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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
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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

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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, <sup>or because of their origins,</sup> 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

that for the Argentinian or British proletariat, we have to base our position on the implications for the international struggle against imperialist first" (IB 7, p.7), is anti-Marxist.

The assessment <sup>according to</sup> which British victory was a major blow for imperialism is incomplete. The British bourgeoisie certainly was strengthened by victory politically and in its prestige. But these gains may well prove shallow and temporary, and the British bourgeoisie gained nothing material - like new military strength, new spheres of influence, or new possessions.

The Argentine regime, on the other hand, has certainly been weakened by defeat. This result is a blow against imperialist and capitalist control in Latin America.

Workers in each country can act as internationalists only by fighting their own bourgeoisies, not by acting as makeweights for international bloc politics. For Argentine socialists to support their rulers' <sup>predatory</sup> war on the basis of the estimate that the British bourgeoisie's predatory war was worse, would violate that principle. On the contrary, both British and Argentine workers should have desired the defeat of their own bourgeoisies.

11. We emphatically reject the notion that the socialist working class can orientate in world politics, and particularly in relation to conflicts among politically independent capitalist states like Britain and Argentina, by constructing a view of the world in terms of two camps, modelled on the division of the world between the degenerated and deformed workers' states and the capitalist states. (IB 7, p.4)

Between the USSR and similar states, and the capitalist states, there is a basic historical class distinction, despite the savage anti working class rule of the totalitarian bureaucratic elites. No such gap exists between capitalist states.

The bourgeois foreign policy of the rulers of Argentina, even when it is expressed in acts of war, can in no sense change their class camp. Even should the bourgeoisie of such a state be in alliance with a healthy workers' state, the task of overthrowing the bourgeoisie would be the central task of the proletariat in the capitalist state - a task never to be subordinated to international diplomatic, military, or balance-of-forces considerations.

This was a central teaching of the Communist International, and it was not formally repudiated even by the Stalinists until 1935. Thereafter the notion that bourgeois forces which allied with the USSR thereby crossed the historic class divide and joined the camp of progress was the ideological basis of Stalinism to legitimise policies of class betrayal and popular frontism.

We reject as un-Marxist, and brand as 'international popular frontism', the view that the Argentine bourgeoisie and their state became part of the 'class camp' of the international working class because of their conflict with Britain or during their war with Britain for possession of the Falkland Islands.

12. Support for Argentina's chauvinist war could not be justified on the basis that it could be the first stage in a development towards militant anti-imperialist struggle. Nor could the war be defined as anti-imperialist by reading an assessment backwards from the scenario of a hoped-for anti-imperialist development.

The scenarios lack the first link: a real national liberation content to the war. A Marxist policy must be based on the realities of the actual war, not on hypothetical speculations or wishful thinking about strategic outcomes.

Argentine workers had no interest in the armed occupation of the Falklands against the wishes of the population; they should have pursued the class struggle regardless of the effects of such struggle on their rulers' ability

to maintain the occupation; and it was none of their concern to protect the Argentine bourgeois state against the humiliation it would suffer from being unable to maintain the occupation. These points should have been the basis of a Marxist policy in Argentina.

The tactical ways of expressing this principled position could of course be very flexible (following the method according to which Trotskyists developed the 'proletarian military policy' as a tactical expression of the defeatist policy in World War 2).

It would be the job of Marxists in Argentina to seek to develop the genuine anti-imperialist element in the confused nationalist reaction of Argentine workers, with demands such as arming of the workers, expropriation of imperialist property, and seizure of the factories. While making their own views on the war clear, they should have sought to develop common class actions with workers who confusedly saw Argentina's war as 'anti-imperialist' but wanted to go further in anti-imperialism.

13. A change in our fundamental attitude to the war could only be justified by a change in the fundamental political content of the war -- i.e. so that it was no longer a war restricted to the Falklands/Malvinas issue. If Britain's objectives had shifted so that the war became fundamentally one about an attempt by Britain to make Argentina a colony or a semi-colony, then Marxists should have sided with Argentina's national independence. But that did not happen. It was always very unlikely that it would happen.

25.8.82

Carolan  
Kinnell  
Hill  
Collins  
Gardiner  
Parkinson

W.S.L. EC STATEMENT ON THE FALKLAND/MALVINAS DEBATE      THE SUMMER SCHOOL  
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For the debate on the Falklands/Malvinas on Saturday afternoon July 31 the WSL EC ruled that the TILC group delegations should be confined to brief statements - 5 minutes each.

These are the reasons why:

The debate was treated separately from the rest of the summer school, because it was really not part of the summer school. It was fixed during the period of the summer school for convenience, but was clearly different from the other sessions. We had originally fixed it on the Friday evening, outside the normal run of the summer school, and it was switched to give more time.

The debate was part of the WSL discussion, towards the WSL special conference. There is a separate TILC discussion on the same issue (and it is a full discussion, with large parts of both April and July TILC meetings given over to it) but this was a WSL event for WSL members, first and foremost.

We were especially concerned to have the maximum number of WSL members contributing in the debate. More extensive contributions from the TILC groups would seriously have restricted the number. There have been a lot of documents, but the area meetings have allowed only limited discussion by most members so far. We wanted to use the debate to compensate.

Even if we had had the full scheduled time for discussion, the TILC group statements (with translations) would have taken up 20 minutes of the 90 minutes available for contributions from the floor. Contributions from the FSP and the Chilean comrades would have taken the non-WSL total to 30 minutes out of 90, or one-third.

An internal WSL debate, with a tendency formed and a special conference planned, must be the property of the WSL. Brief statements from TILC groups might be in order; extensive contributions with a big weight in the debate would not.

The WSL EC has already decided to circulate translations of all the TILC groups' statements on the Falklands/Malvinas, and minutes of the July TILC discussions. The discussion on the WSL's position is, however, a WSL discussion and not a TILC discussion.

There was a blunder - a misunderstanding about who from the WSL EC was to inform TILC groups of the procedure - which led to the TILC groups being informed only just before the debate was due to start. (Though the RWL, at least, had been informed much earlier in the week that speaking time would be limited). This failing on our part helped generate a heated dispute. The WSL EC apologised for the failing, but explained, unanimously, that we felt our decisions was right, and asked the TILC groups to respect our right to conduct the affairs of the WSL.

The TILC groups responded differently to this; and following the debate we decided to write to them in terms of the attached letter.

KINNELL for the EC.



members, allowing many of them for the first time to engage in such a discussion, and many others to hear for the first time the views of members outside their own area.

It was from this standpoint - the need to maximise the involvement of our own comrades in the 90-minute period allocated to floor speakers - that our EC decided that we had no choice but to restrict the involvement of international comrades. We stand by that decision, though we failed lamentably in acting upon it by informing the international delegations. There was no question of us suppressing the views of TILC comrades: TILC itself has extensively debated the issue - full minutes of which are being circulated to every WSL member. TILC statements on the Malvinas are to be reprinted in our IB. Verbal statements from each section would have been taken in the debate - allocating in this way nearly 30 minutes out of 90 to international contributions.

We therefore consider our decision to be justifiable and correct. And we consider that on this question - the semi-public handling of a debate internal to the WSL - the leaderships of the TILC delegations must - as on any detailed question involving assessments of internal problems of organisations - respect the authority of the leadership concerned to take decisions. This does not deny comrades the right to question such decisions; but this should be done through the framework of TILC itself. It is not possible or desirable to concede the right of individual sections, or of TILC as a whole to impose upon other sections measures which they consider to be detrimental to the interests of their organisation.

It is from this standpoint that we object to the conduct carried out primarily by the RWL cdes, but supported by the LOR and other international delegations, which sought in the tense conditions of the beginning of the debate to appeal first to the chair, and then to WSL rank and file members and non-members in the hall for a vote that would have overturned a decision of the elected WSL leadership. It is no part of our understanding of democratic centralism that - even were TILC now a democratic centralist tendency - such behaviour could be allowed. It was an intervention by one section over the heads of the leadership of another. Certainly with TILC at present consisting of an assembly of autonomous groups, such an intervention is quite out of order. Were the WSL to have attempted any such activity in the public or even internal events of another TILC section, we would be rightly condemned.

It is necessary to respect the authority of the elected leaderships of TILC sections - even if we have political differences on sensitive issues - if we are to build the political trust and homogeneity required for a democratic centralist tendency.

We hope these points will be seriously considered by comrades. For our part we will attempt in every way possible to increase the level of discussion and consultation at leadership level between the sections of TILC as part of the political preparation for the adoption of a democratic-centralist structure.

With Trotskyist greetings,

Cunliffe, for the WSL Executive Committee.

Workers Socialist League.  
August, 1982.

To: TILC delegations and  
international observers present  
at WSL Summer School, 1982.

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Workers Socialist League, I am writing to offer our sincere apologies for our failure to give adequate prior discussion and consultation with TILC and other international comrades over our decision on the conduct of the Falklands/Malvinas debate.

In particular we plainly failed to draw sufficiently to comrades' attention the fact that the school was run this year not, as in previous years, as a TILC school under the joint formal control of the TILC sections present, but as a school of the Workers Socialist League. For our part, we felt that we had made this position plain as long ago as last December, when the dates were fixed. The change this year is related to the judgement of the WSL leadership that additional attention had to be given at this year's summer school to cementing the fusion of our organisation, now only 1 year old.

In view of the fact that this change had not been understood by the sections, we can perfectly well understand the indignation of international comrades at discovering that the format of the Saturday debate had been defined "unilaterally" by the WSL — though in fact it is fair to say that TILC sections had not been consulted before or during the week on any of the aspects of the agenda. We can with hindsight understand why cdes should feel this to be an example of a single (larger) section seeking to impose its own decisions upon an international tendency of smaller organisations.

On top of this, the decision to restrict the involvement of TILC sections in the debate to a single 5-minute statement on the position of each group, and to debar non-TILC international cdes (along with non-WSL members) from participation, was not properly explained or even notified to the cdes concerned in advance. We must accept full responsibility and apologise for this lack of socialist courtesy, which plainly raised anger and frustration from the international cdes.

We feel that if we had properly explained and discussed this matter with comrades, we could have avoided the confrontation which took place at the start of the debate, and which led to the positions of TILC sections not being heard.

The fact is that as the leadership of the WSL we were forced to assess the problems involved in the debate from the standpoint of the possible impact on our organisation. There is, as comrades well know, a tendency struggle on the Malvinas issue currently in progress inside the WSL. A date has been fixed for a Special Conference for our movement to vote on the issue. But there has been a real problem in achieving sufficient debate among our members, while many documents have been produced. The Malvinas debate was thus from the outset viewed differently from the other sessions of the school. While other plenaries were scheduled for main sessions, the debate was originally scheduled for Friday night — a timing which was seen as a device to contain the issue and limit the extent to which it would arise in each and every workshop and discussion. No other plenary — whatever differences emerged in discussion — was billed as a debate in which two sides were to be presented from the platform. When we shifted the debate to the Saturday, we did so to maximise the involvement of WSL

## MINORITY RESOLUTION ON THE MALVINAS FOR THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE

That this special conference of the membership changes the present position on the Malvinas which was established by a National Committee majority and adopts a new policy along the following lines:

1. The Galtieri junta's invasion of the Malvinas on April 2 was a reactionary invasion. It was not motivated by a legitimate desire to recover territory plundered in the past from imperialism or to weaken imperialism in the area. The motivation was to bolster the flagging pro-imperialist junta and contain or reverse the forward movement of the Argentine working class. It was an attempt to resolve the crisis of the Galtieri regime, which had continued chronically since it came to power at the end of 1981, by creating national unity around a popular issue. Irrespective of Argentina's historical claim we condemned the invasion and Galtieri's motives.
2. Under these conditions the legitimate Argentine claim to the Falklands is important but not decisive. Part of the Marxist programme is the return of the territory plundered by imperialism. This does not mean we support its recovery irrespective of the motivation of the action or the prevailing political conditions.
3. As agreed at the outset, the only principled position we could adopt in Britain was one of calling for the defeat of British imperialism. This implied campaigning for the withdrawal of the British fleet and the disruption where possible of the war effort.
4. Whilst condemning the Galtieri invasion our position in relationship to Argentina should have been changed once Thatcher dispatched the fleet. From that moment Thatcher had taken the decision to go to war. From then on the issue was not the Falklands/Malvinas but a war waged against a nation oppressed by imperialism and designed to demonstrate the authority of imperialism to the oppressed nations of the world. After some initial hesitation, the US imperialists gave Thatcher their full backing in the war. Under these conditions we should have supported the defence of the oppressed nation independently of the nature of the present regime. It was clear that in a world where imperialism is trying to recover from its defeats in Vietnam, and since, that a Thatcher victory would substantially re-establish its ability to use military force to defend its interests around the world. The invasion of the Lebanon is an obvious example. Now the South African regime is trying to do the same with the same type of 'final solution' on SWAPO.
5. Under these conditions, self-determination for the Falklanders, on which the present NC majority base their case, does not apply. The reason the Falklanders represent the freak phenomenon of a colonial population that wants to remain part of the empire -- in contrast to the multi-millions who have given their blood in the fight for freedom -- is because they are part of a system of enclaves (Gibraltar, and previously the Panama Canal, to name a few), established by imperialism in strategic places, kept racially and culturally 'pure' and tied administratively and by military protection to the imperialist metropolis often thousands of miles away. Although the Falklanders are deeply oppressed themselves by imperialism (their standard of living being very low and with the imperialists hold on them being through ideological rather than material concessions) they are in fact a part of an imperialist system of control. Having ensured that the people of the colonial enclave want to remain part of the empire, the imperialist answer to any nation who claims the territory back is -- "the people must determine their own future".
6. Inside Argentina the starting point for our policy should have been the fight for the defeat of the British fleet, but at the same time knowing that the conduct of the war was in the hands of a class with very strong links with imperialism. A capitalist class of an oppressed country thrown by its own miscalculation into a war with imperialism but determined not to break its links with it. Our policy therefore should never confuse the objectives of the working class with the objectives of the capitalist class. This involved a programme which started with the struggle to take the conduct of the war out of the hands

of the bourgeoisie who in reality didn't want to defend Argentina, and place it in the hands of the working class who did. It meant taking the existing anti-imperialist feelings of the Argentine workers (and it was only possible to be anti-imperialist in any real way while supporting the defence of Argentina) and directing it in a clear anti-imperialist direction: Arm the masses; seize the imperialist property; refuse to pay debts to the imperialist banks; point to the inability of the junta to conduct the war. The struggle to defeat the British task force was therefore also the struggle to defeat Galtieri.

7. Would a Galtieri victory strengthen the junta? No. A defeat for British imperialism would have benefited the working class both in Argentina and elsewhere. The junta, as with other similar juntas, is the local dictator who acts on behalf of imperialism, is a part of imperialist political control in countries which have gained formal political independence. The junta rests on imperialism, therefore, if imperialism is weakened, the basis of the junta is weakened. Thatcher's victory strengthens the basis for such juntas in the oppressed nations of the world.

SMITH. 15.8.82

## DEMANDS AGAINST THE POLICE

The general conclusions (not every detail) of this document were endorsed by the extended Organising Committee meeting on July 22. The document was originally submitted to the EC in August 1984.

Comrade Dupont's letter has crystallised some doubts in my mind about the balance of our coverage on the police.

Our approach - including in the editorial on the police which I wrote - has been more or less grudgingly to concede that demands for accountability, for sacking certain police chiefs, etc. can be supported. I think we should campaign for these bourgeois-democratic demands boldly and positively. The best focus would be the demand for local councils (city, borough, district) to control the police. In addition we should campaign more positively for the sacking of Oxford, Anderton, etc.

We should continue propaganda for disbanding the police, for workers' defence patrols, and for withdrawal of police from riot areas. But in fact not only the general demand for disbanding the police, but also the specific demands for riot areas, are at present very much propaganda to a small audience.

Wallasey Labour Party has supported the call for 'cops out'. Maybe one or two other labour movement bodies have passed similar resolutions. None has supported labour movement/community patrols. The community groups have been as much within reformist limits as the official labour movement - indeed, perhaps more so. The Defence Committees in Liverpool 8, Brixton, and Moss Side do not campaign for cops out or for workers' patrols, but for dropping the charges and removal of chief constables.

The youth on the August 15 demonstration shouted 'Kill, kill, the Old Bill', but not 'Cops out of Liverpool 8', still less 'Workers' patrols' or 'Disband the police'. The fact is that the tremendous courage and anger of these youth against the police does not spontaneously find a revolutionary political direction - and is unlikely to do so unless Trotskyists intervene, not just making general explanations, but also finding ways to link up with the present level of development of struggle and of consciousness, and lead towards revolutionary conclusions.

A sociologists' survey recently found black youth largely accepting the police in principle, but bitterly hostile to their actual local police force. And I guess that must reflect a good part of the reality.

It is possible that next week or next month the struggle could take a leap forward, and 'workers' patrols' could become a mass slogan. It may be that the relation of forces could be different now if we had been able to intervene more effectively in Brixton. Nonetheless, we have to assess the present level of development coldly, without capitulating to it.

The demand for local councils to control the police is the boldest, simplest summing-up of the bourgeois-democratic demands. It can also be readily linked to immediate practical proposals:

- for Labour councils to set up unofficial police committees, to which they co-opt local trade unionists, black community representatives, etc. For these committees to publicly demand the right to inspect police stations and police files; to hear and investigate complaints against the police; etc.
- for Labour councillors to use their existing positions on county police committees. These committees - not all elected members, anyway - have practically no formal powers. They cannot give any instructions to a Chief Constable or even force him to report to them about anything. They can recommend to the Home Secretary that a Chief Constable should be sacked - that's all.

But the real point is that Labour councillors on these committees accept a totally passive role. If Merseyside police committee demanded the sacking of Oxford, or if police committees elsewhere said they would demand the sacking of their Chief Constable if he used Oxford-style 'positive policing', that would be a real blow at the police. So would it be if Merseyside police committee

announced an inquiry into the killing of David Moore and the maiming of Paul Conroy, and summoned Oxford to give evidence.

Would these bourgeois-democratic proposals detract from or contradict the more advanced demands? I think not. On the contrary - they would be a fruitful path of development towards the more advanced demands (which we would continue to put forward).

Fighting for an unofficial or official police committee to call for 'cops out' of a particular area, or demand disbandment of SPGs etc. would help the struggle.

On the level of general principle, bourgeois-democratic control of the police can very well coexist with capitalism. It does, more or less, in the USA. But in Britain, with a strong political labour movement and a fairly high level of class struggle, formal bourgeois-democratic control would rapidly lead to clashes between Labour councils and the police. The police would defy the council's policy. Then either the councils would abandon their formal rights to control (that's what would happen if the present leadership of the labour movement is able to decide the matter), or they would move to break up the command structure of the police.

The bourgeois-democratic demands could mobilise the labour movement in conflict with the police - and then the outcome of that conflict would depend on our struggle for leadership in the labour movement.

In argument with Militant, it seems to me, our youth comrades have probably exaggerated polemically in an ultra-left direction. Militant raise 'democratic control of the police' as a cure-all, in a totally pacifist manner, and use scenarios about the future democratic, unionised, reformed police force to evade the harsh conflicts of today. We certainly have to argue against them. But the answer to opportunist use of bourgeois-democratic slogans is not to negate or ignore them, but to use them in a revolutionary way.

Living Mike  
 Conroy  
 07.6.68. wfg.  
 pic with Mike