

Minority resolution on the Falklands/Malvinas war

- 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 from imperialism territory plundered in the past, or to weaken imperialism in the area. In fact it could have resulted in an American base on the islands. 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 opposed 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 territory plundered by imperialism, but 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 continuing to oppose the Galtieri invasion, our position should have switched to Argentine defencism once Thatcher dispatched the fleet. From that moment it was no longer a "Falklands issue", but a war of imperialist authority, designed to strengthen world imperialism by regaining its ability to use military force against the oppressed nations of the world when they step out of line. US imperialism, which had initially equivocated, lined up with Britain, recognising that the war could help reestablish the authority of imperialism so crucially weakened since the Vietnam defeat. (The Israeli invasion of the Lebanon is an obvious example of imperialism and its agents taking immediate advantage of the world situation created by Thatcher's war. Now the South African regime is planning to cash in, by planning the same kind of 'final solution' against SWAPO). It was a war launched by a major imperialist power (Britain) against a nation (Argentina) which is historically, economically and politically a victim of imperialism. Under these conditions, in line with basic Leninist principles, we should have stood for the defence of Argentina, irrespective of the nature of the current regime, whilst maintaining our complete political independence.
- 5) Under these conditions, self-determination for the Falklanders - on which the NC majority case rests - does not apply. Why do the Falklanders represent such a freakish phenomenon: a population of a colony who want to remain a part of the empire, in contrast to the multi-millions who have fought for freedom from it? This is because the Falklands are a colonial enclave, part of a system of enclaves which have been used by imperialism in strategic places around the globe to facilitate its military and political domination. They are tied administratively and militarily to the metropolis and usually kept racially and culturally distinct

from the region involved.

Although the Falklanders are deeply oppressed themselves by imperialism (their standard of living being very low, and with the imperialist hold upon them being through ideology rather than material concessions), they are in fact a part of the 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 which claims the territory back is "the people must determine their own future".

It is therefore simply wrong to say that the Falklanders (or more correctly the Falklands, since the islanders are simply pawns of imperialism) "oppress no-one". Whilst they remain a colony of the British empire they do. The mere existence of imperialist territory off the coast of an oppressed nation is oppressive. It can potentially be used as a major military base at any time, should imperialism so choose (as it has done since the Falklands war ended). It is therefore simply wrong to say that Argentine national rights were not involved; they were.

6) Inside Argentina, the starting point for our policy should have been the fight for the defeat of the British fleet, while recognising that the conduct of the war was in the hands of a class with very strong links to imperialism; a capitalist class of an oppressed country, thrown by its own miscalculation into a war with imperialism, yet determined not to break those links.

Our policy should never confuse the objectives of the working class with those of the capitalist class. To assert the independent interests and mobilisation of the Argentine workers required a programme which started out with the struggle to take the conduct of the war out of the hands of the bourgeoisie who in reality did not 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-capitalist direction: arm the workers; seize the imperialist holdings; refuse to pay debts to the imperialist banks; point to the inability of the junta and the officer caste to conduct the war; demand full trade union and political rights, the release of all political prisoners and the right of rank and file soldiers to organise and to elect their own officers. The struggle to defeat the British task force was therefore also the struggle to defeat Galtieri.

7) Would a Galtieri victory have strengthened the junta? No. A defeat for British imperialism would have benefitted the working class both in Argentina and elsewhere. The junta, as similar juntas, is the local dictator who acts on behalf of imperialism, more or less openly a part of imperialist political control in countries which have gained formal political independence. The junta rests on imperialism. If imperialism is weakened and the oppressed masses encouraged and strengthened on a world scale, so too the basis of the junta is weakened. Thatcher's victory, on the other hand, strengthens the basis for such juntas in the oppressed nations of the world.

The fact that the British victory has been followed by further crisis in the military regime and a renewal of mass struggle by the Argentinian working class is testimony to the strength of that workers' movement and the scale of the crisis which drove Galtieri into the war - not a justification for a defeatist line. Having resorted to populist tactics by launching the war, the discredited generals have proved unable to reassert their previous levels of repression of the workers' movement."

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