

INTERNAL BULLETIN NO. 14: AUGUST 1982

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* These reprints have been submitted to the I.B. to give comrades easy access to background factual material relevant to the Falklands/Malvinas debate.

The following items were scheduled for this I.B. but we were not able to get them ready in time. They will be circulated shortly:

E.C. document on police accountability
WSL EC statement on the Falklands/Malvinas debate at the summer school, and letter to TILC groups on same.

SPEECH ON THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS WAR

Parkinson
(from the debate at the summer school)

To quote from Cunliffe and Kinnell's document, the debate today is about how best to fight imperialism, and how best to fight the Argentine military regime, not whether to fight them.

We all agree that British imperialism is reactionary. We all agree that the British ruling class seized on the war with Argentina and the reconquest of the Falklands/Malvinas as their greatest propaganda coup since the Tories came to power. Night after night on the TV, endless recounting of the war served to blot out from the public eye the vicious attacks being made on the working class. Clearly we have no truck with the rabid nationalist, racist and sexist propaganda that has been dragged out from the sewers to promote the image of a revitalised British imperialism.

But the reactionary nature of British imperialism does not therefore automatically mean that the non-imperialist country in conflict with it is progressive. We do not take our stance from the position of the bourgeoisie. In a war the approach of Marxists is to view the conflict in the interests of the working class. We must be concerned always with developing an independent working class strategy.

It is only possible to argue a progressive side to supporting Argentina if you ignore the facts and see the war in abstract as simply between a non-imperialist country and an imperialist country, arguing that a defeat for the imperialist country is a good thing, therefore we support the alleged anti-imperialists.

But that isn't our method. We measure our support for an allegedly anti-imperialist stance on whether or not it advances the class struggle.

We can be sure that if the Argentine junta had won the war, it would not have defeated imperialism in Argentina - because they are the agents of imperialism.

The re-orientation of the working class onto the reconquest of the Falklands/Malvinas defocused the class struggle, as Galtieri intended, creating a false objective for the working class which could only serve the bourgeoisie.

That is precisely the same point as we argued about the seizure of the American hostages in Iran. The seizure of the American hostages in Iran was presented as a big blow for the prestige of US imperialism. But in reality the biggest blow to US imperialism was the toppling of its agent, the Shah of Iran. Imperialism would actually have been defeated if instead of being side-tracked into the so-called anti-imperialist struggle around the American hostages, the working class had gone on to develop their factory committees, to seize control of the factories, etc. The tragic results of the side-tracking can be witnessed today.

The only way for revolutionaries in Argentina to develop an independent working class position was to take a defeatist stance and to argue that the only way to fight imperialism was to wrest control of the means of production out of the hands of the imperialists and their agents.

In Argentina imperialism controls through the national bourgeoisie. It does not control through the Malvinas/Falkland islands.

From the point of view of the Argentine working class, their main enemy is their own national bourgeoisie - the best way for the Argentine working class to fight imperialism is to fight their own bourgeoisie.

The war between Britain and Argentina was for the Argentine working class a war between their immediate oppressors, the Argentine national bourgeoisie, and their general enemy, British imperialism. In such a situation socialists must be against the war and for the defeat of their own ruling class.

Our assessment of the war would have been different if it had had progressive aims. But the aim of the war was the reconquest of the Malvinas by Argentina, so that they would once again belong to them. In other words it was a war about

property rights.

Let us for a moment imagine that the war had never taken place. Would we have argued that the working class should campaign for the return of the islands to Argentina? What could there possibly have been progressive in such a campaign, if in fact the islands are not the means by which the Argentinian people are oppressed by imperialism?

No, we wouldn't. We would have argued against it. We would have said that to place the issue of property rights above the rights of people - in this case above the wishes of the islanders - is to conform to bourgeois ideology. Socialist ideology is about breaking down barriers between countries, not re-dividing them by seizing back land. We would have argued that the issue was a diversion.

So, if the islanders are not the agents of imperialism, and the dispute is over property rights, then what possibly could the Argentine working class have to gain by siding with their own immediate oppressors?

Abstract speculation about the possible outcomes of the war and their benefits for the working class should be avoided. A defeatist position, coupled with the demands for the continuation of the class struggle, for the defeat of imperialism, and the revolutionary overthrow of the junta, best prepared the working class for the outcome of the war, whatever it was.

A defeatist position meant that when the war was lost, revolutionaries were best placed to point out the futility of the war in the first place, and its reactionary nature. If the war had been won by Argentina, we would then say that it had not changed anything - the bourgeoisie is still our enemy.

Arguing support for the war meant, in the event of losing the war, that the working class was still focused on the seizure of the islands, thus the working class was disorientated and demoralised by the defeat. In the event of winning the war - the working class would have achieved nothing in terms of their fight against the junta, but the junta would have been given credit by its victory in a war which revolutionaries had supported.

The only possible position for revolutionaries in carving out an independent working class strategy was to argue against the war and to put forward demands for the continuation of the revolutionary struggle.

ARGENTINA: THE ECONOMY

WHAT country in the last few years experienced erratic and generally falling production, balance of payments problems despite near self-sufficiency in oil, out-of-control government deficits and money supply and unacceptably high inflation.

What country has experienced a government whose doctrinaire monetarist creed has led it to try to cut the money supply and government services, keep interest rates high, sell off the public sector, create mass unemployment and lower real wages, policies which have squeezed industrial and commercial companies into bankruptcy but created a bonanza for the banks?

Ironically the two countries which arguably best fit that description are on the point of trying to sink each other's navies in the South Atlantic.

But for all the uncanny similarities between Thatcher's Britain and Argentina under the military dictators Videla, Viola and now Galtieri, the economies they are trying to control are far from identical.

Mature

Argentina is not a mature industrial country like Britain. Yet on the other hand it is a long way from the more backward underdeveloped countries of Latin America, let alone Africa and Asia.

In the nineteenth century it became an enormously prosperous supplier of agricultural staples (wheat and then beef) to the rich markets of Europe and North America. At the end of the century its economic development stood on a par with Australia and New Zealand and was greater than much of Europe.

Since then Argentina's economy has been left far behind by its former equals. Despite surges of industrialisation in the 20th century the economy has been ravaged by paralyzing bouts of economic, financial and political crisis which mean that today the country can only be regarded as a semi-industrialised one even though qualitatively more developed than most underdeveloped countries.

Unlike most countries, Argentina has never had a very sizeable subsistence, peasant agriculture. Its farming almost from the start grew up on modern capitalist lines. That is why today only 13% of its labour force work in agriculture (less than Poland or the USSR or Spain, and about level with Japan), and 82% of the population live in cities (nearly as many as in Western Europe and the USA).

28% of workers work in a wide range of industrial jobs. Argentina has sizeable heavy industries like steel, petrochemicals and armaments (especially the army-owned corporation Fabricaciones Militares).

It has the only commercial nuclear power plant in Latin America and, helped by its moderate reserves of uranium (enough discovered to supply present total electrical energy needs for 30 years), it has a major programme of nuclear development – including, by the government's own admission, the development of a nuclear bomb.

Exploration

Argentina has produced oil and petroleum products for many years and the government now has a plan of exploration to develop new supplies and export 300,000 barrels a day by the mid-1980s.

This plan is behind schedule partly because the major US oil companies have not been keen on the government's terms and partly because new discoveries have not been made as rapidly as was hoped (though expert world oil opinion is divided about the prospects around the Falklands/Malvinas over which the UK and Argentina already clashed in 1981 about prospecting rights).

Despite past development and ambitious future plans, the standard of living of Argentinians remains well below that of Britons.

Average income in 1980 was \$2230, compared with Britain's \$6320. That makes the average income of Argentina slightly ahead of Portugal, Mexico and Turkey and slightly below Yugoslavia, Greece and Venezuela.

And the distribution of income is even more unequal than in Britain. In Argentina the poorest 20% of the population get 4.4% of national income (in Britain the figure is 7.4%). And the top 10% get 35% (compared with 23% in Britain).

Argentina has more doctors per head of population than Britain (one for every 530 inhabitants).

But since nearly all medicine is private the services of doctors are extremely unequally spread.

Argentinians are in general better educated than Britons. Nearly one in three school leavers get some kind of college education compared with less than one in five in Britain. Much education, like medicine, is private, so workers and the poor certainly don't get their share.

And, since the military seized power in April 1976 (after the 3-year interlude of Peronist rule), their share of

everything has been declining.

Over the last six years of bloody dictatorship it is not the structure and long term development of the economy which has mostly concerned the makers of economic policy but its short term crisis.

Catastrophic

When Videla took power he installed Jose Martinez de Hoz as his economics minister, which he remained for five catastrophic years.

Martinez de Hoz is a kind of Geoffrey Howe of the South Atlantic (he even went to the same school – Eton!). A doctrinaire monetarist, he has tried to deal with Argentina's severe economic problems with a series of policies which look like prototypes of those of Thatcher and Howe.

Argentina's inflation rate when Martinez de Hoz was installed by his military friends was a staggering 600%, the result of the intense class struggle and collapse of financial discipline of the Peron era.

Monetarist

Martinez de Hoz proposed to deal with the inflation by the now familiar monetarist remedies of an intense squeeze on the money supply, savage cuts in government welfare spending to reduce the budget deficit (which had been nearly 15% of the GNP in the last year of the Peron government) increasing taxes and maintaining an artificially overvalued exchange rate to hold down the price of imports.

The result of the overvalued exchange rate has been a growing balance of trade deficit which was offset by inflows of short-term funds attracted by enormously high interest rates.

And these interest rates in turn have increased government spending on financing the national debt and have produced a catastrophic worsening of the financial position of industry and commerce (nationalised and private).

Last year this resulted in several major bankruptcies – of Celulosa Argentina, the largest pulp and paper firm; of Saestru, the biggest agro-industrial complex with interests in grain, flour milling, wine, fisheries and banking; of Credibono, a large finance company along with other finance companies. Bankruptcies are now running at \$150 million a month.

The danger of more bankruptcies forced Martinez de Hoz and his successors to channel government funds into failing companies, further undermining

plans to cut public spending.

One contradiction of Thatcherism not shared by Videlanomics was that the Argentinian government has not had to pay money to those they have forced into penury and unemployment by their policies.

Burden

The result is that massive inflation, the control of wages and unemployment (which is still officially below the British level) has imposed an almost incredible burden on the Argentinian working class.

Real wages are now around 50% of what they were in 1976. Although official unemployment is only about 5% in Buenos Aires the real figure (including underemployment in ultra-low paid jobs) has been estimated at over 40%.

The hoped-for results of Martinez de Hoz economics was (as with Thatcherism and Reaganomics) that after a short sharp shock the policies would produce a new upsurge of healthy capitalist growth.

In fact it led to no overall growth at all but to extreme fluctuations from year to year.

At length in 1981, after Martinez de Hoz had left office along with his patron Videla, the contradiction of his policies suddenly exploded.

Devalued

During 1981 the Argentinian peso was devalued from 2,000 to the US dollar to 10,000 to the US dollar providing the potentiality for a tremendous new boost to inflation, which in 1981 rose to 138% and now threatens to go up further.

Alongside the devaluation went a tremendous slump. The GNP in 1981 fell by 8.6% and industrial production by a staggering 14%. Car sales fell by 64% and excess capacity in industry was estimated at 42%.

It was this series of economic disasters which helped lead to the collapse of the Viola regime in December 1981.

General Galtieri who then seized power represented a bunch even further to the right both politically and economically. He declared that "the period of words and promises is over; now is the time for firmness and action."

Budget

And he has installed as Economics Minister, Roberto Alemann.

He plans a budget which cuts spending further and raises taxes so that the budget deficit falls to 2% of the GNP (from 3% last year).

But this included a 10% cut in military spending which has already been abandoned.

Within 60 days he intends to present a plan for selling off large amounts of Argentina's large public sector to private capitalism.

This will include the state-owned banks (which hold 47% of deposits) and even army-owned enterprises like Fabricaciones Militares.

He has raised VAT from 10 to 12%, imposed a complete freeze on wages and state pensions and failed to raise income tax allowances in line with inflation.

The effects of these policies once again will be more slump and unemployment, lower real wages and higher interest rates in the short term even if it were to "work" in the long run.

For that reason it provoked, as soon as it was announced, a wave of militant resistance.

The decision to indulge in an international adventure arises very clearly from the effects of this combination of the need to intensify the economic attack on the working class and growing evidence that the working class will step up its resistance to such an attack.

Cynical

The Falklands adventure reflects the cynical decision to whip up chauvinistic sentiment in order to hold down class resistance.

But now a new problem has arisen – the economic effects of reactions to the invasion. The EEC boycott would cut off 28% of Argentina's exports: it is not likely that the USSR would fill the gap since Moscow has been complaining about the fact that Argentina does not import enough Soviet goods (last year it had a deficit of \$1 billion with Argentina).

Besides Galtieri came to power with promises to reduce links with the Soviet Union and strengthen those with the West. He was regarded as Reagan's man in the Junta.

Britain's war threat may have produced mass demonstrations in the streets but it also produced financial panic. There has been a run on the banks, huge capital flight and the regime has had to impose emergency measures. The peso was exchanging last week at 14,500 to the US dollar when its official rate is 11,500.

This means the war will create even more inflation while wages are frozen. Patriotic demonstrations could well turn into something else.

ARGENTINA: HISTORY

ARGENTINA, like Britain though at a different level, is a capitalist economy in decay. The economic crisis facing the Galtieri regime is the culmination of 50 years of relative decline.

The Spanish Empire which dominated Latin America from the 16th century was centred in Mexico and Peru/Bolivia — where relatively dense, highly developed native (Indian) populations were conquered and used as forced labour to produce silver and gold. Buenos Aires was peripheral.

At the time of Latin America's struggle for independence (starting in 1809) it had only begun to develop as a merchant city. The wild hinterland was for the most part sparsely peopled by nomadic Indians, though cattle-raising had started.

Some of the leaders of the independence struggle had dreamed of uniting the continent. But the old empire broke up into many separate states.

Boom 1870-1930.

In Argentina, after many civil wars and feuds, a stable state structure was consolidated by the 1860s. Capitalism established itself in the countryside. In the 1870s the remaining Indian population of the hinterland was driven out, and vast new areas of fertile land were seized.

British merchants had already established themselves in Buenos Aires soon after independence in 1810.

Ruled by the big ranchers, and basing itself on free trade, Argentina boomed. It became a massively prosperous supplier of wheat and beef, mainly to the British market. Immigrants poured in from Europe — mainly from Italy and Spain. The population increased from 1,750,000 in 1869 to 11,600,000 in 1929. (Today it is about 27 million).

Foreign capital also rushed in. Between 1870 and 1910 27,000 miles of railways were built. British capital dominated. In 1909 41% of the fixed capital in Argentina was foreign-owned, and two-thirds of that 41% was British.

In the early years of this century Argentina looked very different from the other countries of Latin America. Alone with Uruguay it was (and is) almost entirely a white-settler state.

It had no impoverished peasantry living in semi-feudal conditions. Wages were high — higher than in Western Europe — to attract the immigrant

labour. It had the infrastructure and living standards of an advanced capitalist state. The ranchers made huge profits.

But the prosperity was narrowly based. In a world economy dominated by the big imperialist powers of Western Europe and the US, the countries of Latin America had been integrated as provinces, relying on one or two major exports, linked more closely to countries like Britain than to each other. (Even in 1970, only 11% of Latin America's international trade was within the region).

Argentina was one of those provinces, even if a rich one. When the world trade patterns under which it had flourished collapsed, after the 1929 crash, it plunged into economic and political crisis.

1930: Free trade prosperity collapses, and the army steps in

The dominant political force in Argentina up to World War 1 was the oligarchy of big capitalist landowners. Opposition developed from the 1890s.

The Socialist Party, founded in 1894, was based almost exclusively on immigrant workers in the cities. Trade unions — often very militant — were built among craft workers, in textiles, and on the railways.

But many workers were drawn in behind middle-class politics. The middle class of professionals, small businessmen, and officials was (and still is) large in Argentina. It was this class — or more especially the Argentine-born section of this class — that was represented by the Radical Party.

The Radicals' main platform was electoral reform. Having eventually gained this they won the presidency in 1916 and governed until 1930.

They continued the free trade policy favoured by the ranchers and British capital. But they also used the armed forces to bolster themselves against the conservatives. In 1922 army generals were put in charge of the nationalised oil firm.

And it was the army that stepped in when in 1929-33 the money value of world exports fell 50% and the export of capital from the advanced countries dried up. As Argentina fell into financial crisis, the military seized power in December 1930.

The new regime was no

more able to resolve the crisis than the Radicals. In June 1943 it was overthrown by a group of junior officers.

Dominance

The manifesto of this group called for an 'inflexible dictatorship' so that Argentina could gain the same dominance in South America as Germany in Europe. 'Only in this way will we be able to carry out the armament programme that is indispensable to our conquest of the continent'.

In September 1945 Colonel Juan Domingo Peron seized the leadership of the new regime, to become the major figure of Argentine politics for the next 30 years.

Peron's regime 1943-55: a corporatist class alliance

Despite many parallels, Peron's regime was not fascist. Instead of directly smashing down the trade unions (though he broke many strikes and jailed many trade unionists), Peron built up a corporatist alliance of workers and industrialists.

State control of trade, initiated since 1930, was increased. The state took a big chunk of export revenue. The British-owned railways, the US-owned telephones, and other sectors were nationalised (with generous compensation).

By 1955 only 5% of Argentina's fixed capital was foreign-owned, as against 20% in 1940 and 48% in 1913. Ever since then the national state has dominated Argentine capitalism.

Welfare spending was increased. Trade unionism was spread (but under state control), and the share of wages in national income pushed up from 29% in 1946 to 46% in 1950.

On the basis of Argentina's big internal market and substantial infrastructure, industry had begun to develop even before World War 1 — accounting for some 18% of output in 1900-5.

Industry

It became more important after 1930, especially during World War 2 when imports were scarce. By 1937 industry was 26% of output, by 1947, 31%.

Peron loudly proclaimed himself a nationalist and 'anti-imperialist'. But national industrial development under his regime was thin. After a spurt based on

'import substitution' in 1945-8, it stagnated.

Before he was overthrown by a military coup in 1955, Peron had turned back to foreign capital, in an effort to boost industry.

In 1934 Leon Trotsky had proposed the slogan of the 'Soviet United States of South and Central America' as the only road to a socialist reconstruction of the continent's lopsided economies.

Peron's economic nationalism was the diametric opposite, an attempt to restore Argentina to its former prosperity by turning in on itself. It produced a chronic fiscal crisis of the state, which has dominated subsequent development.

The Socialist Party and the Communist Party opposed Peron. But they offered no socialist alternative — instead joining with the Radicals and the conservatives in a 'Democratic Union'. They were marginalised, and to this day the unions are dominated by Peronist nationalism and 'business unionism'.

Between 1955 and 1966 factions of the Radical Party ruled. A coup in 1966 brought to power a military regime determined to break the power of the unions and encourage foreign investment. But it was beaten back by tremendous workers' struggles in 1969 — almost an Argentine parallel to France's May 1968.

In 1973 the army conceded elections. A Peronist candidate, standing on the basis of a 'social pact' signed by the unions and employers won the presidency — and then handed over to Peron himself, who at the age of 78 had returned from his exile in Madrid.

Peron died in July 1974 and his widow Isabel took over as President. There was no repetition even of the shallow boom of 1945-49. Real wages slumped, inflation rose to 500%, and fascist gangs sponsored by Isabel Peron's ministers slaughtered working class militants. It was only a matter of time before the military returned, in March 1976, with an even more ferocious onslaught against the trade unions.

Real wages are reckoned to have been halved since 1976.

Since the 1976 coup — a turn to foreign capital, and a deepening crisis

Slowly, Argentina has become an industrialised country. Industry now accounts for about 45% of national output (1977: agri-

culture is 13%, services 42%) and by 1973 23% of exports were manufactures.

Heavy industry has become a bigger proportion of the total, enabling Argentina by 1963-4 to produce 63% of its new industrial equipment and machinery.

The US has been the dominant foreign investor, accounting for 58% of foreign capital in Argentina in 1975. Substantial US capital did enter in the 1960s — 64% of it (by 1968) was in manufacturing. In 1969, it was estimated, foreign capital (about half of it US) owned 60% of the 150 biggest industrial companies, which controlled 32% of industrial production.

But in 1968-75 the growth of US/West European capital in Argentina was very slow — only 1.2% per year, as against 12% in Brazil for example. By 1976 foreign investment had practically dried up.

Investment by Argentine capitalists has also been slow, with a lot of their money going abroad.

The relative decline of Argentina can be gauged by comparison with Australia. In the early years of this century, the two countries were on a level. In 1928-9 Argentina's output per head was about 70% of Australia's. In 1959-60 it was about half. By the late '70s it was about 25 or 30%.

Argentina is now on a level with countries like Portugal, Greece or Turkey — and not very far ahead of Brazil or Mexico, though it suffers less than those countries from uneven development between booming cities and backward hinterland.

The decline has lurched into disaster with the economic policies of the military regime since 1976. Designed to dismantle statist, protectionist policies and encourage foreign investment, they have led only to an industrial slump and an enormous foreign debt (worse than Poland's). The army-controlled state sector has actually increased, swallowing up bankrupt firms.

Against this background, the invasion of the Falklands was a desperate gambit by the military, to play the nationalist card. Behind them stand the Peronists, newly revived from their disarray in 1976, and vowing vengeance on Galtieri if he fails to fight to the last drop of blood for the islands.

Will the nationalist blind alley cripple the Argentine working class again?

The method of the tendency - Kinnell

The Marxist method demands that we derive day-to-day politics from clear, established principles, mediated through concrete analysis. On the Falklands war, the tendency - as I shall undertake to show in detail - have followed the opposite method. First the conclusion - support for Argentina - has been adopted. Then the 'principles' have been formulated, and re-formulated, to suit the conclusion. And what 'principles'!

Since its formation, the tendency has declared that capitalist Argentina is in our 'class camp'. It has declared that imperialism/anti-imperialism (or alleged anti-imperialism) must take priority over working class struggle: "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". It has changed its view on the Argentine claim to the islands, now supporting it. It has completely jettisoned the original foundation-stone of its position - the idea that a decisive change in the war, requiring a change in fundamental position, came in early May with the 12 mile limit and the sinking of the Belgrano. And all this for the sake of patching up the web of argument for the predetermined conclusion of support for Argentina. Conclusions first, arguments afterwards!

Who decides the politics of the tendency? And how? By what political method? More important - what method of deciding politics does the tendency propose for the whole WSL? If the tendency had had their way over the Falklands war, the WSL would have been publicly changing its position and proposing new 'principles' every week or so - in line with the way that the pressures and impressions of daily politics struck a few comrades in the leadership. We would have arrived at what the comrades now consider a correct line on the war some weeks after it ended! Is that the method that the tendency proposes for the WSL to determine its politics in future?

I shall review the basic different arguments used to support the pro-Argentine position, and then show in detail how the tendency has slid from one to another.

THE ARGUMENTS

ARGUMENT 1: THE CLAIM. Argentina's claim to the islands is a legitimate national demand.

EXAMPLE: LOR resolution - "the question of the Malvinas is undoubtedly a constituent part of Argentina's overall nationalist demands". Merseyside WSL resolution to our April NC - "Calls for Falklands/Malvinas self-determination and the withdrawal of Argentine troops should in all future statements be replaced by demands for... British recognition of Argentine sovereignty". Politica Obrera - "Argentina is a nation oppressed by imperialism: the question of the Malvinas is an aspect of that oppression" (PO no.328, April 5).

This argument is, in short, the basic argument of almost all those who supported Argentina (and it was the Argentine regime's own argument, too).

ANSWER: The islands are not part of the Argentine nation. Nations are people, not geography. The islands are the homeland of a distinct community. That community identifies with Britain. But the islands' link to Britain is not, and has not been, any threat to Argentina. The agency for imperialist domination in Argentina is the Argentine state, not the islanders, or any base on the islands! (*1) Thus the seizure of the islands served no national-liberation or anti-imperialist purpose.

ARGUMENT 2: THE THREAT. The claim to the islands might be invalid, but the national rights of Argentina proper were at stake.

EXAMPLE: The position put to the May 9 EC and May 16 NC by the tendency comrades, who then supported "repudiation of Argentina's claim to the islands" (*2), and argued that "defend Argentina" was a correct slogan, i.e. Argentina proper was under attack.

ANSWER: The war was always restricted to possession of the islands. Argentina was defeated in the war without suffering any loss of national rights.

ARGUMENT 3: THE CAMPS. Britain's and Argentina's precise war aims were not decisive. Our position had to be based on the effect of British victory, on the one hand, or Argentine victory, on the other, on the international balance of forces. British victory would strengthen imperialism, Argentine victory would weaken it.

EXAMPLE: "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... It is the balance of forces [i.e. presumably not its intrinsic content and purpose] which gives the struggle its real importance" (IB 7, p.7, 9).

OTHER VERSIONS: There are less elaborate versions of this argument, as follows:

3A. The most important thing was the defeat of imperialism. That means supporting Argentina. To worry about whether Argentina's war was reactionary or progressive is pettifoggish pedantry.

3B. We must always support an oppressed country at war against an imperialist country.

ANSWER: All the 'balance of forces' argument can mean is that Argentine workers should have supported their rulers' war - and been quiet about any independent socialist judgment of the seizure of the islands - because Argentine victory might have helped to encourage anti-imperialist struggles elsewhere. I.e. the Argentine workers giving up their own revolutionary role and independent politics in favour of the role of sacrificial pawn for possible petty bourgeois nationalist struggles.

In truth the Argentine workers must fight imperialism, not by acting as would-be benefactors to 'shifts in the world balance of forces', but by fighting the class struggle against their own rulers - and denouncing their rulers' reactionary wars. They need independent class politics, not politics in which the working class is a makeweight for the 'anti-imperialist' camp.

In any case, the factual basis for the speculations about the 'balance of forces' is doubtful. The weakening of the Argentine state caused by its defeat must also be taken into account.

Support for oppressed nations against imperialism, is indeed obligatory when the struggle is for national liberation, however partial, however badly led. But Argentina is not an oppressed nation and its war was not about national liberation.

The idea that any economically subordinate capitalist state must always be supported in war against an imperialist state is nothing but an international version of the Stalinist policy of the 'anti-monopoly alliance' - supporting small capitalists against the monopolies.

ARGUMENT 4. THE MASSES. We had to be with the Argentine masses.

EXAMPLE: "In Argentina, [the paper] calls for the working class to fight against the war, in order words against the aspirations of the anti-imperialist masses... Such a position would isolate revolutionaries for many years to come" (letter by Smith in paper no.87).

ANSWER: Whether the isolation would be so great is doubtful. In any case we cannot decide our position by that. We have to stand against the stream when the masses are chauvinist - even if this chauvinism contains elements of sincere but confused anti-imperialism. Consider Iran.

FROM APRIL 2 TO MAY 9

Arguments 2 (the threat) and 4 (the masses) are so thin that they have not been used much. So the debate has focused round arguments 1 (the claim) and 3 (the camps). The 'claim' argument is the more basic, and, as we shall see, the 'camps' argument is often 'converted' into the 'claim' argument.

Both the 'claim' argument and the 'camps' argument (though more 'moderately' formulated than it was to be later) were brought forward right from the start. They were both raised at the April TILC meeting, in Morrow's April document, in the letter from the IWL, and of course by the IMG, WRP, Workers' Power etc.

The 'camps' argument was raised in the EC back in April; the 'claim' argument by the Merseyside resolution to the April NC.

The present tendency leaders were in all these debates (*3). They did not speak out much for opposition to Argentina's war, but they voted for it - i.e. for REJECTION of the 'claim' and 'camps' arguments.

On May 9 the tendency leaders came to the EC with a proposal to change our position. Did they say that they had changed their minds on the basic arguments that we had debated internally and with other tendencies over the previous weeks? Nothing so straightforward.

Smith declared: "I think the escalation renders our previous policy inappropriate. We should regard the conflict as an all-out war with Argentina - we should stand for the military victory of Argentina. The outcome will seriously affect the balance between imperialism and non-imperialist forces on a world scale. The other issues we have discussed are rendered near-irrelevant. I think Argentine sovereignty is false - we have been right on that. But self-determination for the islanders is now irrelevant".

The tendency leaders' position was based on the "famous sentence" in the TILC resolution: "While recognising that the present conflict is restricted to the Falklands issue, in the event of a full-scale war between Britain and Argentina we would be unequivocally for the defence of Argentina".

They were still for repudiating Argentina's claim to the islands (*2). They were still for self-determination, though arguing that the conflict had "gone beyond" that issue. Their resolution stated: "We retain our assessment of the basis of the invasion by Galtieri". (That assessment, remember, was the following: "In taking its action 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..." etc. Nothing about objective anti-imperialism there).

They retained all that, they claimed to be in line with the TILC resolution which was based on clear rejection of the 'claim' and 'camps' arguments... but argued that the conflict had "gone beyond" that.

How? There were two alternative arguments.

a) That the 12-mile limit, etc, represented a decisive shift of the war towards a British attack on Argentina proper. This was quickly

shown to be false.

b) That the war had now become a war of imperialist authority. But our very first article on the war (written by me) had started: "The Tories are going to war to try to save Britain's failing prestige as a world-exploiting power. That is their concern, not the fate of the Falkland Islanders..." What was new? Why was the 'camps' argument now valid when previously we had rejected it?

The fact that it was a war of imperialist authority led us to oppose Britain's war: it was not and could not be a basis for positively supporting Argentina. Here, as often in the discussion, the tendency leaders batted onto the hatred that all WSL members obviously feel for imperialism to slip in a pro-Argentine position.

THE MAY 16 N.C.

At the May 16 NC I insisted that a resolution from the Nottingham branch (pro-Argentine, based firmly on support for Argentina's claim to the islands) be discussed and voted on, so as to separate two camps: those who ACCEPTED the basic 'claim' argument, and those who claim to REJECT it, to stand by our original basic position, but to have discovered some decisive shift in the situation.

There was considerable protest. But we got the separate vote. Six comrades voted for the Nottingham resolution (for the Argentine claim) - Grassac and Wheeler (who had abstained on the Merseyside motion at the April NC); Morrow, James and Booth (who had all been absent at the April NC, but, as far as I know, would have supported the Merseyside motion if they had been there); and Smith. Smith had thus changed his position on this since the previous Sunday. It was the first of many shifts in position, not accounted for.

Ten other comrades voted for supporting Argentina but against the claim to the islands - presumably accepting the argument of a decisive shift in the situation.

THE MAY 20 TENDENCY DOCUMENT

Then came the tendency document. Its position on self-determination and the Argentine claim is naturally not clear, since it is jointly signed by a comrade who had supported the Argentine claim throughout (Morrow), one new convert (Smith), and three others who presumably (then) still opposed the Argentine claim (Cunliffe, Jones, Levy). The document is thus a curious patchwork, and it is difficult to see the central argument. It is worth summarising:

a) Most Trotskyists, most Argentine workers, and most people in Latin America, support Argentina. Defeat for Galtieri would thus be demoralising. [But if support for Argentina was wrong, then surely Argentine Marxists should have been arguing that, so as to MINIMISE workers' identification with the war and demoralisation in the case of defeat?]

b) We must support an oppressed nation against an oppressor (which does not mean supporting the junta). Quotations from Trotsky are cited. [But the quotations are about supporting struggles for national liberation. And Argentina's war - so we had all (except Morrow etc.) argued since early April! - was not for national liberation].

c) "National rights are involved - the right of a non-imperialist nation to recover what it thinks is its property..." [This is a curious version of argument 2 (the 'threat'). But national liberation is about liberating people, not seizing property].

d) The workers' mobilisation in Argentina in support of the war was anti-imperialist. [This is just asserted, not argued].

e) Argentina is economically dependent. Figures are produced. [On these, more later].

f) Argentina was under threat because there was a threat of "the destruction of most of the Argentine navy and air force and much of its army". [Another curious version of the 'threat' argument. But the greater the destruction of the Argentine military caste - given there was actually no accompanying threat of foreign subjugation of Argentina - the better for the Argentine people].

g) Galtieri's motives for the invasion were reactionary, but he was forced despite himself to 'inflame the strong and progressive anti-imperialist sentiments in Argentina'. [Again, it is just asserted, not argued, that the desire for Argentina to possess the islands was anti-imperialist. Also: granted that the WORKERS' chauvinism did contain a core of progressive anti-imperialism - like the genuine anti-fascism mixed into British workers' patriotism during World War 2? - how would that make THE JUNTA'S war progressive?]

h) On self-determination, it is said that the May 9 proposal to change the line does not "alter the rights or wrongs of the Argentine claim" [i.e. presumably, the claim remains wrong: why did cd Morrow sign this statement?], but "the world political situation", "the international class issues", "the international struggle against imperialism", override this. A victory for Britain would strengthen imperialism, a defeat weaken it. "Argentine workers have no interest in the armed occupation of the Falklands against the wishes of the population", but "it would be worse" "if we [?] were to concede a victory to armed imperialist aggression". [I.e. Argentina's war is evil, and not in a progressive national cause - but a lesser evil. Why should workers choose the allegedly lesser evil instead of opposing BOTH evils (and both predatory ruling classes)? Isn't it a departure from class politics for the Argentine workers to support the predatory acts of their own ruling class as a lesser evil than the predatory acts of another ruling class? This is the 'camps' argument].

i) Victory for Argentina would weaken the junta, since the junta rests on imperialism. [Entirely abstract. What is calculable - the prestige and credit the junta would get through victory - is denied or ignored; speculations about the mass psychological impact of an Argentine victory are treated as known and central factors. This is an example of a very bad pseudo-Trotskyist method: reading our assessment of current events backwards from a scenario of what we would like to see happen].

As noted, the document is ambiguous on the 'claim' argument. The 'threat' argument is thrown in, but with little force, and in forms that make it really just a 'converted' form of the 'camps' argument. (That Argentina seizing "what it thinks is its property", or Argentina's military machine being preserved, are progressive, must depend on Argentina representing the "anti-imperialist" camp). The hard core is the 'camps' argument. But this is argued at any length only right at the end of the document. The document starts with the conclusion and minor arguments, and sets out its basic case only afterwards.

THE SECOND TENDENCY DOCUMENT: JUNE 11

The patchwork had to be systematised. So came the second tendency document, IB7.

Here the argument retreats totally - perhaps prudently! - from any attempt to root itself in the concrete facts of the conflict. We have the 'camps' argument in the most abstract, i.e. worst, form.

We have to determine our position according to "the class camp into which Argentina fits in a war against imperialism", and that "camp" is defined by Argentina being allegedly "a dominated neo-colony" (p.4). Our attitude to the

Falklands war should be based on analogy with our attitude to a war between the USSR (a workers' state, although degenerated) and imperialism. "Class camps" are apparently defined no longer as capitalists vs. workers, but as dominant capitalists vs. subordinate capitalists, with the workers duty-bound to support the subordinate capitalists even when the struggle serves no real issue of the workers' liberation struggle. "Whatever the implications for the Argentinian or British proletariat we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialism first" (p.7).

Such 'principles' no doubt made it difficult for any concrete fact of any sort to have decisive weight against support for Argentina - but in return they brought into the WSL ideas very far from Trotskyism, with no precedent in the previous history of the WSL.

To accept the 'camps' argument and reject the 'claim' argument was always difficult: how could we say that the Argentine workers must support the war (for the sake of the international balance of forces) yet oppose the objectives for which the war was being fought? Would not the primacy of this 'international balance of forces' compel us to support the claim, too? (Indeed, doesn't the 'camps' argument, once conceded, erode ANY independent socialist judgment on ANY issue which might cut across 'camp' loyalty?)

In tendency document no.1 the contradiction remained open; in IB 7, the 'camps' argument swallows up the 'claim' argument.

"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. [Every bank robbery is 'objectively anti-capitalist']? 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)

The 'objective anti-imperialism' here belongs equally to the war (defined as in "defence of the invasion"), the invasion, and the claim. And "our position has as its cost the right of the islanders to self-determination" (p.12)

CUNLIFFE'S DOCUMENT: IB 10, JULY

The burying of the tendency leaders' May position was more or less completed by Cunliffe's document in IB 10.

Cunliffe has played a special role in this discussion. He has shown more awareness of the arguments raised by the majority, and much more will to try to answer them intelligently, than any other tendency leader. Alone of the tendency leaders he has distanced himself from IB 7's talk of capitalist Argentina being in our "class camp". Yet in the end he has always lined up with the other tendency leaders.

Nowhere is the factional logic of the tendency more evident than here. Cunliffe knows better than the nonsense he feels obliged to line up behind. He is genuinely concerned to maintain an intelligent dialogue, to argue rather than to declaim. Yet he does not repudiate and attack the nonsense: he tries to redefine it without breaking with its authors.

In IB 10 Cunliffe defines Argentina's claim to the islands (which, remember, even up to May 16, apparently even up to the first tendency document, the tendency leaders except Morrow had regarded as false) as "a real and a live (issue), an outstanding grievance against British imperialism.

"We, too, should see it that way. The elimination of the vestiges of colonial rule is part of our programme..." (p.2)

By a bizarre twist of logic, Argentina's seizure of the islands - which Cunliffe, in an article written jointly with me, had previously described as "mini-colonial" - becomes a blow AGAINST colonialism!

The argument is apparently that the sins of their forefathers, or of the nation with which they identify, so discredit the islanders that it is anti-colonialist to make their islands an Argentine colony. If only old Hegel were still alive...

The invasion is still condemned here, as in IB 7. But the argument is inconsistent. If the claim is justified, if the invasion was objectively anti-imperialist, if "our objection to the Argentine invasion should not have been one of principle, but a TACTICAL objection..." (i.e. that it was used as a diversion etc.), then we would be duty-bound to CRITICISE the invasion but to DEFEND it. The Danish comrades of TAF are right: if the junta's move was "objectively anti-imperialist", then it was "historically progressive" however sordid Galtieri's motives.

POLITICAL ACCOUNTING

Even before Cunliffe wrote his document, other tendency leaders, in debates round the country, had said they now supported the Argentine claim or rejected self-determination. They had dropped all mention of the supposed qualitative change in the conflict at the beginning of May. They had given up the attempt to present their views as in line with the April TILC resolution (and indeed it is now impossible to see any difference between their views and the LOR resolution REJECTED by the April TILC conference, except that the LOR resolution included none of the new notions about Argentina being in our "class camp", etc, developed by the tendency leaders).

So the shifts in position had now added up to a 180-degree turn. And motivated by what logic? It could only be the logic of factionalism. Panicked or pressurised into a pro-Argentine position at the beginning of May, they had then adopted one 'reason' after another to justify their conclusion. The argument did not develop from the logic of real events: the tendency leaders' most "developed" position came only after the war was over — as did the call for a special conference.

And there was no accounting. On self-determination, Smith has attempted to minimise his shift by saying that in the April TILC resolution self-determination came under point 5, as contrasted with point 1 in the original WSL EC resolution. That was a shift already, he appears to say, and to drop the slogan altogether is only a further shift in the same direction! Well, comrades — in future we'd better watch out for anything that appears in point 5 or lower in any of our resolutions! It could vanish all too easily!

On the qualitative change in the conflict, the comrades argue that they have changed their views merely on a detail of timing. Really the qualitative change was at the beginning of April (when Thatcher sent the fleet), not at the beginning of May.

But this is a nonsense too. What the comrades are saying is not that there was a shift in the situation, but that we were wrong all along (and they were wrong for the first five weeks of the conflict). And "qualitative change"? If the invasion was objectively anti-imperialist, if it represented a blow for "the elimination of the vestiges of colonial rule" which "is part of our programme", then it was to be defended (if criticised) whether Thatcher sent the fleet or not.

The comrades consider that an Argentine withdrawal when the war was on, or when the fleet was sailing, would be an intolerable blow for "anti-imperialism", but wouldn't the same apply to an Argentine withdrawal in face of purely diplomatic pressure? Isn't it utterly shameful for good orthodox Trotskyists like cds Smith and Jones, in an imperialist country, to take one position when Thatcher may peacefully coerce Argentina into abandoning its anti-imperialist victory, and only to rally to

the anti-imperialist struggle when the fleet sails? Are they still tainted by the "democracy fetishism" of the NC majority?

THE POLITICAL METHOD OF THE TENDENCY

So the tendency leaders have changed their position on the basic arguments — the 'claim' argument and the 'camps' argument — while giving no clear account of their reasons, and indeed trying to minimise the change with cries of "details, details!" and "never mind if we made mistakes: are we right now?"

It is not just individuals who have changed their views. It is the whole of "the tendency" — whoever that is, exactly — without any visible process of discussion, comparison of ideas, and thought-out rejection of and learning from previous errors.

And this has all taken place under the cover of a good deal of demagoguery. An example is the question of imperialism and Argentina's status in the world.

The majority view, as we have said repeatedly, does not depend on a precise ranking of Argentina in the world capitalist hierarchy. Nevertheless majority comrades have presented their assessment of Argentina; some of us have argued that the concept 'sub-imperialism' fits it (*5); we have pointed out that it is an advanced capitalist country (although a poor one); and we have argued that it can be defined as an oppressed nation only by means of a mystical notion of national liberation as meaning complete economic independence.

The response has been at the most miserable level of debate. It has been fingers pointing and scandalised voices:

"These people say Argentina is sub-imperialist. They deny the theory of imperialism!" "They say British imperialism doesn't exist any longer!" "They say imperialism doesn't exist any longer!" "They say imperialism is progressive!" "They say Argentina is politically independent and an advanced capitalist country. They deny permanent revolution!"...

Our reply is weary repetition: No, we don't think imperialism has ceased to exist. Yes, imperialism is reactionary. No, we don't think Britain has ceased to be an imperialist state. No, we don't think Britain and Argentina are in the same rank of the world capitalist hierarchy. But yes, we (some of us — there is no 'factional line' on such theoretical questions, nor any means for developing one!) think sub-imperialist is a useful description for Argentina. Yes, we think British imperialism is in severe decline. Yes, we think Argentina is politically independent and a (poor) advanced capitalist country. Yes, we think permanent revolution — the fusion of the bourgeois revolution and the socialist revolution — is not relevant to the internal dynamics of Argentina, a settler state with no pre-bourgeois remnants. If comrades have intelligent objections to the latter opinions, please can they relate to the facts and theoretical considerations that we advance to support them, then we might get some clarification.

But detailed facts and detailed theoretical considerations (as opposed to the use of "theory" and "quotations" as demagogic bludgeons, as in the repeated dark mutterings about us not understanding the theory of imperialism) are the last thing to be found in the tendency's documents (*6).

Two examples:

a) Sub-imperialism. There is a substantial literature on this question (including critiques of the concept), dating back to the mid-'60s. My knowledge of this literature is very small indeed. But it seems plain by now that the knowledge of the comrades who have rushed into fervent denunciations is zero. Why don't they try studying a bit before they denounce? (*7).

b) Facts about Argentina. In the first tendency document, the comrades produced a table of facts culled from an Intercontinental Press article by Will Reissner. Since then Traven has pointed out that the figures in the table are wrong (so, incidentally, are a lot of the other "facts" in Reissner's article), and Ellis has produced an annihilating demolition of Reissner's whole argument.

Just as the tendency leaders decided that they had best steer clear of attempts to base their position on concrete facts of the war (instead relying on an abstract principle of solidarity with "anti-imperialism" against imperialism), so they have also apparently decided that it is best to steer clear of concrete facts about Argentina (instead just trying to inspire comrades' sympathy with Argentina as a country with big debts and a rough deal in the world economy).

With great complacency they explain in IB 7: "Figures can often be found to produce distorted views of the world... there might be some figures which suggest that Argentina is more of an industrial power than some lesser imperialist country (we have not seen them). [Look at footnote *8, then]. But even if they could be found, that would not change the international position of Argentina..." (p.2)

It is true enough that partial, one-sided selections of figures can distort reality. For that reason, Traven and myself, in various articles, have tried to fill in the picture from as many sides as possible — we have quoted the facts (on which the tendency leaders rely more or less exclusively) about Argentina's big foreign debt and the large number of its biggest private companies which are foreign or joint-owned, but also other facts.

Maybe there is some side of the picture we have omitted. It would be useful if the comrades pointed it out. But no: they rely on asserting: "whatever any figures say, they cannot change political reality" (IB 7, p.2).

So how then is reality assessed, if not from figures and similar precise facts? It can only be from subjective impressions and desires to have Argentina fit into the costume prepared for it, of an oppressed nation in struggle with imperialism. What is most alarming here is not the conclusions about Argentina, but the precedent set for assessing other situations in future.

WHERE IS THE TENDENCY GOING?

On assessment of reality, on political positions, the method is the same. A conclusion is reached — evidently on the basis of subjective responses, impressions, instincts, since it has not visible support in stable principled arguments. On the Falklands war the conclusion must have been due to the pressure of the rest of the left. Then the arguments are constructed, shuffled, and shifted, without political accounting, to fit the conclusions. Where concrete arguments are challenged the comrades retreat to more abstract arguments. The manoeuvring-space necessary to perform the various shifts in positions is ensured on the basis of the prestige of a self-defined leadership.

On any normal Leninist procedure, the tendency leaders, on deciding (as they have done) that they were WRONG for several weeks, on the major arguments (the 'claim' argument and the 'camps' argument), against Morrow, the Merseyside comrades, etc, would make an open self-criticism, rally to the Morrow/Merseyside position, and then DEFER to those comrades for the rest of the struggle.

On any normal procedure, a tendency formed on the basis of the May 9/May 16 position of the tendency leaders would have been abandoned and disowned by its leaders on them going over to the ideas in IB7 and IB10 — the comrades still sticking to the view that our original position was right, but things changed fundamentally in early May, would have been

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left 'orphaned'.

But no such thing (*9).

The comrades become the tendency leadership, and from then on the tendency takes this or that attitude to the Argentine claim, the islanders' rights, the invasion, the principles of class politics, etc. depending on what the leadership says. In a reversal of all Leninist procedure, the definition of the leadership comes first, the politics after.

It is difficult to avoid concluding that factionalism and prestige concerns play a big role. What else but these could maintain the tendency leaders' self-righteousness though all the zig-zags? What else could have cushioned them, in the course of their gradual political U-turn since April, from the notion that they don't know what they are about?

If the organisation had been guided by the tendency over the past 3½ months, we would have had utter theoretical and political chaos as the line of the WSL. The method pursued by the tendency is one of flagrant subjectivism, impressionism, instability, and factional/prestige-conscious failure to account for radical changes in line. That is what they want to foist on the WSL. We should reject it.

NOTES

*1. To compare the Falklands with colonial enclaves in a country like China in the early 20th century – which is implicitly what the LOR resolution, for example, does – is to compare very different situation, from very different historical periods. Those colonial enclaves were real instruments of imperialist domination, in a period when imperialism operated mainly through colonialism. When Britain seized the Falklands in 1833, it may have had the idea that they might some day serve such a purpose. But in fact they never did.

*2. Morrow, of course, did not. Jones also voted against the slogan 'repudiation of the claim'. But he insisted that he still supported self-determination for the Falklanders, only other factors now overrode that principle.

*3. Except Morrow, of course.

*4. Morrow in his document clearly rejected arguments based on shifts in the war. "Any war which takes place, regardless of its immediate form, will have the same content: the reactionary reassertion of imperialist authority and prestige. Our position should address itself to these class questions, not to hypothetical categories of war".

*5. The I-CL manifesto (1977) bracketed Argentina as sub-imperialist. But maybe the comrades did not read it?

*6. IB 7, p.16, fulminates against "nonsense about the declining role of Britain". But are the comrades seriously arguing that Britain's role is not declining?

*7. Cunliffe is the one tendency leader who seems to have some knowledge. In discussion with me he has said that he would accept the description 'sub-imperialist' for the Shah's Iran but not for Argentina. Good. We could make progress on the basis of a detailed argument as to exactly why Iran would fit into the category but Argentina not.

*8. Here they are:

Country	Population	GDP (\$M)	% of GDP produced in industry	% produced in manufacturing	Industrial output per head (\$)	Manufacturing output per head (\$)
Argentina	27.3M	95,120	46	37	1603	1289
Greece	9.3M	33,370	32	19	1148	682
Portugal	9.8M	18,560	47	37	890	701
Spain	37.0M	180,800	31	N.A.	1515	N.A.

(Source: World Bank, World Development Report 1981. Figures for 1979, in 1979 dollars)

These figures are not the whole picture, nor entirely to be trusted. Compare, for example, the following figures:

Country	Value added in manuf.	Value added per head
Argentina	10,641	390
Greece	4,348	468
Spain	32,808	887
Portugal	5,308	542

(Same source. Figures for 1978, in 1975 dollars. 'Per head' figures got by dividing by 1979 population).

What is certainly true, however, is that Argentina is in the same league industrially as the poorer West European countries and Greece. What is also true is that Argentina's capitalist development flowered much earlier than that of Greece, Portugal, and Spain, and it has been in relative decline since. So it is a more 'mature' capitalism. For example – despite the fact that Argentina attracts migrants on a large scale, while Greece, Spain and Portugal export them, Argentina's literacy rate is rather higher.

Country	Literacy rate (%)	
	1960	1976
Argentina	91	94
Greece	81	N.A.
Spain	87	N.A.
Portugal	62	70

*9. It reflects little credit on Morrow and the Merseyside comrades that they have allowed this.

Falklands/Malvinas: Not Thatcher nor Galtieri!

Statement by Socialist Fight

AS MARGARET THATCHER'S Royal marines fight the last decisive battle for possession of the Falklands/Malvinas, Argentine trade unionists in exile have appealed to Britain's equivalent of our ACTU, the TUC, to meet them to discuss common labour movement action against the war.

Ricardo Perez, a leader of the suspended General Confederation of Labour, told journalists in Brussels: "We are anxious to speak to our comrades in the British trade unions to see what we can do to help the situation".

John Palmer reported in the *Guardian*: "Mr Perez said that the trade unions insisted that there be a peaceful solution and said that the international labour movement should act in unison to try to achieve it. There are politicians in both Argentina and Britain who want to exploit this crisis to deflect attention from other problems", he said.

The Thatcher government went to war to try to save Britain's failing prestige as a world-exploiting power. That is their concern: not the fate of the Falkland Islanders, and still less any objection of principle to the military dictatorship in Argentina.

Exploitation

Since World War II, the British ruling class has lost its big patches of red on the map, as millions in the former colonies have demanded, fought for, and won the right to rule themselves. But Britain's bosses still lean heavily on economic super-exploitation of the 'Third World'.

The 50 biggest British industrial companies currently do 43 percent of their total production abroad, and, while profits in Britain are low and stagnant, their overseas profits are booming. The overseas profits of British financial companies have gone up 160 percent over the last two years.

A good chunk of this plunder is vulnerable to seizure by nationalist governments. And so the British bosses need to prop up their crumbling reputation as a big power.

That's why their fleet sailed. Thatcher's first aim was probably to put pressure to make the US and EEC use their much greater economic and military weight to save Britain's face. But the Tories have shown they are prepared to go ahead with the horrors of war.

All the British working class is likely to get from this war is increased cuts or tax

demands. (Just getting the fleet to the Falklands, with no more, will cost 50 million pounds sterling).

Behind the hollow 'Send-the-gunboats' bluster is sordid hypocrisy. At the same time as the Tories are sending the navy across the Atlantic, supposedly to defend the Falklanders, they took British citizenship away from over 400 of them through their Nationality Act.

Those Falklanders have already lost their right to enter Britain through the Immigration Acts — passed after other British citizens were threatened by dictatorships elsewhere!

Hypocritical also is the sudden fury against Argentina's 'fascist junta'. British governments (Tory and Labour) have happily traded and sold arms to Argentina from....Chile and South Africa!

In the cross-fire between British arms in British hands and British arms in Argentine hands, the Falklanders will be the first to suffer. The best evidence, indeed, is that the islanders whom the Tories claim to be acting for *don't want* an invasion.

Kenneth Clarke of Britain's true-blue *Daily Telegraph* reported from the Falklands:

"Almost everybody I spoke to did not want the British task force to invade unless the islands could first be evacuated".

Other messages from the islands indicate the same feeling.

The islanders are first to suffer from this war. And second are the British and Argentine working classes.

Clearly, socialists everywhere need to fight for Thatcher to withdraw the fleet. We should reject Britain's claims to the Falklands.

But that doesn't mean we must therefore back Galtieri's gang of butchers, like much of the Australian Left is doing.

Populist

The junta has in no way acted against imperialism by seizing and attempting to hold the Falklands. It has merely engaged in a populist ploy designed to divert and unite the Argentine masses behind its own repressive rule.

Socialist Fight campaigns against both Thatcher's war and Galtieri's adventure.

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 deliberately leaves untouched the imperialist banks and multinationals which daily exploit the workers of Argentina.

It is of course possible to imagine circumstances where an attack on these imperialist interests in Argentina — through expropriations and the repudiation of debts to Western bankers — might conceivably have triggered off a military response from Britain or the USA, in the course of which there might have been an attempt by the imperialists to use the Falklands as a base for their operations.

In such a situation, plainly an Argentine invasion of the Falklands would have been part and parcel of a genuine anti-imperialist struggle, and would have had to be defended.

But instead the whole invasion has been a red herring designed purely and simply to divert the Argentine workers away from their mounting mass struggles against the junta.

Far from advancing the struggle against imperialism it has strengthened the standing of a fiercely reactionary, pro-imperialist dictatorship, and embroiled the Argentine people in a war in which they can hope to win nothing of significance.

The Falklands have been a distinct community for 150 years, displacing no-one, oppressing no other community. They were not an outpost for British domination of Argentina. Their seizure was not an issue of Argentine national unity.

The Falkland Islands have never been part of the Argentine nation, a nation that was forged with the big European settlements of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Argentina's claim is purely a territorial claim. It has nothing to do with self-determination. Britain never dispossessed an Argentine population of the Falklands.

As a territorial claim it is extremely dubious, the flag of the former Republic of Buenos Aires having flown over the Malvinas for some part of the years 1822-33.

Its successful accomplishment could well spark off further military adventures against Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, etc., against whom Argentina also has territorial claims.

L.O.R. RESOLUTION ON THE FALKLANDS/MALVINAS

(April 5 1982. This was the resolution presented to and rejected by the April TILC meeting.)

The Anglo-Argentine conflict on the Falklands/Malvinas is to be located in the framework of the residues of the British colonial empire, and on the basis of the fundamental clear distinction between imperialism and oppressed countries.

Galtieri's move is obviously to be understood as a manoeuvre and diversion in relation to the internal situation (this was clearly shown by the wave of repression immediately preceding the conflict); but the question of the Malvinas is undoubtedly a constituent part of Argentina's overall nationalist demands. Control over local resources (oil, coal, etc.) is being sought, on the one side by an oppressed country, on the other by a great imperialist power.

Besides, the sending of the British fleet, independent of the adventurism and the semi-fascist demagogy of Galtieri, creates a real conflict in which England is defending by force a portion, even if a minor one, of its historic system of plunder.

Even if such a conflict does not go beyond a limited scope (i.e. does not develop into a real war against Argentina as such), consistent Trotskyists should not hesitate to defend the interests (however badly represented) of the oppressed country against imperialism. This naturally does not confer any anti-imperialist character to the gorilla junta; analogously, the partial conflicts between Chiang Kai Shek and England (on Chinese concessions and the like) did not make the Kuo-mintang taken as a whole anti-imperialist, still less 'consistently anti-imperialist': however the revolutionary Marxists had to take a firm position in favour of the oppressed country, even in the case of partial, limited (and sometimes more or less 'sham') conflicts with a single imperialist power.

To unmask the demagogy and the pseudo anti-imperialist rhetoric of the Argentine junta, Trotskyists should avoid all ambiguity of any sort, and openly demand unconditional support for Argentina against England, but naturally with their own, i.e. proletarian, methods and perspectives. In this context, we should put forward slogans of an independent character, such as the expropriation of English property in Argentina, workers' control over expropriated property, democratic liberties, and workers' militias to combat the imperialist menace etc. (the development of such demands should be established on the basis of the real development of the situation, but certainly without offering any 'truce' to the junta, whose treacherous and reactionary character should be constantly denounced). All this can be summed up in the slogan of revolutionary defence on Argentina's side and revolutionary defeatism on England's.

Considerations concerning the population of the Malvinas cannot change the fundamental issues of the present conflict, since the democratic rights of such populations are subordinate to the more general democratic question of oppressed countries against the imperialists. Trotskyists are for the democratic rights of these English people (in the same way as for those of all the Argentine population) on condition that such democratic rights do not in fact lead to the restoration of imperialist domination on the territory in question.

R.W.L. STATEMENT

1. The British-Argentine conflict over the Malvinas can only be understood in the context of Argentina's historic and militant claim on these remnants of the British colonial empire, from their original seizure by Britain in 1833 to the present day, and on the basis of the fundamental, clearcut distinction between imperialist and oppressed countries.

2. Clearly, Galtieri's move in ordering the occupation of these islands by Argentine forces on 2 April should be understood as an attempt to divert rising resistance to his regime to some form of 'national unity' behind the junta's military seizure of the Malvinas. In particular, Galtieri was searching for some means of diverting and containing the mounting waves of struggle of the powerful Argentine labour movement, whose militant class spirit could not be broken by the system of terror

maintained by the brutal military regimes which have ruled Argentina since the Videla coup of 24 March 1976.

3. However the Argentine claim to the Malvinas/Falkland Islands is undeniably part and parcel of the overall historic Argentine national demands. In the conflict over the islands between Argentina and Britain, control over natural resources in the overall region of the islands is sought, on the one hand, by an oppressed country and, on the other, by a major imperialist power.

4. Moreover, the sending by Thatcher of the Royal Navy to the region, regardless of Galtieri's diversionary motives and the viciously reactionary and repressive character of his regime, creates an actual military confrontation between imperialist Britain and oppressed Argentina, with Britain defending militarily a portion, however small, of its historic plundering system,

5. Even if this conflict does not exceed the present circumscribed extent - a British attempt at militarily intimidating Argentina into surrendering the Malvinas, without having to engage in actual fighting* - and even if the present situation does not grow over into a regular war by Britain against Argentina, revolutionaries must not waver in defending the interests, however misrepresented by a given regime, of an oppressed country in military conflict with imperialism.

6. This of course does not confer an anti-imperialist character on the bloody junta, which in fact appears to have deluded itself that it could exploit its friendly relations with the US imperialists to prevent an effective counter-reaction by Britain to the Argentine seizure of the Malvinas. But even Galtieri's ambitions to be US imperialism's hangman in Latin America, the questionable value of the Malvinas in and of themselves to either belligerent, and the possibility of a Galtieri sellout of more vital Argentine interests in exchange for the Malvinas, do not alter the duty of revolutionary Marxists to stand with an oppressed country in actual conflict with any imperialist power.

7. In order to unmask the essentially demagogic and sham character of the Argentine junta's anti-imperialist gestures and in order to expose the utter incapacity of such a regime to wage an effective anti-imperialist struggle of any kind, Trotskyists should call and fight for unconditional defence of Argentina in the current conflict with Britain. They should call on the Argentine working class to wage the struggle against Britain with their own, proletarian means, linking this struggle with their struggle to overthrow Galtieri. Trotskyists should fight to develop the mass mobilisation against Britain into a mass revolutionary movement aimed at placing the prosecution of the anti-imperialist struggle completely in the hands of the anti-imperialist masses themselves - specifically, under the leadership of the independent organisations of the working class. While participating in the common Argentine war effort, Trotskyists must offer no truce to the junta, whose reactionary, treacherous and fundamentally pro-imperialist character must be relentlessly exposed.

In this connection, Trotskyists should advance independent slogans, such as expropriation of British and other imperialist investments in Argentina, workers' control of expropriated resources, full democratic and unlimited trade union rights, trade union control of military training, and independent workers' militias to fight imperialist threats.

The progressive raising of these and other slogans should be tailored to actual developments, but the overall thrust of our campaign should be that only a revolutionary workers' government could achieve the sort of mobilisation of the Argentine masses and win the sort of support from the anti-imperialist masses of the rest of Latin America which could win and secure a genuine victory against imperialism.

8. The basic Trotskyist position on the British-Argentine conflict over the

* The RWL statement is dated 23 July 1982 but described as "a somewhat fuller statement of the RWL's position on the Malvinas conflict as of the April TILC conference".

Malvinas is, then, revolutionary defeatism on the British side, revolutionary defencism on the Argentine side.

9. Any consideration regarding the current population of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands (the "Falkland Islanders") cannot alter this basic position, since any claim for their democratic rights must be subordinated to the overriding necessity of defending an oppressed nation in military conflict with an imperialist nation. Trotskyists should certainly oppose any abuse or oppression of these Britons. But Trotskyists ^{must} recognise that the "Falkland Islanders" do not seek self-determination but rather the preservation of British imperialist rule over the islands, in reality, as a colony.

Since it is impossible to ~~separate~~ the exercise of any "right to self determination" of this population from the preservation of British imperialist control over the Malvinas, Trotskyists must recognise that opposition to British imperialism's role in this conflict is incompatible with support for such claims of any "right to self-determination" for the "Falkland Islanders", even setting aside the miniscule size of this community, the absurdity of any notions of its possessing the capacity for an independent capitalist - or collectivised! - economy, and the impossibility of the survival of an Argentine-exclusionist British settlement on the Malvinas except under the colonial protection of Britain or some other imperialist power capable of preventing Argentine settlement, by open or implicit threat of arms.

THE SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY (USA) AND THE U.S.F.I.

Kinnell

(Note: This is based on my presentation at the summer school. It includes some material omitted at the summer school for lack of time).

The SWP (USA) today sees the whole of world politics as hinged round a clash between imperialism, going all for war, and the 'revolution' in Central America (the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadan states, and the FMLN-FDR in El Salvador). This black-and-white, apocalyptic picture of the world, reminiscent of Pablo's vision of "the Coming (World) War" (between the USSR and imperialism) in the early 1950s, so overwhelms elementary class criteria that the SWP ends up hailing the Non-Aligned Movement of bourgeois states as "anti-imperialist".

Every conflict in the world is slotted into the picture of "two camps". Thus for the SWP, in the war between China and Vietnam, China was a catspaw of imperialism; between Vietnam and Cambodia, Cambodia was a catspaw of imperialism. When Tanzania invaded Uganda, Tanzania was a catspaw of imperialism. When Libya invaded Chad, Libya represented anti-imperialism.

Between Iran and Iraq, Iran represents anti-imperialism. In Ethiopia, the Western Somalia Liberation Front is condemned as a catspaw of imperialism for fighting against the anti-imperialist Addis Ababa regime.

And all the 'catspaws of imperialism' and 'anti-imperialists' are painted up to fill the roles allotted to them in the SWP's crude Third-Worldist world view.

The European sections of the USFI - most importantly the LCR in France - have refused to go all the way with this "two camps" politics. And thus the SWP, as LCR leader Daniel Bensaid reports, "reproaches us in substance with being complaisant with our imperialism... weak on the defence of the workers' states... and directed towards the labour aristocracy rather than towards the most oppressed sectors of the proletariat..."

The LCR's response has been weak and vacillating. It has also been negative - the LCR has mostly just reacted to, remonstrated about, and tried to limit, the SWP's initiatives, rather than mapping out a sharp alternative.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Immediately after the July 1979 revolution in Nicaragua, the LCR took a notably more critical stance than the SWP. It clearly described the government of national reconstruction as a danger to the revolution.

But since then the LCR has been dragged along in the wake of the SWP. There is still some differentiation. While the SWP applauds "the workers and peasants in power" without qualification, the LCR will register facts, discuss problems - but only to conclude in the end that the revolution is advancing after all. In its coverage of central America, the LCR gives notably more space to the live struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala than to celebrating the joys of accomplished victory in Nicaragua and Grenada - it thus (rightly) reverses the priorities of the SWP. Its coverage of El Salvador is essentially, in terms of hard conclusions, uncritical of the FMLN-FDR, but again displays an awareness of problems absent from the SWP.

Even the more 'orthodox' minority tendency in the LCR (T1) now describe the Sandinistas as a "workers' and peasants' government" - though they insist on the building of a Trotskyist organisation in Nicaragua. (Something the SWP explicitly rejects and the LCR majority is silent on).

CUBA

Since 1979 the LCR and the USFI majority have retreated a lot on their criticisms of Cuba. In 1979 Livio Maitan published articles which (though without drawing sharp conclusions), gave honest and detailed empirical accounts of Cuba's

internal regime - the lack of democracy inevitable in a one-party state with no internal life in that 'party' and a more and more crystallised bureaucracy. He declared soberly that: "Cuba's international policy today is, on the whole, part of the international policy of the Soviet bureaucracy" (13.4.79). The LCR at its November 1979 conference adopted the call for the creation of a Trotskyist party in Cuba.

The retreat since then is expressed clearly in the LCR Political Bureau's reply to the SWP's fraternal address to their 5th Congress.

"It is true that the Cuban leadership bases itself on Marxism. It is true that by its programme and its social base it can be defined as proletarian. It is true that it is revolutionary to the extent that it supports the extension of the revolution in certain countries and particularly in Central America... but from the point of view of the world revolution taken as a whole, it vacillates between the revolution and Stalinism".

The LCR's critical attitude to Cuba is therefore in practice reduced to the proposition that a revolutionary International must be built independent of it. Of Trotskyist organisation in Cuba there is no more talk.

The more 'orthodox' opposition faction within the LCR - 'T1' - argues for independent Trotskyist organisation in Cuba, but not for a political revolution.

IRAN

On Iran, too, the LCR dissents from the SWP, but weakly. The SWP places its main stress on the supposed threat from imperialism to the "anti-imperialist government", and condemns the Mujaheddin's struggle against the government as pro-imperialist. The LCR places its main stress on the repression of the masses by the Khomeini regime, and organises solidarity rallies for the Mujaheddin.

The USFI majority, however, in a recent resolution (Inprecor no.128) opposed the Mujaheddin's call for the overthrow of the Khomeini regime. It has also supported Iran in its war against Iraq.

POLAND

On Poland the LCR has been relatively firm against the SWP - perhaps because here the question has been solidarity with a living revolution, rather than critical independence from a petty bourgeois revolutionary movement or allegedly revolutionary regime.

The LCR reply to the SWP at the LCR's 5th Congress sums up the differences. The SWP had condemned the martial law in Poland - but on the grounds that it weakened the revolution in Central America! It insisted that Central America was more important than Poland, and minimised the significance of Castro's backing for Jaruzelski. And it has denounced the LCR for supporting pro-Solidarnosc demonstrations organised by the French Socialist Party.

"The attack against Solidarnosc is a blow against the world revolution. It weakens the struggle in central America and the movement against the missiles in Europe. It strengthens the imperialists in the US, in Britain, in France, and in Germany. [No mention of what it does for the bureaucrats in Poland and the USSR!]

"We do not participate in the demonstrations of the social-democrats.

"I think the problem is the same for all the groups of the International. Everyone is 'for' Solidarnosc - Reagan, Haig, Thatcher, Schmidt, Mitterrand, even Giscard and the fascists. The question is not only to be 'for' Solidarnosc, but to be also for the defence of the gains of the workers' states and against imperialism. And it is on these three axes that we can most effectively organise solidarity with Solidarnosc".

The LCR replies, first by pointing out that "the first link of the chain" in the reactionary consequences of martial law is not central America but the "blow against the rise of the political revolution in Poland"; and second, on the question

of solidarity.

"Can we only demonstrate in solidarity with El Salvador with people who support Solidarity, and shall we refuse in consequence any joint demonstration with the Stalinist parties?"

"Or then are the preconditions valid in relation to the social-democrats on Poland, but not in relation to the Stalinists in central America? But according to what hierarchy between the sectors of the world revolution? Is treason to the colonial revolution a mortal sin, and treason to the political revolution only a venial sin?"

"WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' GOVERNMENT"

The LCR leadership (report by Bensaid on the situation in the International, March 1982) points out: "The [SWP] comrades tend to make the Workers' and Peasants' Government a necessary stage of the revolutionary process, a transition government in the framework of the capitalist state, something which must necessarily be gone through in every country, including the developed capitalist countries".

THE LCR AND THE SWP

So as the SWP speeds towards Stalinist politics under cover of "anti-imperialism", the LCR reacts. It does not work out an independent line and fight for it; it remonstrates, it tries to conciliate, it tries to split the difference between the SWP's politics and Trotskyism.

In line with the common pattern of the USFI current for over 30 years, the LCR lacks confidence in the centrality of the working class, of politics based on working class action, and therefore of Trotskyism. Its guiding conception is still of Trotskyism as the helpmeet of the objective revolutionary process pursued by History. That is what makes it weak in face of the SWP's claim to have a direct line to the makers of History.

It also makes it weak in current politics in France, and thus the weakness reinforces itself.

The LCR's line towards the Mitterrand government has been vacillating. The sales of its press are low (7,000, when not so many years ago it was claiming that many members and organised sympathisers). The turn to industry has meant a lot of talk and little action.

It also suffers from a bad internal situation. The 'T1' opposition has substantial support (30% of the membership, perhaps more), and is locked in a dead-end battle with the current leadership. The core of 'T1' has existed as an opposition faction - on one set of politics or another - for some ten years. Its current disputes with the leadership are embittered by disputes over sacking of full-timers, money, etc.

'T1', as mentioned above, calls for Trotskyist organisation in Cuba. It has had a slightly more critical attitude on Nicaragua, talking about Trotskyist organisation there - but still calling the government a workers' and peasants' government, at least after the departure of its bourgeois ministers. A lot of its politics in France clearly reflect the pressure of the Lambertists (PCI, formerly OGI). Its significance for the evolution of the USFI is probably restricted to its sapping effect on the LCR.

Sections of the USFI which have formerly been firmly with the European majority are now more and more under the influence of the SWP - e.g. the IMG.

ORIGINS, RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVES

The general loss of bearings and broken-backed politics of the USFI are the background and the roots of its current crisis. The new element is the SWP's Cuban turn. It is new because:

a) It involves a self-renunciation, a prostration before the accomplished fact, more total than any previous similar turn by the USFI. If, for example, the present material of the SWP on Cuba - Cuba constantly cited as a model of socialist revolution, etc - is compared with the most notorious essays in their adaptation to Castro in the 1960s, there is a definite shift. Then, problems, criticisms, etc. were mentioned, albeit with the comforting thought that the advance of the revolutionary process would sort them all out. Now even that sort of mention has gone.

b) Probably most important - there is a change not only in the manner of adaptation, but in whom the adaptation is to. Now it is not to live revolutionary movements (Castroism in the 1960s was a live revolutionary movement in Latin America), but to established (in Cuba, long-established) governments. It is not naive, enthusiastic, blind optimism about the "evolution" of a militant struggle, but a cold, cynical tie-up with an entrenched state machine.

Nicaragua is the most striking example. Up to July 1979, the SWP's press related to the Sandinista struggle in a sour, critical, stand-offish way. From July 1979 it has been all enthusiasm for the regime, and retrospectively for the Sandinistas' prior strategy - including what they call "obviously the correct, intelligent and revolutionary policy" of a political bloc with the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie.

c) The SWP has explicitly repudiated Trotskyism on the central question of permanent revolution. From some accounts it seems that it may follow this up with an explicit organisational repudiation of the USFI.

d) The turn has gone together with a drastic hardening of the already none-too-democratic internal regime of the SWP.

The turn to industry, and particularly to the super-exploited workers, with accompanying demagogy, is undoubtedly making bureaucratic control easier. It is of course vital for Marxists to organise among the most exploited. But the experience of Maoists, third-period Stalinists, etc, shows that the attempt to by-pass the more organised workers and labour movement activists and to go round them all to the most exploited, only produces sects in which cliques of 'intellectuals' dominate by demagogy over a membership with little political education.

HOW FAR WILL IT GO?

To answer this question is impossible without more detailed facts on the internal regime of the SWP and the material links between its leadership and Cuba.

The current turn was announced in a speech by SWP leader Jack Barnes published in February 1979: "the Castro leadership team was superior to the Bolshevik leadership, once you leave aside Lenin, Trotsky, Sverdlov, and people like that". (Jack Barnes is a greater theorist than Marx, "once you leave aside" Marx's brain?) This was just a few weeks after the death of Joseph Hansen, the last survivor of the 1930s still prominently active in the SWP leadership.

The leadership of the SWP is now in the hands of a team round Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters, recruited in the early 1960s. The older militants who are still around have been elbowed aside. (Some of them are reportedly now in opposition). There is, in short, a marked shift in the political culture of the SWP.

At the end of the the USFI opened the preparatory discussion for its 12th World Congress, scheduled for 1983. All the questions raised by the SWP's turn will be posed. Our job must be to make sure that they are posed sharply to as many militants as possible.

Your contribution on the Falklands/Malvinas war in the summer school debate was based, if I understood it correctly, on the idea that support for Argentina in the war could be a starting point for developing a fight for permanent revolution.

This idea seems to me wrong - and worse, a misuse of the profound and important idea of permanent revolution as a piece of mystification.

To show that the war was the beginning of any sort of revolutionary or anti-imperialist struggle, you must at least show that it was progressive. But if it was progressive, then it merited support anyway, regardless of speculations about further revolutionary developments to follow. (We support national liberation wars because we support national liberation, not because of the chances that may or may not be there to develop from the national liberation struggle into social revolution). The profound-sounding references to permanent revolution add nothing.

In any case, however, to use permanent revolution as a pattern for the internal dynamics of the struggle within Argentina is a theoretical illiteracy. Permanent revolution means the fusion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the socialist revolution in a single revolution led by the working class - a proletarian revolution backed by a peasant rebellion. But Argentina, in its social structure, is a completely bourgeois country. There is no peasantry as a substantial separate class. There are fewer pre-bourgeois remnants than in Britain.

I suppose the gist of what you were saying was that what Trotsky said about a hypothetical war between Brazil and Britain would apply: "If Brazil ... should be victorious, it will give a mighty impulse to national and democratic consciousness of the country and will lead to the overthrow of the Vargas dictatorship" (Writings 1938-9, p.34).

But it would not apply. And the reason is not only that Brazil was and is a country with vast areas of pre-bourgeois backwardness, where the pattern of permanent revolution certainly is relevant.

The Vargas regime was nationalising imperialist property. The hypothetical war mentioned by Trotsky was clearly one where Britain would invade in response to such nationalisations, aiming to reduce Brazil to semi-colonial status. Successful resistance by Brazil to such an attack would in fact be a great victory on the national-democratic level. Successful maintenance of its conquest of the Falklands/Malvinas by Argentina would not be any such victory for national liberation or democracy. The fact that some Argentine workers might feel it was an anti-imperialist blow does not change that.

Again trying to link the war into the perspectives of permanent revolution, you argued that only working-class leadership could have won the war for Argentina. Again, it seems to me that this is pure mystification, blinding yourself with formulas.

In the first place, it does not answer the question of why the working class should want to win the war for Argentina. For myself, I find the idea of workers' militias embarking to subjugate an island community living over 1000 miles from where most Argentine workers live, and posing no threat to those workers, horrific if fortunately surreal.

In the second place, it is not true militarily. To win a real national liberation war it is vital to rouse up the oppressed masses, to back the

military actions with a social struggle, etc. In fact few national liberation struggles have been won by military superiority.

But to win a war for control of islands hundreds of miles away, you need planes, ships, bombs, sophisticated weapons. Workers' militias - a powerful force fighting on their own terrain - would be pretty useless for such a war. In fact the best way for Argentina to win the Falklands war was for everyone to avoid agitation or mutinies in the armed forces and to back Galtieri.

Repeatedly what your argument does is to try to slot the war into some grand-sounding theoretical scheme - and in the process you completely mystify the facts and turn them upside down. You talk all round the question of what progressive cause Galtieri's war served - what cause that made it worthwhile for Argentine workers to fight and die for this war - but still you don't answer that question.

Indeed, you avoid the question in favour of speculations about what might follow the war, or what it might develop into (workers taking the lead, permanent revolution, etc.) But this is not a Marxist method.

Most of the quotations from Trotsky produced in this debate seem to me to miss the point. However many quotes are produced on the need for us to support national liberation struggles - a need no-one disputes - we are not an inch nearer proving that Galtieri's war was such a struggle! But on this point of method, I think a couple of quotations are useful.

The first is from Trotsky's article "A Fresh Lesson", written shortly before World War 2. (This is the article from which the snippets on Mexico and Tunisia are also taken). The main concern of the article is to show that the coming war cannot be considered as one of democracy against fascism. In the course of it Trotsky considers this argument: might not Germany's victory lead to the Czechs, the Belgians, even the French, becoming oppressed nations? And don't we have to fight for the rights of these oppressed nations?

Yes, replies Trotsky, they may become oppressed nations. But:

"It is quite obvious that the proletariat must build its policy on the basis of a given war, as it is, i.e. as it has been conditioned by the whole preceding course of development, and not on hypothetical speculations over the possible strategic outcome of the war. In such speculations everyone will invariably choose that variant which best corresponds to his own desires, national sympathies and antipathies. Obviously such a policy would be not Marxist but subjective, not internationalist but chauvinist in character".

In a further article, "A Step Towards Social-Patriotism", Trotsky replied to some Palestinian comrades who tentatively questioned the defeatist policy for the coming war on the grounds that fascism was such a great and crushing danger.

"The policy which attempts to place upon the proletariat the unsolvable task of warding off all dangers engendered by the bourgeoisie and its policy of war is vain, false, mortally dangerous. 'But fascism might be victorious!' 'But the USSR is menaced!' 'But Hitler's invasion would signify the slaughter of workers!' And so on, without end.

"Of course, the dangers are many, very many. It is impossible not only to ward them all off, but even to foresee all of them. Should the proletariat attempt at the expense of the clarity and irreconcilability of its fundamental policy to chase after each episodic danger separately, it will unfailingly

prove itself bankrupt. In time of war, the frontiers will be altered, military victories and defeats will be associated with each other, political regimes will shift. The workers will be able to rise to the full from this monstrous chaos only if they occupy themselves not with acting as supervisors of the historical process but by engaging in the class struggle. Only the growth of their international offensive will put an end not alone to episodic 'dangers' but also to their main source: the class society".

Yes, I know World War 2 was an inter-imperialist war and Argentina is not imperialist. But the point of referring to the classics of Marxism is not to find some previous situation which is an exact model of today's reality (still less to find impressive-sounding phrases which mystify the simplest questions). The point is to learn from the method used.

The approach of blurring over assessment of the given war, waged by the actual Argentine bourgeoisie, with the war aims it actually had, for the stance of 'supervisor of the historical process', is as wrong methodologically as the position of supporting 'democracy against fascism' in World War 2. Of course it is subjectively different. It is a huge subjective difference that the speculations are about 'permanent revolution' in Argentina, or the dangers of Britain being strengthened, rather than about a national-liberation struggle by the Czechs or the prospect of an all-Europe Reich. But the method is surely the same. And the consequence is that the immediate class struggle, on the basis of the immediate realities in Argentina, would be shelved or downplayed for the sake of a better struggle after the war.

The arguments about the 'international balance of forces' fall into the same category. If they have a rational core, it is in the calculation that victory of Argentina would have encouraged anti-imperialist movements, while Britain's victory encouraged imperialism. I doubt the completeness of the calculations. (What about the weakening of the Argentine military regime provoked by its defeat? How does that weigh in the 'international balance of forces'?) But in any case to determine our policy on the actual war by such calculations (complete or incomplete, accurate or inaccurate) about what would follow is to abandon class politics for the time being -- to consider Argentina as 'in our class camp' for the time being, to shelve our estimate of Galtieri's objectives for the time being. And that is not Marxism.

Yes, the possible consequences of the war were important. But our job was not to act as 'inspectors-general of history', but to prepare the working class to best take advantage of the outcome of the war, whatever variant it turned out to be. And the bedrock of that preparation had to be a clear explanation to the working class of the nature and objectives of the war waged by their ruling class -- of the actual war, not of some hypothetical war which some other force in Argentina might wage for other objectives at another time.

CORRECTION TO FOOTNOTE 8 IN ARTICLE 'THE METHOD OF THE TENDENCY' -- Kinnell

On the first table in footnote 8, I comment: "These figures are not... entirely to be trusted"; and I add a table which gives a slightly different picture of Argentina's economy. On reflection I am 99% convinced that there is a misprint in the World Bank tables, and that the figures should read:

Country	Population (million)	GDP (\$ m.)	% of GDP produced in industry	% produced in manufac- turing	Industrial output per head (\$)	Manufacturing output per head (\$)
Argentina	27.3	59,120	46	37	996	801
Greece	9.3	33,370	32	19	1148	682
Portugal	9.8	18,560	47	37	890	701
Spain	37.0	180,800	31	n.a.	1515	n.a.

The general conclusion is unchanged. But another conclusion can be added: beware of isolated sets of figures.

STATEMENT ON THE MALVINAS FOR THE TILC - ADOPTED AT A NATIONAL
CONFERENCE OF THE TAF (Denmark) on 27. 6. 82.

(For distribution to TILC member organisations, WSL members, and the
TILC Internal Bulletin, by the Secretariat).

We in TAF (Trotskyist Workers League - Denmark) are concerned over seeing the line on the Malvinas in Socialist Organiser. We disagree with that line, and believe that it is wrong and harmful. Therefore as members of TILC, we feel a duty to bring this statement to the members of the WSL, and to the other member organisations of the TILC.

Under a stormy treatment of a resolution on the Malvinas at the last TILC meeting, it became clear that SM & MT saw the conflict as fundamentally a question of defending the Malvinas inhabitants right to self-determination. There was an intense struggle by other participants against this viewpoint. Yet it is precisely this viewpoint that constitutes the thrust of policy in SO's columns. In spite of the intense struggle at the TILC meeting against the self-determination viewpoint, with closer examination the adopted resolution was found to contain clear weaknesses.

It is wrong when the resolution states that, "every such war can only have reactionary consequences in the form of loss of life and the outbreak of chauvinism, both in the British and Argentine working class". Nationalism and nationalism are two things, and the nationalism of Argentine workers is not reactionary, but a progressive and legitimate anti-imperialist current.

Furthermore, the resolution says about the Argentine troops on the Malvinas: "By taking this step the junta hasn't acted against imperialism, but carried out an astute populist manoeuvre". Yes, the junta has, in fact, under pressure of the masses - but via a populist manoeuvre - challenged imperialism, and as the Bonapartist dictatorship it is, it naturally didn't mobilise the masses for a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, we regard the junta's step as objectively anti-imperialist and historically progressive.

As such, neither do we believe that the resolution is adequately precise in formulation, regarding support to Argentina in the event of a war. But the intention was not as it now appears in the columns of SO, that British troops would have to occupy the Argentine mainland before we would support Argentina, and SM & MT exploit thereby the weakness of the resolution.

In TAF we believe that we must support Argentina in all phases of the struggle. We believe that the resolution was strong in taking as its starting point the prevention of the war, namely from the assumption that a defeat for British imperialism without a fight would strengthen Argentina vis-a-vis British imperialism.

But these weaknesses in the resolution could have been corrected, which we also attempted in TAF's monthly organ Trotskyist Viewpoint, after we had published the TILC resolution. The weakness of the resolution shows that the settling of accounts with the self-determination line of SM & MT on the Malvinas, and the implied attack on the Bolshevik concept of imperialism, wasn't concluded, and the columns of SO have since shown the need to carry this out.

SO's defeatist line, with the call for a defeat for both Britain and Argentina by the working class overthrowing their "own" bourgeoisie, presents in fact, an opinion that it is a question of two imperialist powers at war with each other, and obscures thereby, the fact that it is a question of the anti-colonial war. It must not be forgotten that SM & MT talk of self-determination for the 1800 islanders who have chosen to remain supporters of British imperialism's dominance over the islands. They have expressed themselves in favour of the islands remaining a part of the British Empire.

The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department, dated [redacted].

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TAF STATEMENT ON THE MALVINAS (Continued).

We in TAF disagree with SM & MT about what imperialism is. SO itself in its columns, points out correct facts which illustrate the nature of Argentina as a country subordinate to imperialism, and maintains correctly that the British fleet is imperialist. But at the same time SM & MT deny that the conflict has an anti-imperialist content on the part of Argentina. Apparently they believe that Argentina is also imperialist, or "nearly" imperialist. SO uses expressions such as Argentina isn't a "typical" 3rd. world oppressed country, and that Galtieri has "mini-colonialist" motives (SO 83 - Reply to IWL). Likewise the comparison of nationalism in Britain and Argentina points in the same direction. Such masking of the scientific Marxist concepts of the theory of imperialism have to take place in order to serve the self-determination line, but in the bargain theoretical clarity is junked and replaced by self-invented concepts, as expressions of theoretical formlessness.

For SM & MT the real problem with Thatchers war is that it doesn't benefit the islanders (and costs human life). Therefore it becomes necessary to write about the right of self-determination: "Supporting rights does not mean supporting every action that is supposed to defend those rights". And: "By the very nature of the British state Thatchers fleet acts in the interest of Tory and British ruling class prestige". "Any benefit to the islanders is doubtful and strictly incidental". Therefore, according to SO, a class struggle against Thatchers war must be waged in Britain.

But SM & MT know just as well as we that it is a question of settlers on the Malvinas. Since when has it been Trotskyist policy to support imperialism's settlers? Nevertheless, when British imperialism doesn't defend these settlers effectively SM & MT will mobilise the working class to do the work of imperialism.

With self-determination as the axis, SM & MT's claimed class struggle viewpoint becomes an empty shell raised above the class struggle. It is detached from the real tasks of leading the class in Argentina in an anti-imperialist struggle, to strike a blow against imperialism, the Bonapartist junta, and the Argentine bourgeoisie all at once. The main orientation in Argentina must be: "COUNTER-ATTACK IMPERIALISM ON ALL FRONTS"; Support for the reconquest of the Malvinas, and the war against British imperialism; Expropriation of all imperialist property without compensation; Stop the payment of debt to imperialist banks and governments; The burden of the crisis must be paid by the imperialists.

In this manner the masses can be prepared for overthrowing the junta and bourgeoisie in Argentina.

It involves of course, no support for the junta, but struggle for an independent revolutionary programme. On the contrary, it must mean a constant attack on the junta for not carrying out an anti-imperialist struggle, and for the independent organisation and struggle of the workers. The false starting point of SM & MT has led them to stand things on their heads in a two-phase theory: First the Argentine workers overthrow the junta, once that is done Argentina can get the right to the Malvinas.

The working class in Argentina can't win over the Bonapartist junta and its own bourgeoisie without anti-imperialist struggle, precisely because Argentina is dominated by imperialism.

SM & MT with their self-determination viewpoint on the Malvinas question, stand as a hindrance to building the bridge our Transitional Programme talks about - namely, the bridge between the consciousness of the oppressed masses and the actual problems, and the necessary task of making the revolution.

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The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department of the [redacted] Government, dated [redacted].

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