

INTERNAL BULLETIN no.19

IMPERIALISM, THE ARGENTINE STATE, AND THE
FALKLANDS CONFLICT

Harrison

AMENDMENT TO THE CAROLAN, COLLINS ETC. RESOLUTION

Armstrong

PROPOSAL FOR VOTING IN PARTS

Armstrong

LATIN AMERICA AND THE FALKLANDS WAR: A NOTE

Kinnell

September 1982

IMPERIALISM, THE ARGENTINE STATE AND THE FALKLANDS CONFLICT.

INTRODUCTION

Due to pressure of time I have not been able to present a more polished document and apologise to comrades for a somewhat 'stream of consciousness' style of writing. I do not aim to cover specific documents, but hope to answer most of the points raised by the minority comrades and present some additional material and ideas to the rest of the WSL.

The Falklands debate has revealed a considerable difference in method within the League on how to approach important political questions. This will survive the by now almost dead Falklands issue. Essentially we have a division between 'dogmatists' those who supposedly base their position on the 'texts' of Trotsky and the 'revisionists' whose aim to analyse the real world rather than simply to rely on partially outdated writings and crude analogies with past political issues.

In the current dispute I take the side of the 'revisionists' against a mechanical 'cook book' approach to politics I consider the minority guilty of. For too long British Trotskyism has been a kind of fundamentalist sectarian movement. I consider the WSL politically mature enough to develop post-Trotsky Trotskyism, rather than engage in some of the childish political drivel we have witnessed in recent months.

THE ISSUE OF IMPERIALISM

Marxism is an open system. Therefore there can be no finished theory of imperialism. Lenin prefaced his definition of imperialism with the remark that it was "conditional and relative" and could never include "all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its complete development."

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a Brazilian Marxist who knows something about Latin America's socio economic relations wrote something quite pertinent to our debate. "In spite of the accuracy of Lenin's insights as measured against historical events in many parts of the world, some important recent changes have deeply affected the pattern of relationship between imperialist and dependent nations. These changes demand a reappraisal of emergent structures and their main tendencies. Even if these modifications are not so deep as the shift that enabled Lenin to characterise a new stage of capitalism during the period of imperialist expansion, they are marked enough to warrant a major modification of the established analyses of capitalism and imperialism."

Some comrades go in for crude generalisations wishing to put things into boxes labelled 'imperialism' and 'semi-colonies'. They see imperialism almost in a Maoist way (Uncle Sam and John Bull with big hats being opposed by the 'third world' masses). This approach fails to analyse the concrete conditions and relationships between capitalist countries and their relative locations within the international imperialist framework. World economic structures are fluid not frozen. Imperialism has witnessed significant changes since Lenin's death.

We can summarise these developments only briefly for now:-

1. The establishment of large transnational imperialist concerns which have a considerable degree of independence from nation states.
2. The relative autonomy of transnational capital from finance capital, meaning that we can no longer regard the latter as exclusively dominant.
3. The export of productive capital as opposed to finance capital by the major imperialist countries to the dependent economies, which in turn alters the internal

class relations of these states.

4. The integration of former imperialist economies, which makes it even more certain that we cannot simplistically identify 'imperialism' with the nation state. The question 'Is Britain no longer imperialist?' is really a puerile one to pose.
5. The 'de-colonisation' process as carried out by weak imperialist powers, especially Britain. This has created a different world political situation in which some 'Under-developed' states are neither neo-colonial or 'workers' states.
6. The growth of strong 'sub-imperialist' regimes such as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa and Nigeria the precise class nature of which needs to be concretely analysed.
7. The establishment of the USSR as the major political opponent of the USA on the inter-state level and the virtual elimination of military antagonisms between imperialist states.

IMPERIALISM AND LATIN AMERICA

We cannot adopt a Manichaeian world view of good and evil nations, and see all Latin American societies as being more or less the same as each other and having the same basic relationships with imperialist nations. Here it would be useful to give the three types of relationships between Latin American economies and Europe/USA in the 19th., some of which are still in existence today.

- A. Agrarian enclave. Here control of a single agricultural crop in the hands of foreign concerns, which also control the political state in the form of a puppet regime (e.g. Cuba, Nicaragua and Most of Central America).
- B. Mining enclave. Foreign control of the mining sector (e.g. Chile and Bolivia).
- C. Agrarian export economies where the means of production are controlled by the indigenous ruling groups (E.G. Argentina and Brazil)

Within these three basic types of economy there are also big differences. Chile ~~ix~~ had a separate manufacturing and agrarian economy of some importance and was able to establish a parliamentary democracy for a long period. Bolivia is obviously different. Similarly, Brazil did not rely on one agro/export group but three, one of which went down the drain with the collapse of sugar in the 1880's and another which lost out with the world collapse of coffee.

THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

Argentina, along with Uruguay has had historically the most developed and 'European' socio-economic structure in LA. There are many reasons for this, the first being its almost non-existent exploitation by Spanish colonialism. Spanish rule in Argentina lasted from 1776 to 1810 whereas in Cuba it was from 1519 to 1898.

The founders of the Argentine state were a modernising elite who sought to build the nation through European migration and colonisation. Founded before most European nations, (Belgium, Italy, Germany, etc), Argentina had a population of around 400,000 in 1810. These were the portenos of Buenos AIRES

The Argentine elite launched a genocide of the Indians in order to colonise

its territory with Europeans. Proportionately more Europeans emigrated to Argentina than any other country, including the USA in the C19th. The 6.5 million foreigners who arrived between 1856 and 1930 found a local population of only 1.2 million.

80% of industry and trade was in the hands of foreign immigrants by 1890. For more than 60 years foreigners represented 70% of the adult male population of Buenos Aires.

According to the Argentine writer Gino Germani Argentina was a "'republic of foreigners'; served by a small number of nationals performing unprofitable and burdensome tasks, such as keeping order, defending the territory, administering justice, and preserving the rights and special privileges of the immigrants themselves."

So Argentina did not have a large black or Indian population in slavery or peonage. It had an immigrant population escaping from foreign domination in Italy or semi-fuedalism in Spain. It was in many respects like Australia.

FORMS OF ECONOMIC CONTROL AND MODES OF POLITICAL DOMINATION

Although it is something of an oversimplification Argentina passed through four distinct historical phases.

1810 to 1880. The period of national foundation and unification under the dictator Manuel Rosas. The original colony expanded south and west at the expense of Paraguay and the Indians. In this period Argentina had a small population, small import/export trade and a small internal market.

1880 to 1930. This saw the establishment of an industrialised agro/export economy of great world importance. The very nature of mass meat production for the European market required a thorough bourgeoisification of land ownership and the gaucho vanished into national myth. British imperial capital participated in this process and it is correct to say that Argentina was a colony of Britain in all but name during this period.

1945 to 1955. The first period of Peron which was the nearest approximation to the Menshevik/Stalinist conception of "bourgeois democratic revolution." The economic transformations here were never actually led by the bourgeoisie (see Torcuato Di Tella 'Stalemate or coexistence in Argentina') In this period the state directed modernisation on the social base of the 'Peronised' labour movement. British imperialist interests were reduced in a situation of world decline for Britain following the 2nd. world war.

1955 onwards. This is a period of continued industrial expansion in alliance with mainly US capital. In this the big sectors of the bourgeoisie, 'national' and 'traditional' have a symbiotic relationship with the transnational concerns.

SUMMING UP ON ARGENTINA

The state was for a time in a 'semi colonial relationship with Britain despite its 'Europeanism' That relationship with Britain no longer exists. If the state is in a colonial relationship today it is one with the USA.

The 'national bourgeoisie' is an historical myth of Stalinism. It does not exist in actuality. In both Argentina and Brazil the majority of the native bourgeois class - industrial as well as agro export - were at best bystanders in the process of economic nationalisation.

The 'nationalisation' of the economies of Argentina and Brazil were carried out by proxy through the agency of the state in an economic conjuncture favourable to such a process. It is not 'written' that such historical events are 'impossible'. On the contrary, a 'revolution from above' occurred in Brazil and Argentina as it had done in Germany and Japan. It was a 'revolution' by the state however belated and partial, and one which redressed the balance of 'semi colonial dependancy' for a period. That a new form of dependancy was later created, does not deny the fact that Argentina and Brazil became nations which existed in the world in their own right with a relative autonomy from the major imperialist interests.

DEPENDANCY AND DEVELOPMENT

Some comrades have argued as to the 'unscientific' nature of the term 'sub-imperialism.' The very term 'semi-colony' or 'semi feudal' is also pretty imprecise. To say that 'semi feudalism' exists in Peru is not to say that the overall socio economic and political context of Peru today is the same as C18th France. How did 'semi feudal' France compare with 'semi feudal' Spain in the early C20th. The use of the term 'semi' is just as inadequate as the word 'sub' if we do not wish to fill it with a precise content. IT IS UP TO THE MINORITY TO CLARIFY THEIR TEXTBOOK TERMS BEFORE THEY CRITICISE ANYONE ELSE.

The issue of whether Argentina is a 'semi colony' or not doesn't really effect the Falklands argument however, as will be shown below. It has been discussed at length in order to illustrate the need for a concrete analysis of societies so necessary if the TILC is to develop an international revolutionary strategy.

Marx and Engels wrote next to nothing about Latin America. Lenin was also ignorant of much of its history. Trotsky also claimed he knew little. ("I am not sufficiently acquainted with the life of the individual Latin American countries to permit myself a concrete answer on the questions posed by you." If only some minority comrades would be so modest!)

There is a view put forward by Andre Gunday Frank and Regis Debray (and reflected by the USFI) which sees things in terms of a struggle between the Latin American states and imperialism. Castro and Allende talked in terms of a 'second war of national liberation' (what had happened to the first) against foreign imperialism. This position has nothing in common with Trotskyism as regards Argentina.

PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

Comrade Carolan has been pilloried by the ignorant 'fundamentalists' in our ranks for rejecting the theory of Permanent Revolution. What the charge shows is rather the quasi religious attitude some comrades adopt to the concept of PR.

Very schematically the democratic content of PR revolved around three tasks:

1. ABOLITION OF THE MONARCHY 2 REVOLUTION ON THE LAND 3. NATIONAL UNIFICATION

5

The first task was completed in South America (with the exception of Brazil and the Guyanas) in the 1810-1825 period.

In Argentina, the revolution on the land was carried out by the agrarian/export bourgeoisie before 1900 and they largely transformed their own economic situation. It is difficult to see how a mass meat export industry can be carried out under pre-capitalist modes of production unless minority comrades can produce examples of generalised slave and fuedal factory economies.

As for national unification, this was achieved under the Rosas regime, when he brought the agrarian federalist interests to heel and initiated the process for the creation of the modern Argentina. Since that time, the ruling class has the problem of trying to integrate foreign immigrants who did not regard the receiving country as a superiour culture to be imitated. As Di Tella says: "In the settlers' colony that was created, the prosperous urban groups - the bourgeoisie and the burgeoning middle classes despised the criollo native masses and their traditions." So we have a paradox here of a European immigrant group despising a previously established European group which would suggest that Argentina was colonised twice by Europeans!!

The emphasis on the flag, 'be Argentine, speak Spanish,' and the extreme nationalism of the state can all be seen in the context of trying to integrate immigrant masses into the structure. This is very different from the attitude of the 'criollos' in Peru and Guatamala who are not the 'native' culture. This goes to show how complex things can be comrades!

Argentina is a developed industrial and urban nation which has a GNP per capita more than nine times that of India, more than five times that of Turkey and $1\frac{1}{2}$ times that of neighbouring Chile. Its GNP has often exceeded Greece and Spain and its health provision, education, etc have often surpassed these dependent imperialist economies. Argentina even once had a GNP higher than Japan (1960)

Argentina is, however, dependant on foreign finance and productive capital as is any industrialised nation. Its industrial sector (as in Brazil) has been developed in alliance with imperialist transnational concerns. The significant social forces outside of the working class in Argentina (claim as they might to be 'nationalist') are in fact bound up and integrated into world imperialism. There is no real opposition between the capitalist class in Argentina today and the world imperialist system. Argentine state and business interests are fusing with foreign imperialist institutions.

The revolution in Argentina has but one phase - the Proletarian. 'National revolution' is a counter revolutionary, diversionist slogan of Stalinism. Argentine nationalism is a device to chain the working class to the dependant bourgeoisie and the corporate state bureaucracy.

BACKWARD NATIONALISM IN LATIN AMERICA

The states of Eastern and Central Europe in the inter-war years were neither 'imperialist' or 'semi-colonial'. There was a definite dependance on French and British financial capital. The states were politically unstable. They were often ruled by military dictatorships. They suppressed the working masses.

BUT THESE STATES WERE VEHEMENT IN THEIR NATIONALISM. They pressed their territorial demands on the neighbouring states. We have a similar situation today in Latin American, although the industrial sector is by and large far more developed.

The Argentine right has territorial designs on Chile, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay as well as Britain and Antarctica. Peru and Bolivia have conflict with Chile from the war of the Pacific. Ecuador and Peru are in territorial dispute which burst into armed conflict two years ago. Bolivia and Paraguay still quarrel over the Chaco. Venezuela and Guyana are in dispute. Brazil has gone way beyond the territorial limits set for it by Pope Alexander VI in 1494.

Reactionary nationalism would have had a field day if Galtieri won in the Falklands. That victory would have been just as reactionary as Thatcher's is.

IF IRELAND INVADED THE ISLE OF MAN...

Cathal Brugha was a 'progressive' Irish nationalist shot by the Irish imperialist 'Free State' army. Yet he had a dream of an Irish Empire which included the Isle of Man.

Regardless of what we think of the Irish state today ('imperialist' or 'semi-colonial'?) we would be against it invading the Isle of Man (I hope so!) Our position would regard as irrelevant the size, racial origins and political views of the Manx population. All things being equal, we would support the right of the Manx population not to be annexed by a foreign power and to remain part of Britain if they wished. We would not, however, support any move by the UK imperialist state to invade the island. We have no confidence in imperialism and believe that only the working class can safeguard democracy. Imperialism exploits democracy in order to enslave peoples.

Perhaps the above example was a little too fantastic. Let us present a potentially very real problem. In Guatemala the theory of permanent revolution applies. It is a semi colony of the USA. It wishes to annex Belize. The people of Belize do not want to be annexed. The people of Guatemala think annexation is a good thing. British imperialism has interests in the area.

What would the WSL position be in such an eventuality? The majority would say

1. Oppose Guatemalan annexation
2. Self determination for the people of Belize
3. No UK military intervention in Belize
4. British and Guatemalan masses against the war. 'Down with Thatcher and Rios Montt!'

The minority position would be something like

1. Oppose Guatemalan annexation but now they have done it they can have it because most of the people in the invading nation think it a good idea and a continuation of the national revolution of 1821.
2. The Belizeans are not a nation are therefore have no rights. They colonised Belize as slaves and are pro imperialist because they want to be British. An independant Belize is not viable because it can only exist with British Army support.

3. Victory to Guatemala!
4. Down with the camp of Thatcher but we will have to think about Rios Montt.

The blacks of Belize have reluctantly given up their status as British colonials. What exactly did their demand to stay 'British' actually mean? A conscious support for British imperialism and everything it stands for. No, it stood for a desire not to live under a capricious and brutal Guatemalan regime. If there were only two choices, if the world were Manichaean, then who could blame the Belizeans?

666 UNVIABLE 'SHEEPSHAGGERS'

There is a little of the Spartacist mentality in the attitude of the minority comrades who hold the Falkland Islanders in contempt for not being what they would commonly regard as a textbook example of an oppressed people. The attitude is that they are reactionary, pro-imperialist, inbred and probably indulge in unnatural acts with sheep.

Certainly the Falklanders are hardly the cardboard cut out proletarian revolutionaries of socialist realism. Before April, they lived a C19th style rural parish existence, now gone forever. Today the self determination slogan has very little meaning because of the British imperialist re occupation.

But most of the arguments for Argentine 'sovereignty' are nonsense, based as they are on a colonial occupation of eight years by just over a score of Argentines. Argentina never really 'missed' these islands in any economic or social sense. There were after all plenty of places more hospitable for them to colonise. On the other hand, the islands were in no way central to British imperialism's relationship with the Argentine economy. The prosperous Argentine Anglos were upset by the invasion because it stopped them making money. Argentina's people today realise what a waste of life and money the invasion was. Galtieri used it in the same way that Mussolini used demands for Corsica, Nice and Savoy as a bolster to dictatorship and reactionary nationalism.

THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE OF ISLINGTON AND OTHER PLACES

When Lenin was talking about self determination he was referring to the rights of peoples. It was not a question of numbers or whether they were a nation. The fundamental point was whether they would oppress others if they had self-determination.

Marxists are in favour of the rights of individuals to self determination. The right of women to walk the streets freely without fear of verbal or physical assault. The right of a black not to be discriminated in a job. The right of a gay to enter into a relationship of his/her choosing, ETC. Numbers have nothing to do with it and "three streets" in some parts of Islington would complain vigourously about attacks on any of these rights.

What do we say about other bits of Empire. Again we have to review each case concretely if we are to be Marxists. We cannot issue blanket declarations. Hong Kong obviously to be returned to China. Gibraltar to be returned to Spain (itself

8

an imperialist country) not only for historic reasons, but because it is in an exploitative relationship with surrounding Spanish areas.

Deciding on other 'bits' is not so straightforward. Tristan Da Cunha Who does that belong to Perhaps Argentina It probably belonged to the Spanish colonial empire at one time after all! It has only 320 inhabitants - not even one street in Islington or the national membership of the WSL! They can't have any rights. So far as I know no other nation has claimed sovereignty over Tristan Da Cunha. Why don't we demand Argentina kicks these 320 pro British pidgin English speaking bastards of the Island in the name of 'national liberation' of Argentina.

Pressures of Chauvanism

To anyone who knows anything about the majority comrades on the NC the accusation that they are chauvanists is absolutely stupid. Yet absolutely stupid comrades have actually levelled such a charge.

We live in a bourgeois democracy which, even during this disgusting military adventure, allowed pro Argentine newspapers to be printed and anti war demonstrations to take place. Our paper was anti war and internationalist throughout the conflict. The government would have censored or banned our paper along with the IMG's or WRP's if it decided to. There was no real 'pressure' on the left to become social chauvanists. The fact that the Grantites were is more to do with their general world outlook than the crisis of the moment.

Where the 'pressure' did come from, however, was among the radical mileau in the 'three streets in Islington' and other places where petit bourgeois leftists tend to huddle together to keep out the cold of a British summer.

I'M A BETTER ANTI-CHAUVANIST THAN YOU ARE! NO YOU'RE NOT!

The great left wing competition during the Falklands crisis was who can be the best emotional (or tired and emotional) anti-chauvanist. It was a re-run of Oklahoma ('I can do anything better than you can') or 'as soon as this pub closes.' In this context, easily influenced comrades with a rudimentary knowledge of Marxism, were swooped upon by the predators of the IMG and WRP who saw an opportunity to try to split the WSL. Some of our comrades were unsure of how to argue a complex Marxist position against these sectarian petit-bourgeois elements. They reacted to this pressure and took it inside the WSL. We have to fight this pressure.

"THE FALKLANDS FACTOR"

We are undergoing a division in the organisation which could either make or break us. There are different political methodologies. Some comrades have genuine political differences which must be ironed out in a rational and scientific manner. There are also a few comrades who are incapable of conducting such a debate.

9

Some comrades have even declared they want a split. This sector, a small minority within the minority, are either hopelessly hind round dogmatists or frightened clique politicians.

I am confident that whichever position wins at the special conference, the WSL will continue to struggle against cosy cliques of sectarians. Our struggle is for the development of Marxist theory as applied to the world political situation of today. It is not a competition; but a serious dialectical movement of theoretical clarification and understanding.

AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION FROM CAROLAN AND OTHERS: Armstrong.

Add a new section 14:

While we have been able to reach a definitive position on the Falklands/Malvinas war, the discussion has shown the woeful inadequacy of our understanding of modern imperialism. This inadequacy is shared by the other tendencies claiming to be Trotskyist and will not easily be overcome.

But as part of a continuing process of education and discussion with the WSL the Executive is instructed to commission a series of theoretical studies on various aspects of the question; to produce reading lists; and to ensure the publication of discussion articles in the magazine and the paper. This work should be carried out in collaboration with the other TILC sections.

PROPOSAL ON VOTING IN PARTS:

In the resolution from Carolan and others, to vote on the first 5 paragraphs of section 6 separately from the last two paragraphs.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE FALKLANDS WAR: A NOTE

Kinnell

The latest issue of the (British) SWP magazine Socialist Review contains an interesting report from David Beecham (just back from Brazil) and Mike Gonzalez:

"The attitude of opposition forces - the whole of the organised left up to and including 'Trotskyists' - through Latin America [to the Falklands war] has been tailored to the 'geopolitical' issues. The rhetoric about national liberation and dependency has generally been reinforced.

"The one exception to this generalisation is the largest and most industrialised country in the whole continent: Brazil. The attitude of the Brazilian left, almost without exception, and indeed of the Brazilian population, to the Falklands crisis has been quite different. The Brazilian ruling class and military also took a quite distinct position. There are various reasons for this.

"An underlying cause is the residual suspicion of Argentina in Brazil, which dates from a history of conflicts and also stems from the competition between the two ruling classes for regional dominance... [Beecham and Gonzales go on to describe the Brazilian ruling class's "almost studied neutrality"].

"On the left the attitude to the Malvinas crisis could be summed up by the statement 'The Argentinians should not have intervened and the British should not be there'. Most of the Brazilian left took the position that the war was a diversion for the British and the Argentinian working class. Brazil should not become involved. The main struggle was at home.

"A critical factor in all this must be the enormous upsurge in workers' struggle, and the emergence of a workers' party in Brazil. [In a region where the working class is mostly dominated by bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalism, the Workers' Party in Brazil is just about the only such party - apart from the Stalinists.] While populism is far from dead, the opposition to the military regime and the ruling class over the past few years has been so dominated by the working class that the rhetoric of 'people's freedom and national liberation' does not make a lot of sense.

"The Brazilian left and rank and file trade union militants have also been unique in Latin America in not expressing reservations or outright hostility about Solidarity in Poland. Ideas are much less dominated by the myths of Cuba and the Soviet Union than elsewhere... traditional Third Worldist ideas are very much in retreat".