unequal to Britain, we should support Argentina. Let us analyse this. Had Britain not kicked Argentina out of the Falklands, it would then have been an oppressor at least in the Falklands and probably in Chile, Uruguay etc. Does this mean that it would then be wrong to defend Argentina? Cunliffe could fall back on the fact that Argentina is dependent and unequal. But on that basis one could say that because Britain is dependent on the economic policies of imperialism, in particular of America and Europe, and because Britain and America are unequal, one could justify defending Britain. That would be ludicrous, but it illustrates the effect of replacing analysis of specific situations with ready-made formulas.

### Stages theory

What is of most concern is the way the stages theory creeps into Cunliffe's analysis: "... socialism in Argentina demands first and foremost mass action that will break the grip of imperialism" (emphasis added). Not permanent revolution, therefore, whereby the socialist revolution and anti-imperialist struggle go hand in hand, but anti-imperialism "first and foremost" then socialism.

This leads Cunliffe to some strange conclusions. Modern imperialism, as Cunliffe says, operates through economic domination (though it is prepared

to use military force if this is threatened). This is one reason why anti-imperialism can only be accomplished through socialist revolution. Yet Cunliffe states that, "Even El Salvador - long formally independent - and the other Central American states would no longer qualify (as places where Permanent Revolution applies) since presumably the struggle should be seen not as anti-imperialist but simply one for socialist revolution".

It becomes an either/or. Either it is anti-imperialist, or it is socialist revolution. The essence of permanent revolution, the waging of the anti-imperialist and class struggle side by side, disappears, and we are left with the stages theory. "Should we denounce the FMLN guerillas as 'chauvinists' for seeing their struggle as one against imperialism?", Cunliffe asks. In so far as they focus on this rather than linking it to the necessity of socialist revolution, of course we should. At the same time we stand alongside them with our own programme against imperialism and against their own bourgeoisie.

Where does the minority's position lead?

Cunliffe argues that the minority's position offered the means of deepening and radicalising the workers' struggle. It didn't. It led the workers into a fruitless adventure, for which the worker conscripts on the Falklands showed they had no enthusiasm, at a time when the workers were mobilising against the junta and imperialism in a positive way at home. Had the adventure succeeded, it would have rallied support behind the junta on the basis of nationalist fervour, and provided the basis for the junta to use similar adventures into Chile etc. to head off opposition in the future.

THE FALKLANDS WAR: A letter to Comrade Cunliffe

Kinnell

Dear John,

Your opening speech in the Oxford debate on the Falklands war came to grips with the majority's arguments, I thought, more than any other contribution I've heard or read from the minority. In the interests (I hope) of more real dialogue in the debate, I've tried to set out why I still found the speech unconvincing.

Common ground

First a point of agreement. I was glad that you started your contribution with an outline of the common ground in the debate, and especially that you referred to the "common struggle against the British war effort".

Being clear about this common ground, it seems to me, is essential for a comradely debate which produces real clarification.

The differences

You summarised the differences in three points:

1. The majority is sectarian towards the Argentine workers "in their actual struggles".
2. The majority has had an "almost obsessive" concentration on the rights of the Falkland Islanders at the expense of the overall class-struggle issues.
3. The majority view obscures or overlooks the fact that Argentina is an oppressed nation, wrongly describing it as "sub-imperialist".

I'll try to deal with these arguments one by one. First I will sum up the majority argument as I see it.

The majority argument

The war was about rival claims to the Falklands. The Falklanders are, and for 150 years have been, a distinct community, with a distinct and separate territory, displacing no-one, oppressing no other community. Neither Britain nor Argentina has any valid claim over this community.

The rival governments fought for possession of the islands to boost their respective positions at home and to promote themselves as powers in the world (Britain) or in the region (Argentina).

The war was therefore reactionary on both sides. As we put it in the reply to the IWL which we wrote jointly:

"Galtieri's invasion did not liberate anyone from colonialism or imperialism. It did not lessen the burden of imperialist exploitation, or improve the conditions for the fight against it, for a single Argentine worker...."

"It has...embroiled the Argentine people in a war in which they can hope to win nothing of significance... a disastrous war in a false and reactionary cause".

The fact that the Argentine state is so much weaker than the British state - too weak to realise the imperialist-type aims for which it launched the war - cannot modify our judgement of those aims and therefore of the war. Our concern is not the balance of forces between imperialist and non-imperialist bourgeoisies, but the independent mobilisation of the working class.

We do not fight the bourgeoisie's wars. We fight our wars. We fight jointly with bourgeois forces when they fight for an issue - like national liberation - which we fight for anyway.

If the war had been about Argentina's national rights, therefore, we would have supported Argentina. But it wasn't.

### Sectarian towards the Argentine workers?

Your argument was similar to that in IB7: "The whole Argentinian working class (with tiny exceptions...) regard themselves as in an anti-imperialist struggle ... It is time to take proper account of the struggle that the Argentinian working class see themselves as fighting".

You suggested that we should propose a policy for Argentina similar to the proletarian military policy proposed by the Trotskyists in Britain and the USA in World War 2: universal military training and officers' schools under workers' control, election of officers, workers' control and expropriation of war industries etc.

But the 'proletarian military policy' was proposed as a tactical way of putting across a defeatist line! The Trotskyists opposed the war! In principle there is no reason why the majority position of opposing Galtieri's war should not be expressed tactically in something like the 'proletarian military policy'.

Some slogans from the 'proletarian military policy' could certainly be adapted: "Only a workers' government can fight imperialism" (cf: "Only a workers' government can fight Hitlerism"). Concretely I see problems in adapting the full 'proletarian military policy'. But that is a tactical issue that could be discussed on the basis of common agreement on a principled line of defeatism.

It is no part of the majority view that the anti-war position in Argentina should be put across by lectures on the evils of chauvinism. In reply to the IWL we suggested:

"To propose a real fight against imperialism - which should start with the confiscation of imperialist property in Argentina. To fight for democratic rights and for the replacement of the standing army by a workers' militia - which could not serve as an instrument for the junta's adventures, but which could all the better defend the real interests of Argentina's working people against imperialism".

What is sectarian about that?

### A workers' struggle

The argument about sectarianism really falls down, however, on the fact that the war was not a workers' struggle. It was launched and carried through by the Argentine bourgeois state in its own narrow class interests. The fact that many Argentine workers supported the war did not make it a workers' war. It is not the first time that a bourgeoisie has succeeded in rallying its working class behind its reactionary wars.

The attempt to present Galtieri's war as a workers' struggle leads to really strange conclusions in IB7. On page 4 it refers to:

"the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism..."

On page 6:

"The war has followed the logic... of the international balance of class forces and the needs of the international class enemy - the imperialists".

On page 8 it refers to:

"a very tight balance of forces, tilted by the string of anti-imperialist victories against the imperialists".

On page 9 the war is described as:

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

So the argument is that our position should have been determined by considerations of the "international balance of forces" between two "class camps" - imperialism and "the anti-imperialist masses". It is just like Pablo's arguments in the early 1950s, when he persuaded the Trotskyist movement to look at everything in terms of the "international balance of forces" between imperialism and the Stalinist states. In 1953, for example, Pablo argued that the call for withdrawal of Russian troops from East Germany could not be raised except in combination with the call for the withdrawal of US, British, and French troops from West Germany, or otherwise an advantage would be given to the imperialists. The current arguments against the call for withdrawal of Argentine troops from the Falklands follow just the same method.

But Pablo's arguments were at least more rational in that there was a real difference of class nature between the two "camps" he described, imperialism and the Stalinist states. Here the Argentine capitalist state, apparently, must be considered to be in our "class camp" as soon as it enters into armed conflict with an imperialist state! Pablo's idea that Stalin would be forced, despite himself, to stand at the head of "the Revolution", reflected quite enough confusion. The idea that Galtieri was forced, despite himself, to stand at the head of "the anti-imperialist masses" in a crucial test case with imperialism, is even more remote from sober Marxist analysis.

Yes, IB7 wants to develop the "anti-imperialist struggle" beyond Galtieri. But Pablo wanted to develop "the Revolution" beyond Stalin.

And it is no good saying, "in defining the war, we are concerned not with Galtieri but with the masses". So long as the Argentine bourgeoisie retains power, Argentina's wars, like the Argentine state's activities in general, are bourgeois, whether the masses support them or not. Militant nationalist demonstrations in Buenos Aires cannot change the class nature of the Argentine state. The objectives of the Argentine bourgeoisie determine the character of the war.

Theoretically it is conceivable that the Argentine bourgeoisie should conduct a bourgeois-progressive, bourgeois-democratic (i.e. national liberation) war. But in fact it did not. General talk about "anti-imperialist masses" - as if the confrontation with Britain fused all classes in Argentina into a single progressive block, or reduced capitalist rule in Argentina to some minor or secondary feature of a mass movement - amounts simply to giving the Argentine bourgeoisie credit on the grounds of possible progressive elements in the illusions of the masses it had rallied behind itself. As well describe World War 2 as a war of "the anti-fascist masses"!

Whatever happened to Marxist class analysis? As far as I can see, it is ditched in IB7 with the argument that:

"we have to base our position on an assessment of the international meaning of the conflict. 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" (Page 7. Underlining represents emphasis added, capitals original emphasis).

Thus the class struggle in Argentina is to be subordinated to estimates of the "international balance of forces" (between whom?) This is not (even if it is confusedly meant to be) an argument about the national class struggle being subordinate to the international class struggle. Concretely here the much-vaunted "balance of forces" is a balance of forces between the different bourgeoisies.

#### "The main enemy"

For the Argentine working class, the war between Argentine state power and British state power over the Falklands was a war between its immediate enemy - the enemy that it must first settle accounts with in order to win its liberation, or to give effective assistance to the liberation of other working classes - and a more general and remote enemy. The Argentine working class could have no interest in preferring or helping the victory of its immediate enemy. On the contrary, recent weeks have shown that defeat in the Falklands war has seriously shaken the political grip of the Argentine military dictatorship - and that aspect of the war's outcome is all to the advantage of the Argentine workers.

A war about national rights would have been different. Then, defeat for Argentina would have meant, not a blow to the bourgeois repressive apparatus, but its maintenance or probably strengthening, in a changed (i.e. more or less British-controlled) form - plus the fact of foreign oppression.

It was entirely possible to put forward an independent workers' defence and anti-imperialist policy for Argentina in the context of a defeatist line on the Falklands war. We did just that in the reply to the IWL.

It would be entirely possible to put forward an independent workers' defence policy for Argentina in the context of supporting a bourgeois-led war for national rights, if such a war occurred. We would say: these are our demands, we fight for them whatever the bourgeoisie does. We fight alongside the bourgeoisie now, we will fight against them for the same demands at a later stage if necessary.

How it is possible to have an independent workers' policy to help the victory of the Argentine state forces in a war conducted 400 miles away from Argentina, for possession of islands inhabited by a non-Argentine population, I do not know.

In the tendency document (p.8-9) there is an attempt at such a policy.

But it consists of:

- a) proposals like arming the workers, seizing the factories, etc, which would be more rational in the context of a defeatist policy,
- b) a statement that on the basis of politics we should be against the war - "Argentine workers have no interest in the armed occupation of the Falklands against the wishes of the population" - but the war must come first, politics after. "It would be worse for the masses (?) of Latin America as a whole if we (??) were to concede a victory to armed imperialist aggression". (Who is we? The Argentine nation, all classes combined?)
- c) crucially, an untruth. "Argentina is under attack and must be defended against imperialism". Argentina was not under attack. That is now a matter of fact. The Argentine state was defeated, and the Argentine working people were in no way worse off as a result. In fact, the main prop of imperialist control in Argentina - i.e. the military machine - has been weakened.

For socialists in Argentina to argue that Argentina was under attack was harmful, because it inevitably gave political credit to the junta - painting up the junta's war for something in which "the Argentine workers have no interest" as a just, defensive war.

It urged the Argentine workers to identify not with precisely-delineated, independently-formulated demands, but with vague notions of the prestige or confidence of "Latin America as a whole". It called on them to support a war "whatever the implications for the proletariat" for the sake of the general 'anti-imperialist camp'. Such an approach cannot be reconciled with an independent workers' policy.

Actually, even if Argentina's war had been a national liberation war (which it wasn't), the Argentine capitalist state would have remained capitalist. Unless and until the Argentine workers succeeded in taking advantage of the war to establish their own rule, the war would remain a war on a bourgeois terrain. We would have supported it, because we support bourgeois democratic rights. But we would have maintained clear definitions. And we would therefore have rejected any idea of subordinating the socialist class struggle of the Argentine workers to the bourgeois-democratic struggle for national liberation.

#### Foreman or capitalist

At the TILC meeting this month, Smith argued that it was not true for the Argentine workers that the main enemy is at home. For Argentine workers to think that the Argentine capitalists are their main enemy is, he said, like a worker in the factory thinking that the foreman is her/his main enemy.

This really sums up the whole debate, and - there is no other way to put it - the tendency's abandonment of the most elementary class politics.

A foreman is a privileged worker and an agent of the capitalists. But he is a worker. An Argentine capitalist is a capitalist. And our main consideration - it is painful to have to spell this out - is the struggle of the workers against the capitalists.

The precise analogy with the idea that the Argentine workers' main enemy is not at home is a worker in a small company who thinks that her/his main enemy in the industrial struggle is not the employer but the big bankers to whom that capitalist is in hock - and who therefore supports her/his employer in a property dispute with the bankers, under the illusion that by so doing s/he is promoting the struggle against big business.

### The rights of the Falklanders

In Oxford you argued that "what they (the islanders) wanted was British troops there" (but you made it clear that you were not accusing us of wanting that). Factually it is far from certain that the islanders did want troops there. In the paper we quoted a Daily Telegraph reporter on the Falklands - no anti-militarist - indicating that the majority of the islanders did not want British troops. Other evidence points the same way.

In any case this is nothing to do with self-determination. We explained in the paper, replying to Richard Moore (no.84): "To support the fleet on the basis of the Falklanders' rights would be like supporting saturation policing in London on the basis that it might protect some people from violent crime."

"We regard the rights of the Falklanders as a matter for the international working class, and we base our attitude to the British Navy on an overall class assessment".

Apart from that your argument was, I think, similar to IB7:

"We believe that in this situation, self-determination has to be subordinated to the struggle against the imperialist invasion".

But if the right to self-determination for the islanders is valid - if Argentina's claim is false, as we have repeatedly insisted - then this argument is just another variant of subordinating our programme and our necessary class tasks to the international "balance of forces" between different bourgeoisies.

What do the Argentine Marxists say to the workers? Your rulers "have trampled on the rights of the Falkland inhabitants" (TILC Resolution point 5). Thus when they send you - and your brothers, fathers, friends - to war, it is in a false and reactionary cause. However, they are in danger of getting a drubbing at the hands of Britain. That would have a bad effect on the world balance of forces. Therefore best be quiet about the rights of the islanders and support the war.

If they say that, what has happened to their independent politics?

And what has happened to the principle, "Workers of the World Unite"? The Falklands workers are excluded from any possible participation in this unity until they submit to - indeed, welcome - Argentine conquest. So are any other workers seriously concerned for the islanders' rights. They are brushed away into the camp of "imperialism" while we rally with Galtieri to the camp of the "anti-imperialist masses". "Workers of the World Unite" is buried under a new principle - "Non-imperialist forces of all classes unite".

But there are only 1800 Falklanders? The small number is completely irrelevant to the importance of the issue for the political education of the Argentine workers - for opening the eyes of the Argentine workers to the cynical, predatory nature of their capitalist rulers. After all, we often enough wage big campaigns about the democratic rights of single individuals!

The small number would be relevant only if the rights of some larger group inescapably contradicted the Falklanders' rights. But not so. Our argument is not that the rights of the Falklanders prevented us from supporting an anti-imperialist struggle - but that there was no anti-imperialist struggle.

### Sub-imperialism?

You argued that the description by some of us of Argentina as "sub-imperialist" is "one of the more substantial differences"; that it is "designed as a let-out" from the fact that Argentina has no economic

independence and "no substantive independent existence", and is an oppressed nation.

Now the precise description of Argentina's place in the world is not essential to our position. In the TILC conference resolution and in what I have written above the position is argued without any reference to such a description.

From an independent working class point of view, support for the bourgeoisie of backward countries in any war against imperialist states cannot be automatic. Such wars, like political struggles in general, we evaluate in relation to our own programme. We side with the bourgeoisies of backward countries - i.e. we march separately but we strike together - when they fight for national liberation. We side with them in those circumstances despite what they are, because of what they fight for. To side with Galtieri despite what he fought for, because of what he was (representative of a non-imperialist country) is to turn the argument upside down.

To take a Marxist position, the question we need to answer is not how backward or dependent Argentina is, but what the war was about.

Basic to our position is not so much that Argentina is sub-imperialist, as that the invasion was sub-imperialist... or mini-imperialist, or mini-colonialist (as we described it, you and I, in our reply to the IWL), or an example of how "even medium-development capitalist countries can hold expansionist 'imperialist' aims" (as Ali put it at the TILC meeting in April).

Nonetheless the question of the character of Argentina has been raised and should be answered. It is clearly relevant to a more precise assessment of the war. Also, the discussion on the character of Argentina sheds light on the way in which the tendency, in IB7, ends up subordinating Marxist categories to the two "camps" of imperialism and "the anti-imperialist masses".

One preliminary word. In the tendency's material there are frequent suggestions that we have "invented" the characterisation of Argentina as sub-imperialist for the purposes of this debate. But a good many of us put this characterisation down in writing 5½ years ago, not casually but in a fundamental document - the I-CL Manifesto. Read it. The jargon term sub-imperialist is not there, but the concept unmistakeably is. That does not prove it is correct. It does prove it has not been invented for the occasion.

#### Nature of the state

In its region Argentina is a big power. (These things are, of course, relative, and not static: it would have been a bigger power if the invasion had succeeded, and it is a weaker power now that the invasion has failed). It is a relatively strong and developed state. It is one of the major lieutenants of imperialism in the region. It has intervened as such in El Salvador, Honduras, Bolivia.

Is it economically dependent? Certainly it is! To be more precise (for all capitalist countries are economically dependent), it is economically a victim of imperialism. It is a middle-rank capitalist state in an imperialist world economy - i.e. a world economy dominated by the big monopolies and finance capital - and as such squeezed by and subordinated to big imperialist capital.

To say that it has "no substantive independent existence", as you did, is nevertheless to exaggerate. Even in the era (before the 1940s) when British and other foreign capital owned most of Argentina's infrastructure, the Argentine ranchers and small industrialists were a substantial force. Since the 1940s Argentina has been a relatively closed economy: some 95% or

more of its fixed capital, according to the best available figures, is Argentine-owned. (It is true, of course, that the foreign-owned 5%, being concentrated in large companies in advanced sectors of industry, has much more weight than the bare figures would indicate). It has pursued aggressive economic-nationalist policies. It has its own policies and plans: take for example its breaching of Carter's grain embargo on the USSR.

This point seems important: because, as far as I can make out, the idea of the Argentine bourgeoisie having "no independent existence" is the nub of some comrades' analysis. They deduce that the Argentine bourgeoisie either acts as the simple tool of New York and London, or swings to the side of the "anti-imperialist masses". And in a conflict with New York and London it must therefore represent (albeit "objectively") the "anti-imperialist masses". In no way is it possible for it to have its own plans, which are reactionary, predatory, bourgeois plans, but nonetheless not in line with what London and New York want.

That is the argument: but it is the total negation of Marxist class analysis, replacing it with an image of the Argentine bourgeoisie as a classless force wavering to and fro between the camps of imperialism and "anti-imperialism".

#### Nature of the war

Argentina's war was not a war against imperialism. It was a war by a regional baron in the imperialist hierarchy, trying to boost its position, and being slapped down by the kings and grand dukes. Capitalist classes are reactionary, predatory, and expansionist - and in the same "class camp"! - in all countries.

What differentiates the bourgeoisies of economically subordinate countries is their relative weakness in pursuing predatory aims. Because of that weakness they may sometimes find themselves fighting bourgeois-democratic, national-liberation wars against the big powers (but even then they remain in the opposite "class camp" to us!) At other times they fight predatory wars against weaker or similar powers. At all times they fight a predatory class war against their own working classes.

Over the Falklands, Galtieri reckoned that Britain was sufficiently decayed and moreover keen to get rid of the islands, and the US was sufficiently complaisant, that he could succeed in a predatory conflict with a stronger power. He miscalculated. But that does not make his war anti-imperialist.

The only real anti-imperialist war in Argentina was and is the class war of the workers against the Argentine bourgeoisie and its state.

#### Economic dependence and political dependence

In the arguments of the minority there is also, I think, a blurring of the distinction between economic dependence (or victim status) and political dependence. The two are often connected; but they are quite distinct.

When a nation is politically oppressed - denied the right to secede, denied the right to use its own language, subjected to a puppet government imposed by another nation, etc. - then it is indeed the nation that is oppressed. We of course stress that this general oppression affects different classes differently, and the unreliability of the bourgeoisie in resisting it. But the oppression, and the fight against it, remain general bourgeois-democratic questions. National self-determination in the political sphere is not utopian, but a bourgeois-democratic demand.

Economic subordination is different. As you pointed out in Oxford,

we do not demand economic independence for nations. It is a reactionary utopia.

Lenin's polemics against 'imperialist economism' were centrally concerned with the distinction between economic subordination and political subordination. Bolsheviks like Piatakov argued that in the era of imperialism, economic subordination was inevitable short of the socialist revolution, therefore there was no point in fighting for national (political) self-determination. Lenin replied: yes, economic subordination is inevitable, but we can fight for political self-determination of nations while recognising its limitations.

Argentina is an example of a country which has political self-determination but remains economically a victim of imperialism. Argentine nationalism cannot combat, and historically has not combatted, that economic victim status. The only programme that can be is the Socialist United States of South and Central America.

Argentina's economic subordination means that its capitalists are squeezed and subordinated to big imperialist capital, and that its workers are exploited by big imperialist capital. This is not a common 'national' oppression shared by workers and capitalists. The Argentine workers have no interest in the relative fortunes of their own exploiters as against other exploiters. They can fight the economic essence of imperialism only as a class issue.

Imperialism, after all, is not just big powers preying on small powers. It is a stage of capitalism. Some of its political effects (denial of political self-determination to nations) are sometimes (unreliably, treacherously, partially) fought against by various bourgeoisies. Even in that case we continue, and prioritise, the class struggle against those bourgeoisies. And imperialism as a system - i.e. modern world capitalism - can only be fought on a working-class socialist basis.

In your speech, when you drew the conclusion that Argentina is an oppressed nation from the fact that it is economically subordinate, you seemed to me to confuse the distinction between political oppression and economic subordination. And this confusion is grievous. For the idea that imperialism operates economically as one nation exploiting another nation, in direct analogy with political oppression, leads to replacing Marxist class analysis by a vision of "imperialism" exploiting the "anti-imperialist masses" (all classes together). And we have seen what role that vision plays in the tendency's arguments.

In fact, it seems to me, Argentina is not an oppressed nation. The modern Argentine nation - formed by the mass immigration of 1880-1930 - has always had political independence. It is a white settler state, populated overwhelmingly by people from the historically privileged countries of Western Europe. Its living standards until the 1940s were among the highest in the world, and are still higher than 'Third World' countries. Its social relations are bourgeois - there is no peasantry suffering under pre-capitalist relations. Argentine nationalism has historically been a drive to assert Argentine pre-eminence over other nations and to assert 'Hispanic America' as against the Yankees, the English, the Portuguese-Americans, the Afro-Americans, and the Indo-Americans.

If I racked my brains I might be able to imagine a situation in which Argentine nationalism would play a progressive role. But for the last 40 years, certainly, it has played a reactionary role. In the 1940s Argentine nationalism - i.e. Peronism - crushed and overwhelmed the independent workers' parties of Argentina, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. (In this it was helped by the thoroughly rotten popular-frontist leaders of those parties, who formed a bloc with the Conservatives against Peron). Since then it has tied the Argentine workers to bourgeois demagogues. In any case relative to the Falklands Argentina was acting as an oppressor nation. Its economic victim status was irrelevant to a Marxist

judgment on the war, because there was no way that the invasion, and the war to maintain the invasion, could be a step forward in the fight against imperialism as an economic system.

As we put it in the reply to the IWL: "Galtieri's invasion... did not lessen the burden of imperialist exploitation, or improve the conditions for the fight against it, for a single Argentine worker".

Two camps: capitalists and workers, or "imperialism" and "anti-imperialism"?

You - alone of the minority, so far - have distanced yourself from IB7's argument that the Argentine bourgeois state was in our "class camp" (or we were in theirs?) But you maintained that this argument was inessential, it was just sloppy writing. I don't think so. Perhaps I can explain.

The tendency view depends heavily on the idea that the world is strictly and absolutely divided into, on the one hand, imperialist countries, and, on the other, colonies or semi-colonies. On the Falklands war, it is argued either that the debate about national rights is entirely secondary, because the war was one between these two camps - a test case - and we more or less automatically support the colonial/semi-colonial camp; and/or that Argentina's seizure of the Falklands was a valid exercise of national rights because it was a seizure by the colonial/semi-colonial camp from the imperialist camp.

The division between the two camps is thus comparable to the capitalist/worker division. Indeed (and what IB7 does is make this explicit) it transcends it. Argentina's war is to be assessed by the Argentine workers primarily from the 'national' viewpoint that it is a war by a 'semi-colony' against imperialism, and only secondarily from a class viewpoint as a war waged by their bourgeoisie.

I would agree that a basic orienting fact of world politics is the broad division between the rich capitalist states - headquarters of the big industrial/commercial monopolies and banks, militarily strong, historically oppressor nations - and on the other hand poor capitalist countries, whose industry is owned by or operates in the shadow of those big monopolies and banks; in which big areas of pre-capitalist backwardness survive; and which are militarily and politically weak. The latter are mostly historically oppressed nations, though most have now won political independence and to call them colonies or even (in most cases) semi-colonies is not possible unless the words' meanings are twisted out of all shape.

But I see absolutely no basis in fact or in Marxist theory for considering this as a matter of two camps. Rather it is a matter of two poles of a hierarchy. This hierarchy is fluid and changing (like the hierarchy of monopoly capital and small capital in a single country); the relations of oppression within it are all relative; and there are middle-ranking states. (I and others have cited facts to show that Argentina is one of the latter, and remain unconvinced by charges that we are 'revisionist' unless we assign the country to one camp or another). Moreover, the hierarchy is not one-dimensional: oppressed nations may be more economic partners of imperialism than victims (e.g. Quebec, Catalonia), and economically subordinate nations may be oppressor nations (e.g. Turkey, Persia).

✓ The hierarchy is not simply something done by the richer countries to the poorer countries; it is the expression of an integrated system, the world system of capitalism in the stage when it is dominated by monopoly capital and finance capital. And - while, since the fight for democracy and the arousing of the oppressed peoples is indispensable to the fight for socialism, we must be the boldest fighters for the political rights of the oppressed nations - it is no part of a socialist alternative to that system

to champion weaker capital against monopoly capital. We are against the 'anti-monopoly alliance' policy in national politics; and we do not have different principles for national and for international politics.

The bourgeoisie of Argentina (and even of much poorer countries) differs from the bourgeoisie of the big capitalist powers essentially only as weaker from stronger. The working class must assess the wars of the Argentine (and other) bourgeoisies, like their political actions in general, on the same criteria (what are the issues, what are the objectives) as we would apply to the wars and actions of the more powerful capitalist classes, and with the same independence of judgment.

### Out on a limb?

The other point you mentioned in your Oxford speech was that our position on the Falklands had put us "out on a limb" in the world Trotskyist movement.

This point is of course not decisive, and I don't think you were claiming that it was. Such is the disarray of the present-day Trotskyist movement that any tendency which is merely stable and consistent in its politics will often enough find itself "out on a limb".

In any case, those that share our fundamental line - Lutte Ouvriere, the British SWP, the RWP (Samarakkody) of Sri Lanka, and (though he is not a Trotskyist) 'Lula' of the Workers' Party in Brazil - seem to me to be no worse company than the USFI and Moreno.

Whatever judgments we make on the general quality of the politics of the USFI and the Morenists, it is certain that their positions on this were taken not for Trotskyist reasons, but in response to alien class pressures.

On reading the letter of the IWL (Morenists), you commented to me: "They just don't have a proletarian policy". As I understand it their position has got worse since then. There is no mystery as to why. The TILC document on the Parity Commission points out: "there are definite signs that the opportunist adaptation to the Peronist movement in that period (the 1950s) has grown in the intervening years into an adaptation to the Peronist union bureaucracy, and even the Peronist political leadership".

The USFI's position was set by the US SWP. The LCR and the German section originally took the same position as us, and were shifted only by polemical fire from the SWP. And where does the SWP's position come from? Havana. Where does their world view come from? The Kremlin via Havana. In parallel to Pablo in the early 1950s, they blur over class issues in a vision of a world divided into two great blocs, imperialism and anti-imperialism, and they rationalise this with the picture of a coming Armageddon. For Pablo the Armageddon would be World War 3. For the SWP it is the confrontation they foresee between rampant imperialism and revolution in Central America.

You exposed the SWP's abandonment of class politics very well in your article on the Non-Aligned Conference. But then you opt for a position based on fundamentally the same logic. Are you not in danger of playing the same role in relation to the authors of IB7 - the people who base themselves on the Argentine state <sup>being</sup> in our "class camp" - as Ernest Mandel now plays in relation to the US SWP: objecting mildly but fundamentally presenting the same politics in a rationalised form, trying to square it with Trotskyist orthodoxy. (All proportions guarded, of course!)

### The WSL minority view and the world Trotskyist movement

Where does the WSL minority fit into the spectrum of the world Trotskyist

movement? Very oddly.

The minority view as expressed at the May 9 EC was that:

- a) the original TILC position was correct,
- b) in early May there had however been a shift in the situation implying that we should now back Argentina,
- c) repudiation of Argentina's claims to the Falklands should nonetheless continue to be part of the agitation of Marxists in Argentina.

So this view would line up its supporters with the "defeatists-on-both-sides" between early April and early May; with the supporters of Argentina between early May and mid June (though with very different motivation for the same conclusion: all the other tendencies supporting Argentina based their case squarely on the justice of Argentina's claim to the islands); and after mid June it would again separate its supporters from the "pro-Argentina" mainstream. While the IMG is arguing that Argentina cannot be democratic until it has seized the Falklands, you (according to your May 9 position) would be arguing for Argentina to repudiate its claim.

I think this is a very odd position. And I am strengthened in this conclusion by the fact that most of the leaders of the minority have started to change it.

Jones and Levy and Smith have now all said that they thought that the TILC resolution was wrong to uphold self-determination for the islanders. The initial tendency document argues that Argentina did have a right to seize the islands. "National rights are involved - the right of a non-imperialist nation to recover what it thinks (!) is its property (!) from imperialism". (Since when did Marxists ever think that alleged bourgeois property rights should override human rights? And how many bits of "what it thinks is its property" does a nation have to seize before those seizures become imperialist rather than anti-imperialist??) IB7 now argues (p.10) that the invasion was "objectively" anti-imperialist. "There was an element of objective anti-imperialism in Galtieri's move - whatever his motivation". It concedes that the war was for "the defence of the invasion against imperialism" - i.e. not the defence of Argentina - but still calls it anti-imperialist.

There is no way, no way at all, that these positions can be presented as a "development" of the positions in the TILC resolution.

"Any military action or war over the Falklands... could have only reactionary consequences in the form of loss of life and a chauvinistic fervour in both the Argentine and British working classes".

"The junta has acted not against imperialism, but in a populist ploy designed to divert and unite the Argentine masses behind the Generals' own repressive rule... In doing so the Argentine dictators have trampled upon the rights of the Falkland inhabitants, who in themselves oppress and threaten no-one and should have the right to decide their own future. Such action does nothing to build anti-imperialist consciousness in the Argentine working class, but rather seeks to generate chauvinism and 'national unity'. We do not support this action, and call for the withdrawal of Argentine troops..."

Equally I can see no way that these latest conclusions of the tendency can be differentiated from the LOR resolution rejected by the TILC conference.

There are two fundamental positions on the left over the Falklands war, both based on an assessment of the political issues. One says that Argentina's claim to the Falklands is just, and that the war was therefore a genuine though limited war of national liberation. The other says that the Argentine bourgeoisie is the Argentine workers' main enemy, that the

war was launched to strengthen the position of that bourgeoisie, that Argentine workers had no interest in the objectives for which their bourgeoisie was fighting (i.e. the subjugation of the islanders), and that therefore they should have continued the class struggle for the defeat of the bourgeoisie.

Both positions have clear conclusions. To slip from one set of conclusions to the other according to the movements on the battlefield and the pressure of the rest of the left is not a Marxist method. To slip and then retrospectively to revise your assessment of the political issues to square with your new conclusions negates the entire ideological role of the revolutionary party. Such instability, lack of rigorous thinking-through, and lack of honest political accounting will discredit - and, more important, disqualify - us in the international arena more than any amount of "being out on a limb" ever could.

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#### THE INITIAL E.C. RESOLUTION ON THE FALKLANDS

1. We uphold the right of the people of the Falkland Islands to decide their own future.
2. We therefore call for the withdrawal of Argentine troops, looking to the Argentine labour movement as the force capable of realising this demand.
3. We are opposed to British imperialism generally and in this specific case. It is concerned not with the rights of the Falklanders but with its failing imperialist prestige. We oppose and campaign against any military action or war over the Falklands on these grounds and on grounds of (a) the probable human cost of any war, (b) the effects of a war on the British and Argentine labour movements.

This should be the leading point of our agitation.

4. We condemn the jingoism of the Labour leaders, and call for labour movement action against war through public agitation and through blacking of military supplies.
5. While still upholding the full rights of the Falklanders, and looking towards action by the British and Argentine labour movements to secure them, we do not oppose negotiations between the British and Argentine governments to reach a settlement acceptable to the Falklanders without loss of life.

Draft by Kinnell, amended by Cunliffe, passed unanimously by EC on 9.4.82 with the following comrades present: Carolan, Cunliffe, Khan, Kinnell, Noonan, Parkinson.

was launched to strengthen the position of that movement, the Argentine workers had no interest in the objectives for which their movement was fighting (i.e. the abolition of the Falklands), and that therefore they should have continued the class struggle for the defeat of the bourgeoisie.

Both positions have clear conclusions. To slip from one set of conclusions to the other according to the movements of the bourgeoisie and the pressure of the rest of the left is not a Marxist method. To slip and then retroactively to revise your assessment of the political issues to agree with your new conclusions negates the entire ideological role of the revolutionary party. Such instability, lack of rigorous thinking-through, and lack of honest political accounting will discredit - and, more important, disparage - us in the international arena more than any amount of "being out on a limb" ever could.

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### THE FALKLANDS RESOLUTION ON THE FALKLANDS

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This should be the leading point of our agitation.

4. We condemn the hijacking of the labour leaders, and call for labour movement action against war through public agitation and through blocking of military supplies.

5. While still upholding the full rights of the Falklanders, and looking towards action by the British and Argentine labour movements to secure them, we do not oppose negotiations between the British and Argentine governments to reach a settlement acceptable to the Falklanders without loss of life.

Draft by G. Marshall, amended by G. Marshall, passed unanimously by the on 2.2.68 with the following amendments: G. Marshall, G. Marshall, K. M. Marshall, H. Marshall, J. Marshall.