

WSL EC statement on the Falklands/Malvinas debate at the summer school
WSL EC letter to TILC groups

SPECIAL
CONFERENCE
RESOLUTIONS

- 1. Minority resolution Smith
- 2. Resolution Carolan/Collins/Gardiner/
Hill/Kinnell/Parkinson
- Demands against the police EC document

The document 'Towards an Internationalist Position on the Malvinas War' (Evington) has been duplicated separately but is distributed with this IB. (Unfortunately there are insufficient numbers for one copy for each member).

RESOLUTION ON THE FALKLANDS WAR

1. A Marxist attitude to a war must start from an assessment of which classes are waging the war and for what objectives. On the basis of that assessment we determine our line not as supervisors of the historic process but as militant advocates of class struggle.

Where a war, even under bourgeois leadership, is about an issue like self-determination for an oppressed nation - an issue which is a necessary part of the liberation struggle of the working class - the working class should support the war while maintaining complete independence and the fight to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

Where wars under bourgeois leadership are about no such progressive cause, class-struggle politics demand a defeatist stance - i.e. denunciation of the war, continuation of the class struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie while clearly accepting that this will make defeat more likely in the war.

Where a war between bourgeoisies has no progressive content on either side, we must fight for the defeat of both sides - i.e. against the war and for the defeat of both bourgeoisies by working class action.

In all cases we fight for working class fraternisation. We do not disrupt the international unity of the working class, setting one national section to slaughter another, casually or out of deference to the right of the bourgeoisie to rule as it likes. Where a war has a progressive content, we fight for working class unity on the basis of support for the progressive demands of the progressive side.

As the 1920 Theses of the Comintern on the National and Colonial Question, a basic document of our movement, put it: "... the entire policy of the Communist International on the national and colonial question must be based primarily on bringing together the proletariat and working classes of all nations and countries for the common revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landowners and the bourgeoisie. For only such united action will ensure victory over capitalism, without which it is impossible to abolish national oppression and inequality of rights".

2. Britain's war over the Falklands/Malvinas was designed only to preserve a relic of empire and shore up the prestige of British imperialism. A defeatist stand towards Britain's war was therefore the no.1 campaigning priority for Marxists in Britain.

Instead of assisting the Tories in their crisis by 'patriotic' support for the government, the British labour movement should have used the crisis to hasten Thatcher's overthrow in the interests of the working class, and given all material and political support to the Argentine workers in the struggle for democratic and trade union rights and for the establishment of a genuinely anti-imperialist workers' government in Argentina.

We repudiate any legitimacy of British territorial claims in the Falklands or any legitimacy in related British claims to resources in Antarctica.

3. But the pretext on which the Argentine junta embarked upon the invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas was equally contrived. In taking its action, the junta 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 trampled upon the rights of the Falkland inhabitants, who in themselves oppress and threaten no-one and should have the right to decide their own future. Such action did nothing to build anti-imperialist consciousness in the Argentine working class, but rather sought to generate chauvinism and 'national unity'. We did not support this action, and called for the withdrawal of Argentine troops.

In its seizure of the Falklands/Malvinas, designed to boost its position at home and in the region, the Argentine regime miscalculated about the British

reaction, and the US response to the British reaction.

This miscalculation could however make the seizure, or the war to maintain the seizure, progressive.

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 embroiled the Argentine people in a war in which they could hope to win nothing of significance, a disastrous war in a false and reactionary cause.

4. On both sides therefore the war was reactionary. The job of Marxists in both Britain and Argentina was to oppose the war, to counterpose international working-class unity, and to continue the class struggle for the overthrow of both the Tories and the military regime.

5. Support for the right of the Falkland Islanders - a distinct historical, ethnic, linguistic, economic and geographic community 400 miles from Argentina - to determine their own future is axiomatic for Leninists in the given conditions, where that community exploited no other community, threatened no other community, and was not used as, or likely to be used as, a base for imperialist control of another community.

The Falklanders' right to self-determination cannot be invalidated by a desire by them to adhere to the now-imperialist state that spawned the Falklands community. That desire to adhere to Britain would invalidate their right to self-determination only if adherence had direct imperialist/colonialist consequences for Argentina or some other country, whose right to resist those consequences would (because of their size etc.) outweigh the rights of the islanders. Only then would the "pro-imperialist" views of the islanders lead to them playing an imperialist role. Nothing like that was actually involved. The agency for imperialist domination in Argentina is the Argentine state, not the islands or any base on the islands.

To use a definition of the islanders as "pro-imperialist" against their right to self-determination is to introduce inappropriate political categories and criteria, different from those which properly apply. The Falkland islanders are British. That is what determines their attitudes, not any pro-imperialist views they may have. The WSL is not in favour of the subjugation of a population because it has such views, ^{or because of their origins,} The ethnic tying-up of the globe is no part of the international socialist revolution.

Support for the Falklanders' rights plainly does not necessarily mean any support for military action to enforce these rights. In the actual situation, with Britain an imperialist power, we rejected and opposed the British military action. We look to the international working class, and especially the Argentine labour movement, to secure the Falklanders' rights.

Such a consistent democratic policy is the only basis for international working-class unity, and specifically for the unity of the British and Argentine working class (which had to be our central concern) in this dispute.

6. The WSL conducted itself as an internationalist and revolutionary proletarian organisation during the British/Argentine war. We raised a variant of the famous slogan of Liebknecht and Luxemburg: 'The enemy is at home', and called on the working class to actively hinder the British ruling class's prosecution of the war by industrial action. We conducted internationalist working class propaganda against the social-chauvinist Labour leaders, while attempting to maintain a dialogue with the pacifistic Labour Left (that is, with those in the working class who listen to the Left leaders) on the question.

It is no necessary part of proletarian internationalist opposition to the war of an imperialist government to side with their opponents. Our response to the fact that it was for the British ruling class a war for authority and prestige was our defeatism; positive support for Argentina could, for communists, only be grounded in positive working-class reasons for such support.

everywhere that the bourgeoisie puts a minus. We must judge events from an independent working class viewpoint.

We side with our ruling-class enemies in particular conflicts if the struggle serves our politics - e.g. in a national liberation struggle, even under the leadership of a Chiang Kai Shek.

But in no way could the policy of the Argentine proletariat be deduced as a mere negative imprint of the policy of the British bourgeoisie.

The tendency justifies the pro-Argentine position with the view that "a victory [for Argentina] would quite likely mean the downfall of Thatcher... [And] the British have a far more important international role [than Argentina] as a primary carrier and protector of imperialism. This means that the nature of the British regime is a question of immediate international importance..." (IB7, p.16); conversely, "[Argentine] withdrawal... would result in another Tory government with a massive majority... it would be an event of world significance..." (tendency document p.8).

The idea here that Argentine workers' policy should be decided by what is worst for the British bourgeoisie - that the British revolution has priority, and the Argentine revolution should be subordinated to it - is British nationalist and utterly to be rejected as a basis for determining proletarian politics in Argentina.

7. Argentina is far more developed than most non-imperialist countries; it is a fully bourgeois state; and it possesses political independence. It also occupies a subordinate rank within the imperialist world economy. This subordination, however, in no way gives any progressive character to the Argentine bourgeoisie.

The Argentine bourgeoisie is not a progressive force, but the major agency for imperialist domination of the Argentine working class and an assistant for imperialist domination throughout Latin America. It has moreover its own predatory ambitions. For the Argentine working class it is 'the main enemy at home'. Quite apart from its foreign connections, it is the class that directly exploits them.

We reject as un-Marxist assessments of Argentina's situation such as this: "Argentina is economically, militarily, and politically dominated by imperialism - not by its own national bourgeoisie - but in particular, by the US imperialists. The whole basis of the economy is subject to the international market over which Argentina has no influence, let alone control and dominance" (IB 7, p.2).

We reject the counterposition of the Argentine bourgeoisie to imperialism, and the measuring of Argentina's situation by comparison with a situation where the country would escape the international market (which in a capitalist world it can never do). Every country is more or less dominated by the world economy. No country has control over it - now not even the US colossus which was supreme after World War 2. This situation cannot be changed by war between the weaker bourgeoisies and the stronger. Not such wars, but the international workers' revolution, can change it.

The communist answer to colonial, semi-colonial, and military domination is national liberation struggle; to the domination of the weaker by the strong in the world market (as to the domination of the weak by the strong, and the pauperisation of particular regions, within capitalist nations) our answer is the proletarian revolution.

We reject the notion of an anti-imperialist united front for Argentina (a version of the bloc of classes central to Menshevism and then Stalinism, motivated on the grounds that the Argentine bourgeoisie is an oppressed class in relation to imperialism.) We reject the notion that the Argentine bourgeoisie can play any progressive role either within Argentina, where it is our mortal class enemy, or against imperialism, into which it is completely integrated.

There are major implications in what is cited above from the tendency on Argentina for British politics. Un-Marxist views which substitute something else (war led by the Argentine bourgeoisie) for the communist programme to change the character of international economic relations from those of capitalism and imperialism to those of socialism, cannot but have repercussions for the politics of the WSL in Britain. The views, arguments, and alien conceptions propagated in the organisation to justify an international bloc with the Argentine bourgeoisie, are the thin end of the ideological wedge: what the tendency says about Argentina is what the Bennites and the CP say about Britain.

It is true that Argentina is on a much lower rank than Britain, more comparable to Greece or Portugal or Spain. But Britain too is a weak power, and like Argentina a declining one. Its weakness vis-a-vis the international market, and its decline, is a major political question which leads Benn and the CP to conclusions for Britain like those of the anti imperialist united front for Argentina. (Benn calls for a national liberation struggle in Britain).

Good intentions, and the observation that Britain is imperialist and Argentina is not, will only partly fend off the logic. To say what they do about Argentina, the tendency have to pulverise the Marxist and communist considerations crucial against social chauvinism in Britain.

8. In the war over the (maybe strategically important) Falkland Islands there was no conflict over military bases or possible future military bases of a character to give socialists the option or the duty to favour one of the contestants.

Argentina and Britain are in the same imperialist camp. Britain was literally within months of scrapping the naval apparatus that made the re-invasion of the Falklands possible. (But because of the internal crisis in Argentina the junta could not wait).

On the other hand, the Argentine junta had been negotiating with the USA, South Africa, and Britain to set up a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation to police the region (as Argentina helped to police El Salvador for imperialism by sending troops). The expert commentators are largely agreed that this would have led to US bases on the Falklands.

That is, had Argentina got hold of the Falklands without falling out with US imperialism, it would have speeded up the work of replacing the decrepit and militarily insignificant British imperialist presence on the Falklands with a military presence of the dominant imperialist power.

The Falklands are maybe strategically important; but neither side in the war would have taken them away from imperialism. Argentina is part of the imperialist system; its war with Britain did not place it outside that system.

9. There is no sense in which the conflict had an economic anti-imperialist dimension. British property in Argentina, not to speak of the property of other imperialist powers, was left alone during the war. The Argentine state did not even propose to take the Falklands Islands Company from Coalite.

Better Argentine claims on Antarctica from the Falklands would most likely have led to US exploitation of the Antarctic, with Argentina as a conduit. This is the concrete meaning of the subordinate position of Argentina vis a vis the US and imperialism. The Argentine bourgeoisie is not counterposed to imperialism.

10. The Argentine working class should never subordinate its own class struggle to estimates of the "international balance of forces" between different bourgeoisies. The view that "whatever the implications of