

WORKERS SOCIALIST REVIEW 2

70p



**FALKLANDS—
WHOSE WAR?**



Sean Geraghty after his court hearing on August 13

The arithmetic of class struggle

THIS ISSUE of Workers' Socialist Review goes to press just after the Fleet Street employers' unsuccessful attempt to get EETPU Press Branch secretary Sean Geraghty jailed for contempt of court in leading a strike in support of the health workers.

The failure of the bosses' attempt — Geraghty was fined £350 plus costs — gave a boost to the whole labour movement. Where do we stand now?

The slump

The first half of 1982 (not including the ASLEF dispute) showed a total of strike-days almost equal to the whole of 1981: about 4 million. But that is still a low figure by the standards of the 1970s.

Industrial production has just dipped again, back to the same level as the 1975 slump. Manufacturing industry is some 11 per cent below 1975's level. The slump — with all its effects in increasing unemployment

and pressurising those still employed — has no end in sight.

The Tories are still riding high in the opinion polls after their Falklands sabre-waving. The Labour Party leaders are helping the Tories by delicately trying to purge radical left-wing commitments from the party manifesto, and not-so-delicately witch-hunting Militant.

In the ASLEF dispute the TUC leadership mobilised itself for concerted, disciplined action in a way rarely seen — in order to break the strike. The weight of TUC discipline was used, not to bring other unions out alongside the train drivers' union threatened with mass sackings, but to force ASLEF back to work.

A gloomy picture? Yes, but it is only half of the reality. During the same period, support for the health workers — especially on June 23 — has reached levels of solidarity action not seen since 1972 or 1976.

Socialists have long agitated for strikes by other workers in support of

the NHS workers, but really with the idea in our minds that a few token stoppages would represent a peak achievement. Now, suddenly, solidarity strikes have been mushrooming and burgeoning on a mass scale.

The tactics of the NHS union leaders — rejecting the NUPE conference call for all-out action, and instead going for more and more spread-out and dispersed dribs and drabs — may yet torpedo the dispute. But in any case the experience of the solidarity action is a lasting gain.

The rail disputes

The rail disputes also showed tremendous rank and file militancy. Conditions could hardly have been worse.

The union leaderships were deliberately, grotesquely divisive. The ASLEF leadership had practically conceded the flexible rosters issue **before** it called its strike. NUR general secretary Sid Weighell sabotaged his union's strike,

A newly aggressive management, making Edwardes-style threats, with a war-like Tory government behind it, was backed up by a press barrage. Yet both the NUR and the ASLEF rank and file were remarkably solid. ASLEF activists — no thanks to their leaders — were organising successful flying pickets.

The union conferences this year have generally shown a shift to the left. Most spectacular was Arthur Scargill's first conference as president of the National Union of Mineworkers, which set the NUM firmly on course for confrontation with the government. The miners look like being the next big test case in the continuing war between the Tories and the unions.

The new generation of Broad Lefts in the unions continues to multiply: CPSA, NUR, COHSE, TGWU, POEU, UCW, IRSF... these new Broad Lefts vary, of course, in their politics and effectiveness. They are all, however, a distinct breed from the old Communist Party dominated Broad Lefts: more left wing, more activist, less bureaucratic. The political clamour in the Labour Party is clearly beginning to resound through the unions, too.

The Labour witch-hunt

And though some of the prominent leaders of the Left (in the LCC, for example) have responded weakly to the witch-hunt, the constituency rank and file has so far been solid. They reject firmly the idea that any group or faction (except, of course, the already-established bureaucracies and the Parliamentary Labour Party!) must depend for its right to existence on "positive vetting" by the NEC.

The Socialist Workers' Party has distinguished itself on the left as the most vehement advocate of the view that the working class has suffered a historic collapse — which forces socialists back to rebuilding elementary trade unionism at grass-roots level. They dismiss the activities of the new Broad Lefts and the ferment in the Labour Party as mere resolution-passing, and even propose the remarkable view that the problem with Tony Benn is that he is too left wing for the working class. The Labour Party, they argue, is caught in an insoluble dilemma, because more left-wing policies will surely mean more certain electoral defeat.

Obstacles to struggle

There is a grain of truth in the SWP's arguments, of course. Often there are left-wing resolutions passed at Labour Party GCs or Trades Councils which have very little relation to action. But the point then is not to reject the resolution-passing — which is after all a necessary part of the political development and regrouping of the Left — but to fight to link it to action. And all the evidence is that given a sufficiently clear call from a strong leadership, the apparently 'apathetic' and 'demoralised' rank and file will respond.

For the situation is not that the voltage of class consciousness has been cut off. The voltage is very high, but the existing leadership is maintaining crucial breaks in the circuit through which the current of class struggle could flow. Occasionally sparks leap

through this insulation, showing what is possible.

At the same time as the most modest disputes face great difficulties, in recent months — around the NHS dispute, around the ASLEF dispute, and again around the possible jailing of Sean Geraghty — workers have been talking about a general strike. It seems paradoxical. So long as the outlook for small disputes remain bad, shouldn't the talk of general strike be dismissed as mere hot air, or sloganising to keep our spirits up? if we are weak factory by factory, how can we be so strong overall?

Two and two make ten

The answer is that in the arithmetic of class struggle two and two do not make four, but ten or twenty. Workers who are realistic in being un-confident

about small local battles can be equally realistic in being confident about the prospects if only the whole force of the labour movement can be mobilised.

A revolutionary organisation

The issue hinges, then, on challenging, winning control over, and replacing the leadership in the labour movement. This is a struggle which is not the work of one day, which proceeds in many different tactical forms, and cannot be accomplished by this or that group proclaiming itself as the saviour come from afar. Nevertheless the essential core and political driving force of the process has to be a revolutionary Marxist organisation, integrated within the existing movement and tactically sensitive to it but absolutely sharp and clear on its political principles. That is the organisation the WSL is working to build.

Join the WSL

The present Workers' Socialist League was formed in July 1981 by the fusion of the old Workers' Socialist League with the International-Communist League.

The old WSL originated in the expulsion from the Workers' Revolutionary Party in late 1974 of about 200 members, including the principal working-class base of the WRP in the Cowley car plants at Oxford. They had opposed the accelerating sectarian degeneration of the WRP.

The I-CL was created by a fusion of Workers' Fight and the former International Socialists Left Faction in December 1975. Workers' Fight, the larger of these two groups, dated back to a small breakaway in 1966 from the Militant tendency, but traced its political roots to the early-1960s SLL (forerunner of the WRP). It rejected the SLL from the mid-'60s as irredeemably sectarian.

The WSL, together with the LOR (Italy), TAF (Denmark), and Socialist Fight (Australia), is affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee. The RWL (USA) is prevented from affiliating to TILC by reactionary legislation, but is in political sympathy.

The WSL organises on the basis of democratic centralism, and aims to help build a revolutionary workers' party in Britain as part of a revolutionary International. For other WSL literature, see the advertisement elsewhere in this issue.

* For more information about the WSL, write to: WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

I would like more information about the WSL.

Name

Address

.....

Send to: WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

LEBANON:

with the PLO against Israel

The invasion of Lebanon by Israel is aimed at delivering a crushing blow to the Palestinians and creating, through the defeat of the Lebanese National Movement, the conditions for the restabilisation of Lebanon on the basis of the rule of bourgeois reaction.

The Zionist state here acts as the mailed fist of US imperialism. The EEC states, while condemning Israel's invasion, continue to supply arms to the Zionists. There has also been dissent within the US ruling class (possibly reflected in the replacement of Haig by Schultz). Indeed there are even differences between the Begin-Sharon leadership and the more reliable interpreters of US foreign policy on the leadership of the so-called Israeli Labour Party as to precisely how to effect a final solution. But whatever differences there may be, all these forces are united on the need to crush the Palestinians and defeat the Lebanese National Movement.

The Arab regimes have no wish to see the victory of the Palestinians and the Lebanese National Movement. At present a victory of this alliance would be incomparably more threatening to them than a strengthening of imperialism through the victory of Zionism and the Lebanese Right. Their play at 'forcing concessions' from imperialism and Zionism is a show in response to the pressure from the masses.

The Stalinist bureaucracy fears a further strengthening of imperialism in the region; but its counter-revolutionary desire for co-existence with imperialism prevents it from countenancing any line of action that would threaten vital imperialist interests, and its innate conservatism leads it to cling to its existing alliances...even where these allies are preparing a capitulation to imperialism.

2. The timing of the present onslaught is to be understood as deriving from the pressure on the Zionist state coming from the mounting Palestinian action on the West Bank on the one hand, and the freedom of action granted to Israel by Egypt's signing of the Camp David Agreements and Iraq's embroilment in the Gulf War.





More fundamentally, however, the invasion connects back to the Lebanese civil war. This war was the outcome of two intersecting developments. On the one hand the distribution of state power enshrined in the National Pact of 1943 no longer represented the communal balance within Lebanon as the Muslim population increased. On the other hand a radicalisation had taken place among the Lebanese working class and petty bourgeois (mainly in the Muslim communities), catalysed by the presence of the Palestinians. Both developments threatened the relatively privileged position of the Maronite community and the position of the Maronite bourgeoisie in particular. And while the class struggle had not advanced to the point of challenging bourgeois power, it both created the conditions which permitted the Palestinians a considerable freedom of action.

The mid-70s saw the beginning of a systematic offensive by the Lebanese fascists, playing on the existing communal divisions, directed at the forces challenging the traditional allocation of power. Within this offensive there were also clashes between rival communal militias, the Keta'eb (Phalangists led by Gemayel) emerging as the chief battering ram of the offensive of the Lebanese bourgeoisie as a whole.

In the course of the counter-offensive against the fascists and their allies, there evolved an alliance between the PLO and the LNM — an alliance which not only constituted an immense step forward in the fight against Lebanese reaction and Zionist attacks, but was a pragmatic prefiguration of the strategic alliance necessary between the Palestinians and the oppressed masses if Zionism is to be defeated. The refusal at first by the PLO leadership — effectively the leadership of Fatah — to involve their forces in domestic struggle constituted a criminal repetition of their line that in 1970 enabled Hussein to slaughter the Palestinians in Jordan. This time it permitted the advance of the fascists against both the Palestinians and the LNM. The course of events and pressure from the base forced the PLO leaders belatedly to create an alliance with the LNM.

The recent desertion from this alliance of sections of the LNM, above all of Walid Joumblatt, represents, whatever statements may be made about the continued commitment to fight Zionism and Lebanese fascism, an historic betrayal. It weakens not only the Palestinians' struggle, but also the fight against the extreme Right and opens up the possibility for imperialism to impose its solution and include some of those elements until recently fighting on the side of the Palestinians and forces opposing fascism.

Given the breakdown in the central state apparatus and the offensive of reaction, the Lebanese masses fighting the right-wing offensive were forced to create organs of self-defence and self-administration. These organs are not the expression of a proletarian challenge to the bourgeois state power, but of the petty-bourgeois and proletarian masses pitted against a fascist onslaught.

3. The Syrian intervention of 1976 was directed at halting the counter-offensive of the Palestinians and the LNM and using control over Lebanon as a card to be used in striking a bargain with imperialism. The Syrian government — including a complaining but co-operating Communist Party of Syria — kept its troops in Lebanon, butchering now the Palestinians and their allies, now the Phalangists and their supporters.

This bloody balancing act was given diplomatic cover by the agreement negotiated on behalf of the Arab regimes by the Libyan leader, Jaloud. Again the Arab regimes — from the verbal Left to the verbal Right, from monarchist to pseudo-socialist — supported a solution designed to break the radical impetus of the Palestinian struggle.

Today Israel uses the situation in Lebanon to weaken the Syrian regime militarily. We condemn this aggression and support Syria against Israel but at the same time place not the slightest confidence in the Assad regime to offer any resistance to Zionism or otherwise act as a wall of defence for the Palestinians and the Lebanese Left.

The Zionist state

4. The Zionist state was established by dispossessing the Palestinian Arabs. Its establishment and continued existence have only been possible with imperialist support — a support given because Israel is the watchdog of imperialism in the Middle East, the servant of its interests, in particular the interests of the dominant imperialist, the United States.

Although this support gives rise on occasion to complications for imperialism in its attempts to relate to the Arab bourgeois and feudal-bourgeois regimes, Israel remains the primary military instrument for maintaining imperialist order and imperialist interests in the Middle East. Imperialism's reliance on Israel is qualitatively different from its reliance on other agencies.

Having expelled the Palestinians and being a weapon against any Arab initiatives opposed to the interests of imperialism, the Zionist state is compelled to try to impose its will over, and sometimes to occupy, ever wider surrounding territories either for its own security or to do the bidding of imperialism.

5. The Palestinian people are the direct and central victims of the imperialist-sponsored Zionist settlement. We are for the destruction of the Zionist state and unconditionally in support of the struggle of the oppressed nation, the Palestinians, against the oppressor, Israel.

We are in favour of the destruction of the Zionist state and the creation in its place of a democratic and secular state in all of Palestine — that is, a unified state respecting the right of all those who presently live there to live side by side with the returning Palestinians as citizens, but while the PLO leadership — because of its own class interests and because of pressure from the Soviet Union — struggles in reality for a bourgeois state and develops consequent strategic and tactical positions, we affirm that the destruction of the Zionist state will necessarily be the task of the oppressed masses under the leadership of the working class and is practically inconceivable without the Arab working class having established its class rule in at least a substantial part of the Arab East.

We advocate and would fight for the maximum cultural and communal rights for Jews within such a state that are compatible with its existence, but oppose any 'bi-national' or confessional arrangement opposed to the wishes of the Palestinian people.

6. The establishment of a Palestinian sovereign state on the West Bank or West Bank plus Gaza Strip would not constitute a just solution of the Palestinian question. There can be no just settlement without the right of the Palestinian people to return to all of pre-partition Palestine as citizens.

The fact that a section of the PLO leadership has for some time been pressing for such a state and the fact that this leadership would in return for the establishment of such a state guarantee the borders of Israel — if necessary by militarily suppressing those wanting to continue to struggle against the Zionist settlement — does not change the fact that the Palestinian nation has a right to return to all of Palestine, nor does it legitimate the existence of a Jewish state based on the expropriation of Arab lands.

No such agreement resulting from the murderous attack of Zionism of any other forces can be considered as having the slightest legitimacy.

7. The outcome of the present conflict centred on Lebanon will have profound importance for some time to come, both for the course of class struggles in the region and for the course of imperialist development regionally and globally.

In Australia, Greece and Scotland, the trade union movement has called for a boycott of the Zionist state. There is an urgent need to mobilise working class support for the Palestinian people and those others fighting reaction.

8. In Israel the anti-war feeling has been growing. Despite the political amorphousness of the huge demonstration called by the 'Peace Now' leaders under pressure, the importance of a protest of such size during a military campaign should not be under-estimated. Nor should the petty-bourgeois composition of the anti-war movement as a whole cause us to downplay the importance it could have: the movement could develop into a qualitative step towards internal political differentiation in that state. We recognise particularly the important role played within the anti-war movement of the Anti-War Committee that has developed out of the Bir Zeit Committee.

Adopted by TILC, August 2 1982.
Note: the vote on point 5 was taken as consultative only, pending further discussion.

The struggle in Central America

Resolution of the TILC, December 1981

Since this resolution was discussed, there have been several changes of facade. Following the elections in El Salvador, the Christian Democrat president Duarte — who was always something of a figurehead without real control over the army — has been ousted in favour of a nominee of Roberto d'Aubuisson, described by a former US ambassador as 'a pathological killer'. In Guatemala a coup has brought Rios Montt to power. But essentially the same struggle continues, between the same forces.

In recent weeks, several thousand Honduran troops have entered El Salvador to aid the Salvadorean army. The Nicaraguan government has reported that substantial armed forces have invaded from Honduras; the US government admits that US transport planes are running regular flights to the border. Our criticisms of — indeed, more than criticisms: expressions of class independence from and hostility to — the Nicaraguan government and the FDR-FMLN leadership in no way diminish our unconditional solidarity with them against the aggression of US imperialism and its local agents.

SINCE THE overthrow of Somoza, Central America has been the scene of sharpening struggles. Over the last year the Reagan administration has sought with ever-greater desperation to weaken and reverse the mobilisation of the masses in Guatemala and El Salvador, to promote a counter-revolution in Nicaragua, and to cow the Castro leadership in Cuba.

In escalating its military presence in the area and returning to the politics of the Cold War, the moves of imperialism in Central America are a sharper expression of its worldwide strategy. But the challenge to US military and economic supremacy is also most acute in this, its own 'backyard'.

IMPERIALIST STRATEGY

By mid-November 1981 Secretary of State General Haig had begun openly preparing the diplomatic ground for a possible blockade of Cuba and Nicaragua as well as direct military intervention in El Salvador. These threats — which have always existed — have become more insistent and acute. They have been met by a defensive mobilisation of military force in both Cuba and Nicaragua, as well as loud warnings by the regime in Grenada that they fear a US invasion.

Yet Pentagon war chiefs are cautious about actual intervention. US imperialism faces problems in moving from threats to actions, because of:

- * The weakening of its power — reflected in economic crisis at home and abroad, and repeated blows struck against its political power, particularly since the Vietnam war,

- * The opposition that it would face — for diverse reasons — from the American people,

- * The increased importance for imperialism of its relationships with Third World

bourgeois and military rulers, who in turn have become increasingly conscious of their own interests in some instances running counter to those of their US sponsors. This means that the US imperialists could not necessarily count upon material support even from the most pro-US and anti working class dictatorships in Latin America. It is this latter fact which acts as an obstacle to the use of the so-called 'peace-keeping force' of the Organisation of American States in place of US marines in El Salvador — a course which would otherwise be cheaper, diplomatically more acceptable, and easier to sell to public opinion than a direct US intervention.

As regards direct US intervention, the Pentagon knows full well that it would not today be a question simply of repeating the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. National liberation struggles have advanced in strength and scope, and the US would be forced to fight protracted anti-guerilla wars in the face of mass opposition. US imperialism has an unhappy precedent for such actions in Vietnam — and has no guarantee that it would be able, even much closer to home, to avoid a repetition of the same experience.

But despite the large obstacles in the way of the US mounting a military intervention in line with Haig's threats we cannot exclude the possibility that the Reagan administration could resort to such measures. Sound the alarm and mobilising on an international scale against any such intervention is a major task in the workers' movement of the imperialist countries.

We should recognise that within the USA the campaign against intervention is based largely on the antipathy to new foreign adventures in the aftermath of Vietnam. Though the campaign is publicly headed by

liberal sectors, it has gained most of its impetus in Congress from an essentially conservative reaction. The task of mobilising a proletarian internationalist opposition to the war drive has been evaded by the leaders of the US workers' movement.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

In this situation a division has developed within the imperialist bloc between the USA and sectors of the European bourgeoisie. These elements — expressing themselves principally through the Second International — have declared major reservations about the Reagan strategy for Central America, and produced an alternative strategy which appears to challenge it.

This difference is most obvious in the Franco-Mexican recognition of the Salvadorean opposition front, the FDR-FMLN. This is particularly important because Mexico is the strongest local capitalist state, of great strategic importance to the USA.

Social democracy opposes the Reagan stance of strengthening the existing local oligarchies and their military dictatorships — a policy which has led inevitably to genocidal civil wars. Instead the reformists look to concede political independence and an end to absolutist rule of the landed bourgeoisies, in a bid to forestall the complete destruction of the capitalist state apparatus and thus preserve the basic property relations within a reconstructed state-capitalist regime. It envisages nationalisations sufficiently extensive to provide an infrastructure and guarantee of the long-term extraction of surplus-value by imperialism.

This strategy is less immediately threatening to the masses than the US war drive and its arming of the dictatorships. But ultimately it is equally as pernicious — since it seems to fit in with the aims of national liberation struggle and to coincide with many of the proposals of the petty bourgeois nationalist leaderships of the guerrilla organisations. These leaders themselves seek only to achieve formal bourgeois democratic freedoms. But they, like the Second International, fail to grasp that such freedoms are not realisable in backward capitalist states.

Social democracy is also fighting for the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the national liberation movements. This means limiting the mass mobilisation and fighting ultimately for bourgeois control over the very workers' movement upon which the nationalists and social democrats themselves depend to accomplish their schemes. The strategy of social democracy rests on the containment of the anti-imperialist struggle and the suppression

in particular of its socialist element.

MOBILISATION OF THE MASSES

NICARAGUA: In Nicaragua the initial class alliance forged by the FSLN is now falling apart. But it shows no sign of being replaced by a workers' and peasants' government based on a strong working class leadership. Meanwhile the Sandinista regime continues to follow its necessarily erratic and crisis-ridden course as a petty bourgeois leadership which is organically threatened not only by the domestic bourgeoisie (as in the constant tirades of the La Prensa newspaper) but also by the working class (bringing from the FSLN the typically bonapartist response of prohibiting strikes and independent proletarian organisation).

The US offensive has succeeded in revealing to the FSLN that imperialism is not susceptible to diplomatic overtures, but fights constantly for its interests – though the form of its fight varies according to circumstances. Hence after failing to obtain indisputable bourgeois hegemony in the new regime, Carter's administration embarked upon the campaign of economic and diplomatic sabotage which Reagan and Haig are now escalating into a full-scale offensive.

To the petty bourgeois leaders of the FSLN the choice now appears to be between

two alternatives – neither of which is a proletarian revolutionary policy. Either:

a) they must submit to client status to imperialism – the terms of which they cannot hope to negotiate – at the expense of their prestige and positions in the eyes of the masses of Nicaragua, or

b) they must make a clean break with imperialism, nationalising the remaining decisive sections of the economy and aligning themselves clearly with the Stalinist bloc. This course – with material aid from the Kremlin – could conceivably go as far as the destruction of capitalism and the creation of a deformed workers' state, in a rough parallel with Cuba.

The Sandinista leadership – despite their rhetoric – show no signs of internationalist action. But while they continue to hold back the masses, and fail – despite imperialist accusations – to provide necessary aid to the struggle in El Salvador and Guatemala, the FSLN will dig the grave of the Nicaraguan revolution. But the masses of Nicaragua must be offered a third, revolutionary alternative, based upon a turn to the masses in struggle against imperialism. This means steps towards the mobilisation of the masses in Nicaragua to expropriate the capitalists, together with open support for other Central American struggles and public demands for aid from Cuba, the Soviet bloc and the international working

class. It is for their failure to offer such a perspective and not through any abstract or dogmatic motivations that Trotskyists criticise the FSLN and call for the building of a revolutionary proletarian leadership – a Trotskyist party – in Nicaragua.

EL SALVADOR: In El Salvador the puppet Duarte regime and the USA are losing the guerilla war simply by not winning it. Militarily the guerillas of the FMLN have recovered from the disastrous 'final offensive' of January 1981 and now effectively control a third of the country. But without external support they will be incapable of making a breakthrough and gaining state power in the short or medium term.

The FDR-FMLN alliance has been built on the Nicaraguan model. It is therefore intrinsically unstable even under war conditions. On the one hand the bourgeois reformists (Ungo, Mayorga and Zamora) seek a negotiated settlement in tandem with social democracy. On the other hand within the FMLN itself certain groups (notably FARN) constantly tend to the 'short cut' of a coup in alliance with dissident sectors of the military. This reveals their aim: an entente with imperialism.

Yet the bourgeois forces in the FDR have no significant social base. They rely upon the backing of the Communist Party, which is still attached to the unrealistic policy of a

WSL publications

Workers' Socialist Review no.1:
Capitalist Crisis and Socialist
Alternative, by Bob Sutcliffe ... 50p

TILC Bulletin no.1: Poland,
the FI(IC) split, Central America,
Italy, South Africa, France 20p

TILC International Discussion
Bulletin: The Transitional
Programme in Today's Class
Struggle 60p

The Fight for Workers' Power:
Manifesto of the I-CL 80p

The Battle for Trotskyism (record
of a struggle inside the WRP) ... £2.50

'Communists' against Revolution:
two essays on post-war Stalinism £1.75

Makers of Modern Marxism, by
Terry Eagleton 60p

Trotskyism Today no.4: Transit-
ional Programme, Mandel and
Stalinism, US SWP 45p

Trotskyism Today no.2: History
of the Fourth International;
British Trotskyists in World
War 2 50p

For Workers' Revolution in
Southern Africa 30p

Spartacist Truth Kit £1.00

International Communist no.9:
Lessons of May 68, Zetkin on
women's liberation, etc. 35p

International Communist no.8:
West Germany, 'Western Marxism',
revolutionary unity, the first
working women's movement,
review of Rosdolsky, etc. 35p

International Communist no.7:
Revolutionary unity, Trotskyism
in Vietnam, the Workers'
Government, etc 40p

International Communist no.4:
Building a mass working class based
women's movement; the Fourth
Comintern congress and the
workers' government, etc. 40p

International Communist no.1:
WF/WP fusion, Portugal, world
recession 30p

The I-CL and the Fourth
International 30p

The Fourth International: its roots,
historic mission, and an outline of
its history (WF) 20p

Women's Liberation and Workers'
Revolution (I-CL) 15p

Permanent Revolution no.3: The
EEC, J P Cannon, Bukharin's
economics (WF) 30p

The EEC: In or out the fight goes
on (WF) 5p

The revolutionary left in
Portugal (I-CL) 15p

The Toolroom strike and the
fight to end wage control 25p

A policy for BL workers 20p

Don't let Turkey become another
Chile 15p

The Hotel Strikes 35p

*Also available from the same address:
publications of Workers' Action*

Workers' Action magazine, March 1981:
How women can change the labour
movement; the Third International;
Militant and Afghanistan 50p

Why we need a General Strike 20p

Marxists and Nicaragua 15p

Afghanistan: Imperialism – hands
off! USSR – troops out! 15p

The Politics of Militant 20p

Labour's Misspent Youth: an account
of the history of the LPYS 15p

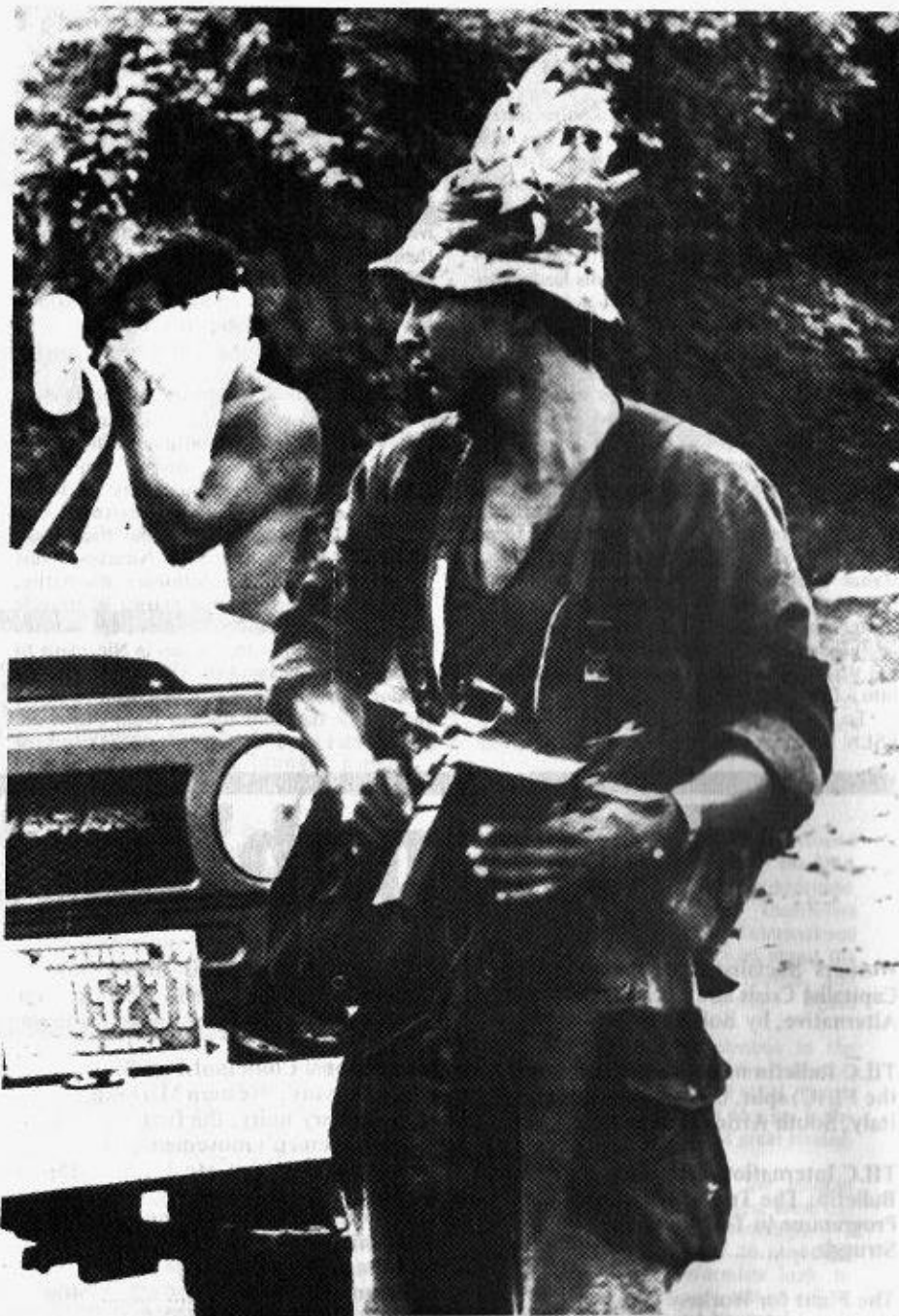
*All orders to WSL, PO Box 135,
London N1 0DD. Cheques to WSL or
Workers' Action as appropriate. Please
add 20% for postage (minimum 15p).
Orders over £10 post free.*

bourgeois-democratic revolution even though no indigenous bourgeois supports this policy. However in such conditions – as experience has shown – the petty bourgeois leaderships can act as the efficient agent for the creation of a new bourgeois order after a victory against imperialism. It is on this that Stalinists and social democrats rely. But they are also faced with a left wing in El Salvador which is much stronger than in Nicaragua, principally because the left organisations have developed out of the CP in strong opposition to it.

However the Salvadorean left has pledged itself to a programmatic platform which sets aside socialism 'in the short term' and lends itself openly to bourgeois reformism. While some forces on the left (FPL and BPR) call for a worker-peasant alliance and have a history of opposing the CP and bourgeois reformists, they do not fight for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government. Nor have they sought to break the links with social democracy which offer a lifeline of support to the bourgeois reformists. Thus, although the political forces in the FDR-FMLN are more heterogeneous and potentially antagonistic than those contained in and organised around the FSLN, the tendency is increasingly towards bourgeois hegemony within a popular front.

GUATEMALA: In Guatemala the process of building the anti-dictatorial struggle has advanced more slowly. This fact has slowed down the revolutionary movement in the whole region, since Guatemala is the key state in Central America, possessing the largest population and most developed economy. Over the last year the guerilla struggle has made a major impact with considerable successes against the forces of the dictatorship (evident in the fact that more officers have been killed than in El Salvador), and it has seen the operational unity of the various groups (EGP, ORPA, PGT, FAR).

But the concentration of the guerillas in the countryside has failed to protect the working class and contributed to its slow recovery from the major defeats of the 1960s and 1970s. The guerillas still adhere to the broad front strategy of the FSLN, despite receiving a cool response from the reduced circles of bourgeois reformists, and despite the fact that they are heavily based in the large rural proletariat. The Guatemalan struggle is however having a growing influence in Mexico, and forcing US military support to the dictatorship.



Country	Population (million)	Urban population (%)	GNP per head (\$1979)	Main exports (per cent)	Unemployment (per cent)	% of labour force Agric:	Industry	Infant mortality (0-1, per 1000)	Life expectancy	Literacy (per cent)
Costa Rica	2.2	43	1820	coffee (34) bananas (18)	4.6	30	23	45	70	90
El Salvador	4.8	41	670	coffee (40) cotton (10)	35 (1977)	51	22	79	63	62 (1975)
Guatemala	7.3	39	1020	coffee (35) cotton (15)	45	56	21	89	59	47 (1975)
Honduras	3.7	36	530	coffee (24) bananas (23)	10	63	14	95	58	60 (1979)
Nicaragua	2.7	53	660	coffee (35)	45 (1980)	40	14	96	56	90 (1980)
Mexico	65.5	67	1640			37	26	60	66	82 (1976)

For comparison

Argentina	27.3	82	2230			13	28	51 (1975)	70	94 (1976)
Britain	55.9	91	6320			2	42	14	73	99 (1976)

Population figures for 1980. Labour force composition figures for 1979. Infant mortality figures for 1975-80 (average). Life expectancy figures for 1979. Other figures for 1980. Sources: Jenny Pearce 'Under the Eagle'; World Bank World Development Report 1981; Pluto Press World View 1982.

HONDURAS: In Honduras, less economically developed and more backward politically, the level of mass mobilisation has not yet reached the point of armed conflict on a national scale. Significantly a sector of the military considers that its best chance to avoid this is to offer reforms and establish a populist regime. The USA has pressured the high command into following the 'Duarte formula' of conceding elections and acquiescing to a civilian figurehead while the army retains the power. This solution is destined to failure, and will not protect the weakening Honduran oligarchy from the tornado that is sweeping the region.

THE LIBERATION FRONTS

Almost all of these mass movements are organised in the form of cross-class fronts in which a relatively small proletariat is allied with a very much larger peasantry and rural proletariat as well as bourgeois reformist elements. As pointed out above they follow the Nicaraguan model which in turn was influenced by the failure of Guevarism and by the turn of the Castroites to more traditional Stalinist politics of class collaboration. They are therefore not 'natural' alliances but the product of the crisis of political leadership in the region.

The small entrepreneurs, petty bourgeois and middle class, although they may depend directly upon the exploitation of the workers and peasants, are also oppressed by imperialism. They can therefore at times join with serious struggles against imperialism. But it is only the peasantry and the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie who, together with the rural proletariat, can be solidly allied with the industrial working class through the whole of the anti-imperialist struggle.

In the cross-class front, beneath all the slogans of 'unity', there is therefore a constant and bitter struggle — taking place at present between on the one hand the bourgeois opposition (backed by social democracy) together with the petty bourgeois forces which solidly support it, and, on the other, the more radical petty bourgeois leaderships based upon the workers and peasants. This internal struggle determines the outcome of the anti-imperialist struggle, within a range of alternatives from the Zimbabwean experience to that of the Cuban revolution.

But a full victory of the struggle — though a socialist revolution subsuming the democratic programme — is possible only through the development of an independent proletarian revolutionary vanguard which can forge a strong alliance with the oppressed plebeian masses of the countryside and cities. Such a

development presupposes the break-up of the existing fronts and the winning of the worker, peasant, and other plebeian forces from these fronts to proletarian leadership.

POLICY TOWARDS THE FRONTS

Such an independent proletarian revolutionary vanguard however does not exist. The forces from which it might be built are largely already organised in the left wings of the existing cross-class fronts. Small groups of Trotskyists attempting to lay the groundwork for a Trotskyist party must take this reality into account in developing their tactics.

From outside the struggle we can only suggest extremely broad outlines of policy. The basic principles, in our view, would have to be the following:

a) Maintenance of independent proletarian politics: a rule of 'March separately, strike together' in relation to bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces. This means for example that there can be no question of signing the programmes of the broad fronts.

b) Provided that they maintain their political independence and their own disciplined organisation, Trotskyists should be flexible in their means of reaching the masses. So long as they remain only small groups and not yet viable parties they must seek first



and foremost to achieve maximum involvement in struggle with and alongside the left wings of the movement actually fighting imperialism. Abstract self-proclamation should be strictly avoided.

In El Salvador for example this would mean involvement in the FDR-FMLN, via the trade unions, local committees, military forces etc which are affiliated to it.

c) In the fronts, the task of Trotskyists must be to fight for the programme of permanent revolution and for the exclusion of the bourgeois forces. The illusory nature of such ideas as the political 'subordination' or subjugation of the bourgeois forces or of achieving proletarian 'hegemony' over them within the fronts must be patiently exposed. The reality is that the bourgeois forces will remain in the fronts only insofar as it is their programme and perspective which predominate – and that therefore they remain in the fronts only to strangle the struggle for socialist revolution.

Tactical intelligence would, however, be necessary as regards the form of the fight for our principles. For example the exclusion of the bourgeois forces may not necessarily be the most appropriate leading slogan at the first stage of the work of a Trotskyist group in a broad front, it might be more appropriate to bring forward demands designed to expose to left wing militants the gulf between their class interests and their so-called 'allies', in order to lay the basis of the polarisation of forces within the fronts.

But the political struggle must not be delayed until after the taking of power in the mistaken belief that the continued mobilisation of the masses can spontaneously and automatically displace the existing leadership and lead to the overturn of capitalist property and the emergence of a deformed workers' state on the Cuban pattern.

It is indeed such a belief which lies at the heart of the USFI's strategy for Central America. They voice only mild criticisms of the FSLN and refuse to try to build Trotskyist parties. This policy corresponds to a false understanding of the Cuban revolution and

of the current attitude of the Stalinist bureaucracy towards developments in Central America as well as a capitulation to petty bourgeois reformism. The responsibility of the Trotskyist movement is to build parties that will provide revolutionary leadership – not to wait for the spontaneous evolution of petty bourgeois leaderships into 'natural Marxists' or to praise the actions of local agents of the Moscow bureaucrats. Indeed even the Cuban revolution and the assimilation of Castro's petty bourgeois nationalist movement into the orbit of Stalinism confirms the necessity for the establishment of genuine workers' power based on the organised strength of the masses and for a policy of internal extension of the revolution.

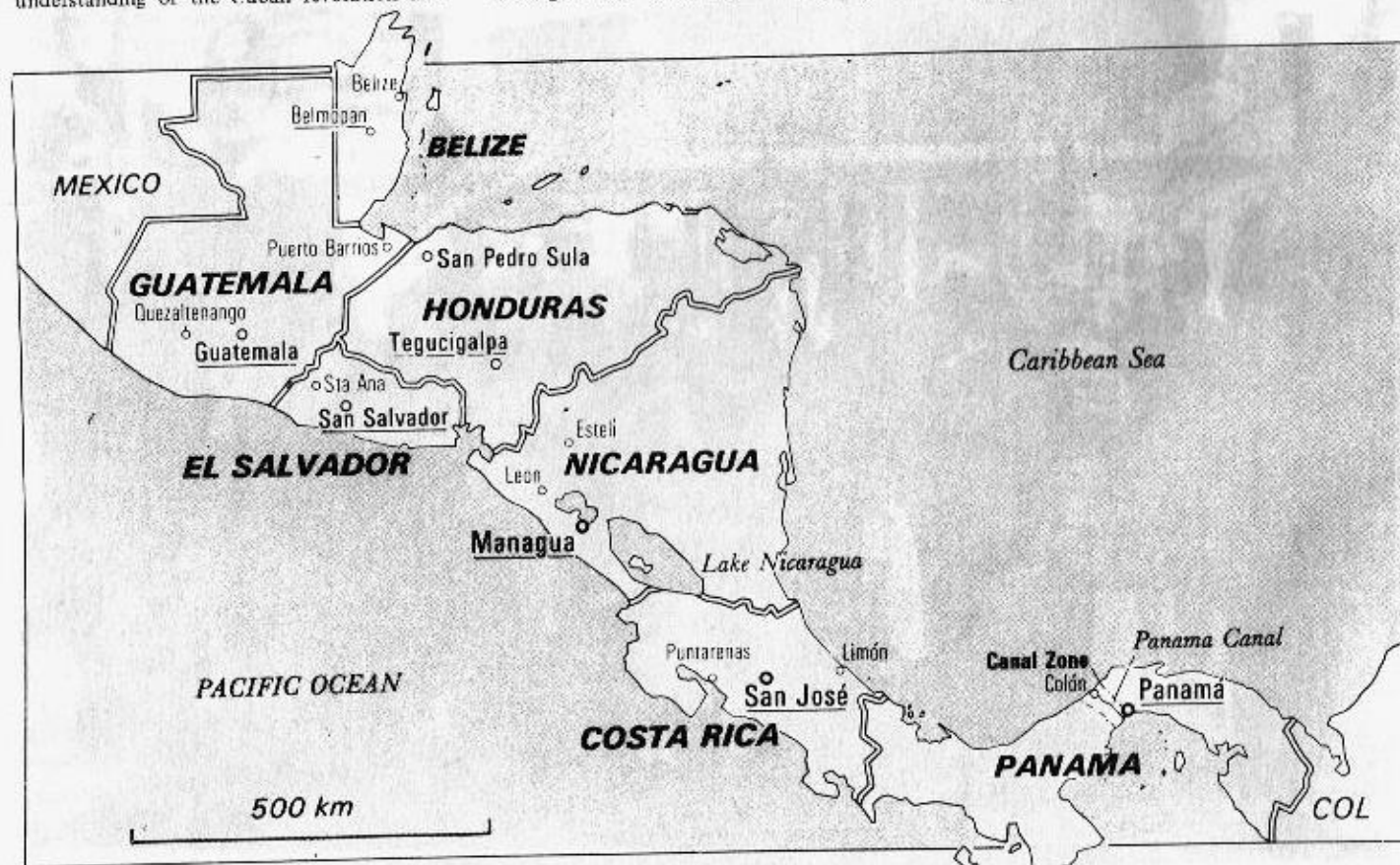
Revolutionaries must therefore fight on two fronts. On the one hand they must support the anti-imperialist struggle against a growing imperialist offensive, and take an active part in this fight. On the other hand they must fight for proletarian hegemony. The latter struggle does not diminish the importance of the former. Yet it cannot be achieved simply by proclaiming a separate Trotskyist party outside the existing mass organisations. This would be a sectarian stance towards left wing and centrist organisations which are at present notable in many cases for their lack of definite political character and in some cases highly accessible to revolutionary ideas.

SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Furthermore the task of forming a revolutionary vanguard in these struggles must take as its focus the impossibility of the consolidation of national liberation while it remains a struggle constrained within the limits of the nation state. Central America is a balkanised region, comprising small, disastrously-organised economies. A planned economy must be created through the fight for a United Socialist States of Central America.

In failing to give concrete military support to the other struggles in the region, both Nicaragua and Cuba are endangering the

survival of their own conquests. And while Cuba – itself under direct pressure from the USA – has made perceptibly more emphatic verbal declarations of solidarity than those emanating from the rest of the Soviet bloc, the fact is that (despite the fabrications of the State Department and the illusions of the USFI) Castro is at one with the Kremlin leaders in promoting the counter-revolutionary politics of Stalinism and failing in the elementary responsibilities of anti-imperialist solidarity. The fight for principled revolutionary leadership and the building of Trotskyist parties in Central America involves a fight against illusions in Stalinism and its Castroite variant.



Along with all the revolutionary left, the WSL campaigned with all its energy against Thatcher's war in the South Atlantic. The aim of the war, we said, was to boost the prestige and position of British imperialism and the Tory government. For British workers, the main enemy was at home.

This campaign was, of course, our main concern. But Marxists aim not only to campaign but also to understand — to see issues not only from the angle of our immediate activity, but within international politics. So we were concerned also with the debate on the Left about attitudes to Argentina's war.

That we opposed Britain's war did not, for Marxists, mean that we necessarily supported Argentina's war. From the point of view of international working class action, a possible attitude was to denounce the war on both sides and to urge working-class struggle to overthrow both governments, irrespective of the fact that in each country such

struggle would contribute to defeat of that country in the war. For both working classes the main enemy was at home.

Such an attitude is called by Marxists *revolutionary defeatist*. The majority of the WSL National Committee concluded that it was the best attitude for this war.

A minority in the WSL NC argued, however, for a *defencist* position in Argentina. So did most of those considering themselves Trotskyists internationally.

The *defencist* position meant supporting Argentina in the war, while insisting on no confidence in Galtieri.

In this issue of WSR we present a brief statement of the WSL's position; resolutions of TILC; background material, and articles arguing the rival points of view on Argentina's war.

The articles by Trotsky which we reprint explain in more depth what Marxists mean by 'defeatism' and 'defencism' in wars, and the possible tactical forms of these principled positions.

A war where workers could win nothing

THE FALKLANDS/Malvinas war was about rival claims to the islands. The Falklanders are, and for 150 years have been, a distinct community, with a distinct and separate territory, displacing no-one, oppressing no other community. Neither Britain nor Argentina has any valid claim over this community.

The rival governments fought for possession of the islands to boost their respective positions at home and to promote themselves as powers in the world (Britain) or in the region (Argentina).

The war was therefore reactionary on both sides.

For British socialists the main task was to campaign against Thatcher's war. But Galtieri's war was also reactionary.

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.

The fact that the Argentine state is so much weaker than the British state — too weak to realise the imperialist-type aims for which it launched the war — could not modify our judgment of those aims and therefore of the war. Our concern is not the balance of forces between imperialist and non-imperialist bourgeoisies, but the independent mobilisation of the working class.

We do not fight the bourgeoisie's wars. We fight our wars. We fight jointly with bourgeois forces when they fight for an issue — like national liberation — which we fight for anyway.

If the war had been about Argentina's national rights, therefore, we would have supported Argentina. But it wasn't.

Argentina's claim to the islands

The sovereignty of the Falklands/Malvinas has been disputed since before 1833, when



the British seized them from the Republic of Buenos Aires. In general territorial sovereignty should be an unimportant issue for socialists, who are concerned with issues of human liberation.

Sometimes – e.g. in the case of colonial occupation where people are ruled by an alien power – the struggle for human liberation involves the struggle for territorial sovereignty. In the Falklands/Malvinas dispute nothing of the kind was involved.

Today Argentine sovereignty is clearly against the wishes of those who inhabit the islands, who believe, almost certainly correctly, that Argentine sovereignty would lead to their greater oppression.

Hence there is no general reason why socialists should support Argentine sovereignty over the Falklands/Malvinas, and at present there is a specific reason why we should oppose it. Argentina's claim to the Falklands/Malvinas should not be regarded as an anti-imperialist demand.

Self-determination

The WSL has therefore defended the right of the Falklanders to self-determination. The objections put forward to this are invalid.

First, it has been argued that the Falklanders are pro-imperialist. That is hardly surprising, since they see British imperialism as their only defence against Galtieri's oppression. Our support for their rights to self-determination, however, does not involve support for its imposition by British military power.

There is nothing original about that. We support many people's rights without supporting their imposition by capitalist military power.

Our demand in relation to the Falklanders involves arguing that it should be defended by the Argentine labour movement, which has for the most part so far maintained a reactionary chauvinist position on this question.

It has also been argued, alarmingly, that the small numbers of the Falklanders in some way devalue their rights. This argument implies that only large numbers of like-thinking people have rights – a view which has in the past led socialists to accept much oppression.

It has also been argued that the Falklands/Malvinas are too small to be 'viable' as an independent country. There is absolutely no reason at all to believe this. There is no reason political or economic why countries 'need' to be of a certain minimum size.

And there seems no reason at all to believe that the Falklanders' right to self-determination would reduce the rights of anyone else.

So we should defend the Falklanders' right to self-determination, but not its enforcement by imperialist military might, and demand support for this right by the Argentine labour movement.

The invasion and the war

Galtieri's invasion was reactionary. This was because it was an attempt to deflect the mass opposition to the dictatorship, and because it imposed the dictatorship on the Falklanders.

If it was reactionary, socialists had to oppose it and demand the withdrawal of Argentine troops. It was a disastrous failure of the Argentine left that it did not in general do this, even though many analysed correctly the reasons for the invasion.

Some comrades argue that the sending of the task force changed this, and meant that it was wrong to continue to call for the withdrawal of the troops because that would have meant a victory for Thatcher.

This is a terrible argument. It means supporting an acknowledged evil to combat what is regarded as a greater evil (an imperialist victory). Anti-imperialism can only be weakened by the defence of reactionary, evil actions. Socialists should have maintained independent class politics, continuing the demand for the withdrawal of Argentine troops, and refusing to let the clamour of war drown their politics.

Those on the left who have argued for the defence of, or support for, Argentina in the war, have taken two distinct positions. One was that the struggle against Galtieri and the dictatorship should be suspended during the war and taken up again afterwards (this seems to have been the position of the Peronists and the Argentine PST) and another sought to combine the struggle against Thatcher and Galtieri (e.g. *Política Obrera*) or to promote the struggle against the British military without any support for Galtieri.

The second position is a difficult one. In what way could a struggle against the military dictatorship be carried on alongside a struggle against the British military? What would our position be on the general strike called shortly before the invasion, or the mutinies which evidently took place in the Argentine army?

Also, it has been argued that a victory for Argentina would have intensified and assisted the struggle against the military dictatorship. This seems to be largely wishful thinking. It has been argued that the new regime is to the right of Galtieri and that proves the point. But that argument ignores the obvious loss of authority of the regime since the war.

An oppressed nation?

The argument on the left for supporting Argentina has been based on a description of it as an oppressed nation.

This has raised important theoretical points which, however, have little in our opinion to do with the point at issue.

Argentina cannot be considered either an imperialist country or a semi-colonial country. Such divisions are too crude to describe reality, and Argentina occupies an intermediate position.

The category sub-imperialist has been used to describe Argentina, and has some validity, though it is far from complete.

But the point is that a revolutionary position on any war cannot be decided independently of the origins and the content of the war.

It is the contention of many on the left that, regardless of the initial content of the dispute, the sending of the task force converted into a battle between imperialism and anti-imperialism.

For many reasons this is wrong. First, why not support Argentina in that case before there was a South Atlantic war?

Second, the British war aims were limited to regaining the Falklands/Malvinas – though of course they went very far in doing so, and will undoubtedly take advantage of the victory to strengthen their strategic position. But the war and defeat could have been avoided by Argentina withdrawing from an unambiguously reactionary action.

Yet the pro-Argentine comrades oppose them doing so. And seemingly on the grounds that the specifics of the dispute (the rights and wrongs of the occupation, the rights of the Falklanders) all became secondary compared with the struggle between two camps in the world.

This disastrous theory of two camps has led revolutionaries over and over again to suspend struggle against specific injustices and reaction in favour of critically supporting the (relatively) progressive against the reactionary 'camp' in the world. It has led revolutionaries

variously to support the Vietnam Stalinists against Cambodian Stalinists, Iran's reactionary regime against Iraq's, General Jaruzelski against Solidarnosc, and the Soviet Army's murderous invasion of Afghanistan, etc. etc.

An independent socialist vision of the world is submerged beneath a perceived need to support the lesser of today's evils. This in the long run is the death of socialism. It means socialists will always be outmanoeuvred by those who pose as progressives but act as reactionaries.

In such a dispute socialists should surely put forward a view, utopian as it may sound in the short run, which corresponds to the logic of the necessary struggles of the oppressed workers of Argentina, Britain, and of the inhabitants of the Falklands/Malvinas, and meets their *real* needs, instead of supporting fake anti-imperialist demands and playing into the hands of reactionaries.

That would have meant (at least in the short run) being isolated – not the first time for revolutionary socialists! Better than in the long run being irrelevant.

It should be obvious that none of the above detracts from the cardinal importance of the fight to oppose Britain's war. The WSL argued for the defeat of Britain – that means not defeat by the Argentine military, but defeat by mobilisation of massive opposition in Britain.

We should not underestimate the bad political and ideological consequences which the British action and victory have had in the British working class. We should redouble our right against chauvinism and militarism.

War and peace

Finally: socialists cannot lightly support war, given the destruction and death it causes. Sometimes violent means are the only way to fight for human liberties. In this case the violence arose in defence of something reactionary. Socialists had to be against war in this case – i.e. in favour of an Argentine *retreat* because the 'gain' (occupation of the Falklands) was not one worth defending from the point of view of socialists, or of the interests of the Argentine working class.

This position is characterised by some as pacifism, not revolutionary defeatism. That is perhaps due to the degeneration of revolutionary socialist traditions. Socialists are surely very reluctant non-pacifists. One of the main slogans of the Russian revolution, after all, was 'peace'. We should not fail to use it because it has been so besmirched by Stalinists.

A WAR?

- OVER ISLANDS WE DON'T WANT
- WHOSE POPULATION DON'T WISH TO BE FOUGHT OVER
- AGAINST SAILORS WE HAVE TRAINED
- IN SHIPS WE HAVE BUILT



Learn to think

THIS WAS the title of an article written by Leon Trotsky in 1938. It was one of many directed against the stream of ultra-leftists in and around the Trotskyist movement. One of their characteristics was that they rejected defence of the USSR and support for semi-colonial countries like China because – or in part because – they believed that such politics would inevitably entangle the working class in imperialist countries allied with the USSR, for example, in a net of social-patriotic support for their own governments.

Trotsky was far from denying that social patriotism was and would be a problem. He denied that working class organisations could shield themselves from it by adopting a single rule of thumb. The proletarian party had to work out its politics in the different situations, maintaining its independence, *thinking through* and concretising its class politics for each occasion. *"In 90 cases out of 100, the workers actually place a minus sign where the bourgeoisie places a plus sign. In 10 cases however they are forced to fix the same sign as the bourgeoisie, but with their own seal, in which is expressed their mistrust of the bourgeoisie. The policy of the proletariat is not at all automatically derived from the policy of the bourgeoisie, bearing only the opposite sign – this would make every sectarian a master strategist"*.

Trotsky said of one of those he argued against: *"Craipeau believes that in the War – the war with a capital W – the proletariat should not be interested in whether it is a war against Germany, the USSR, or against a Morocco in rebellion, because in all these cases it is necessary to proclaim 'defeatism without phrases' as the only possibility of escaping the grip of social patriotism."*

"Once again we see, and with what clarity, that ultra-leftism is always an opposition which is afraid of itself and demands absolute guarantees – that is, non-existent guarantees – that it will remain true to its flag. This type of intransigence calls to mind that type of timid and weak man who, becoming furious, shouts to his friends,

'Hold me back, I'm going to do something terrible'. Give me hermetically-sealed theses, put impenetrable blinkers over my eyes, or else... I'm going to do something terrible!'"

The psychology is the same, even if the descendants today of the Oehlers, Vereckens, and Eiffels of the 1930s express themselves mainly on different issues, such as the Labour Party.

These late-'30s articles by Trotsky have been mined for 'quotations' to explain and justify their position by those Trotskyists who took a 'victory to Argentina' position in the recent British/Argentine war over the Falkland Islands. In the publications of all the tendencies, the self-same quotations have appeared. Plainly they have all read the articles, or at least bits of them. But they do not seem to have read them very carefully.

For though these articles were directed against ultra-leftist politics which equated China with Japan or the USSR with the imperialist countries, the method, criteria, alternatives discussed by Trotsky are just as relevant for the politics of the 'twin' position – mistaking the sordid petty adventure of the bourgeois Argentine junta for a blow against imperialism, and the consequent British/Argentine war for an anti-imperialist war of liberation by Argentina. This is, so to speak, the Oehlerism and Eiffelism of the right.

In this discussion, the points made relate to both the minority in the WSL who argued for support for Argentina, and to the big majority of those calling themselves Trotskyists throughout the world. Politically the most important of these latter groups is the USFI (United Secretariat of the Fourth International). But that organisation's response to the British-Argentine war was directly related to its deep political crisis, which merits separate comment.

In essence, the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, and the big section of the world organisation that it influences, have taken their identification with the now-Stalinist Castro regime in Cuba to the point that their attitude to it is barely distinguishable from old-fash-

ioned Stalinist attitudes to the USSR. They have in recent months explicitly repudiated the historic Trotskyism on the question of permanent revolution. They take their politics increasingly from Castro: Castro, for most purposes, takes his from the Kremlin, whose subsidy to Cuba is about \$8 million a day.

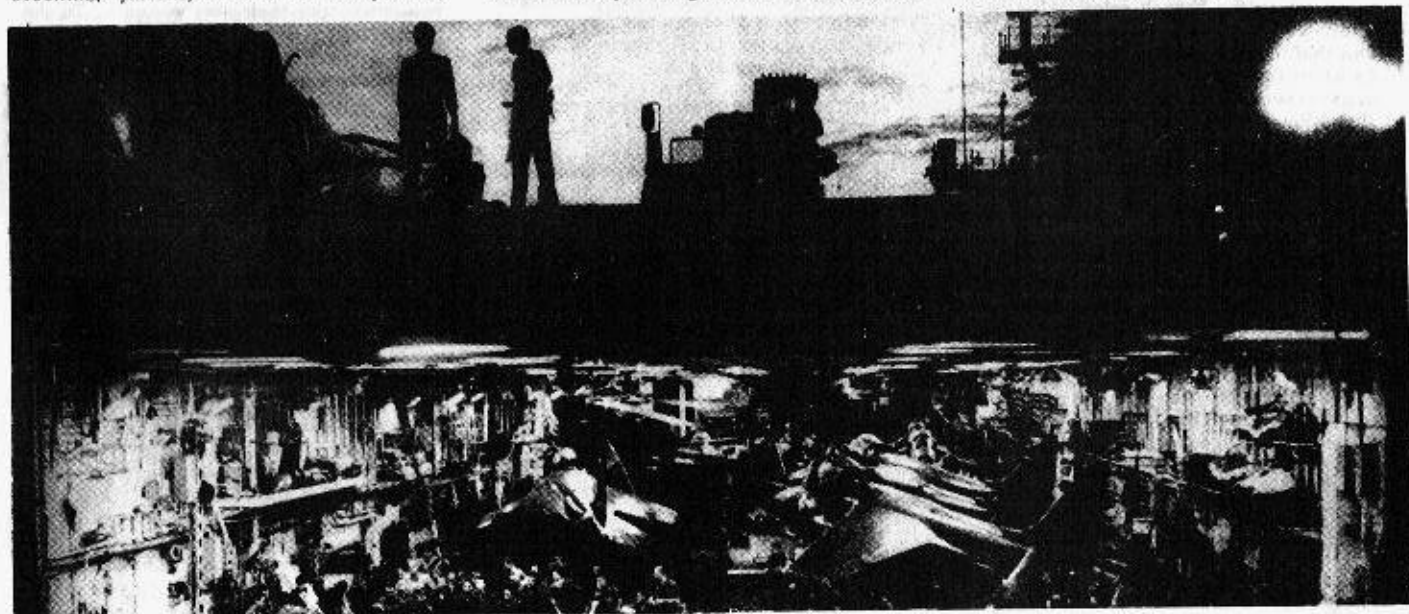
The only organic viewpoint according to which the Argentine state enters 'our class camp' when it has a squabble with Britain is that of Leonid Brezhnev. Castro expresses that viewpoint. The SWP accommodates to Castro. The rest of the USFI is pressurised by the SWP.

The European leaders of the USFI, such as Ernest Mandel, produce clear-headed analysis of the Argentine manoeuvre (see the USFI statement printed in Socialist Challenge, May 13). But then the political conclusion emerges as a result of the pressure from the SWP.

It was like that too in 1980 when the majority of would-be Trotskyists supported the invasion of Afghanistan, or refused to call for Russian withdrawal. For the first six months of 1980 the SWP welcomed the Russian presence as 'aid to the revolution'. They pressurised the rest. The 'compromise' – the political line – was not to call for the withdrawal of the USSR's army. Such politics is necessarily unstable. Today the SWP has changed position, deciding that it did not study Castro's statements on Afghanistan carefully enough, and 'the majority of the world Trotskyist movement' calls for the withdrawal of the troops.

Over the Argentine war the USFI found itself recreating a grim caricature of the 'two camps' politics that politically decimated the Trotskyist movement at the beginning of the 1950s.

The best way to refute these politics is to call Leon Trotsky to the witness stand. The clearest indication that pro-Argentine politics in 1982 are not Trotskyist politics is contained in the texts in which Trotsky argued for support for China and other countries in the 1930s. We reprint some texts in full, and discuss one of them in detail.



Learn to think: a friendly suggestion to certain ultra-leftists

CERTAIN professional ultra-left phrasemongers are attempting at all costs to 'correct' the thesis of the Secretariat of the Fourth International on war in accordance with their own ossified prejudices. They especially attack that part of the thesis which states that in all imperialist countries the revolutionary party, while remaining in irreconcilable opposition to its own government in time of war, should, nevertheless, mould its practical politics in each country to the internal situation and to the international groupings, sharply differentiating a workers' state from a bourgeois state, a colonial country from an imperialist country.

"The proletariat of a capitalist country which finds itself in an alliance with the USSR", states the thesis, "must retain fully and completely its irreconcilable hostility to the imperialist government of its own country. In this sense its policy will not differ from that of the proletariat in a country fighting against the USSR. But in the nature of practical actions considerable differences may arise depending on the concrete war situation". [War and the Fourth International].

War continues politics

The ultra-leftists consider this postulate, the correctness of which has been confirmed by the entire course of development, as the starting point of...social-patriotism. Since the attitude toward imperialist governments should be 'the same' in all countries, these strategists ban any distinctions beyond the boundaries of their own imperialist country. Theoretically their mistake arises from an attempt to construct fundamentally different bases for war-time and peace-time policies.

Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to 'the rebels'. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case? I have purposely taken an example of rebellion against a democratic imperialism with intervention on the side of the rebels from a fascist imperialism. Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ultra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation. Even if a general maritime strike broke out in fascist Italy at the same time, even in this case the strikers should make an exception in favour of those ships carrying aid to the colonial slaves in revolt; otherwise they would be no more than wretched trade unionists — not proletarian revolutionists.

At the same time, the French maritime

workers, even though not faced with any strike whatsoever, would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism.

Does this not signify, however, that the Italian workers moderate their struggle in this case against the fascist regime? Not in the slightest. Fascism renders 'aid' to the Algerians only in order to weaken its enemy, France, and to lay its rapacious hand on her colonies. The revolutionary Italian workers do not forget this for a single moment. They call upon the Algerians not to trust their treacherous 'ally' and at the same time continue their own irreconcilable struggle against fascism, 'the main enemy in their own country'. Only in this way can they gain the confidence of the rebels, help the rebellion and strengthen their own revolutionary position.

If the above is correct in peacetime, why does it become false in war-time? Everyone knows the postulate of the famous German military theoretician, Clausewitz, that war is the continuation of politics by other means. This profound thought leads naturally to the conclusion that the struggle against war is but the continuation of the general proletarian struggle during peacetime. Does the proletariat in peace-time reject and sabotage all the acts and measures of the bourgeois government? Even during a strike which embraces an entire city, the workers take measures to ensure the delivery of food to their own districts, make sure that they have water, that the hospitals do not suffer, etc. Such measures are dictated not by opportunism in relation to the bourgeoisie but by concern for the interests of the strike itself, by concern for the sympathy of the submerged city masses etc. These elementary rules of proletarian strategy in peace-time retain full force in time of war as well.

A minus where the bourgeoisie puts a plus

An irreconcilable attitude against bourgeois militarism does not signify at all that the proletariat IN ALL CASES enters into a struggle against its own 'national' army. At least the workers would not interfere with soldiers who are extinguishing a fire or rescuing drowning people during a flood; on the contrary, they would help side by side with the soldiers and fraternise with them. And the question is not exhausted merely by cases of elemental calamities.

If the French fascists should make an attempt today at a coup d'état and the Daladier government found itself forced to move troops against the fascists, the revolutionary workers, while maintaining their complete political independence, would fight against the fascists alongside of these

troops. Thus in a number of cases the workers are forced not only to permit and tolerate, but actively to support the practical measures of the bourgeois government.

In ninety cases out of a hundred the workers actually place a minus sign where the bourgeoisie places a plus sign. In ten cases however they are forced to fix the same sign as the bourgeoisie but with their own seal, in which is expressed their mistrust of the bourgeoisie. The policy of the proletariat is not at all automatically derived from the policy of the bourgeoisie, bearing only the opposite sign — this would make every sectarian a master strategist: no, the revolutionary party must each time orient itself INDEPENDENTLY in the internal as well as the external situation, arriving at those decisions which correspond best to the interests of the proletariat. This rule applies just as much to the war period as to the period of peace.

Concrete and abstract

Let us imagine that in the next European war the Belgian proletariat conquers power sooner than the proletariat of France. Undoubtedly Hitler will try to crush proletarian Belgium. In order to cover up its own flank, the French bourgeois government might find itself compelled to help the Belgian workers' government with arms. The Belgian soviets of course reach for these arms with both hands. But actuated by the principle of defeatism, perhaps the French workers ought to block their bourgeoisie from shipping arms to proletarian Belgium? Only direct traitors or out-and-out idiots can reason thus.

The French bourgeoisie could send arms to proletarian Belgium only out of fear of the greatest military danger and only in expectation of later crushing the proletarian revolution with their own weapons. To the French workers, on the contrary, proletarian Belgium is the greatest support in the struggle against their own bourgeoisie. The outcome of the struggle would be decided, in the final analysis, by the relationship of forces, into which correct policies enter as a very important factor. The revolutionary party's first task is to utilise the contradiction between two imperialist countries, France and Germany, in order to save proletarian Belgium.

Ultra-left scholastics think not in concrete terms but in empty abstractions. They have transformed the idea of defeatism into such a vacuum. They can see vividly neither the process of war nor the process of revolution. They seek a hermetically sealed formula which excludes fresh air. But a formula of this kind can offer no orientation for the proletarian vanguard.

To carry the class struggle to its highest form — civil war — this is the task of defeatism. But this task can be solved only through the revolutionary mobilisation of

the masses, that is, by widening, deepening and sharpening those revolutionary methods which constitute the content of class struggle in 'peace' time. The proletarian party does not resort to artificial methods, such as burning warehouses, setting off bombs, wrecking trains, etc, in order to bring about the defeat of its own government. Even if it were successful on this road, the military defeat would not at all lead to revolutionary success, a success which can be assured only by the independent movement of the proletariat.

in their OWN country. Thus, if it is a question of sending arms or troops against a workers' government or a rebellious colony, not only such methods as boycott and strike, but directly military sabotage may become entirely practical and obligatory. Resorting or not resorting to such measures will be a matter of practical possibilities. If the Belgian workers, conquering power in wartime, have their own military agents on German

soil, it would be the duty of these agents not to hesitate at any technical means in order to stop Hitler's troops. It is absolutely clear that the revolutionary German workers also are duty-bound [if they are able] to perform this task in the interests of the Belgian revolution, irrespective of the general course of the revolutionary movement in Germany itself.

Defeatist policy, that is, the policy of irreconcilable class struggle in war-time, cannot consequently be 'the same' in all countries, just as the policy of the proletariat cannot be the same in peace-time. Only the Comintern of the epigones has established a regime in which the parties of all countries break into march simultaneously with the left foot. In struggle against this bureaucratic cretinism we have attempted more than once to prove that the general principles and tasks must be realised in each country in accordance with its internal and external conditions. This principle retains its complete force for war-time as well.

The ultra-leftists who do not want to think as Marxists, that is, concretely, will be caught unawares by war. Their policy in time of war will be a fatal crowning of their policy in peace-time. The first artillery shots will either blow the ultra-leftists into political non-existence, or else drive them into the camp of social-patriotism, exactly like the Spanish anarchists, who, absolute 'deniers' of the state, found themselves from the same causes bourgeois ministers when war came. In order to carry on a correct policy in war-time one must learn to think correctly in time of peace.

Revolutionary defeatism signifies only that in its class struggle the proletarian party does not stop at any 'patriotic' considerations, since defeat of its own imperialist government, brought about, or hastened by the revolutionary movement of the masses is an incomparably **LESSER EVIL** than victory gained at the price of national unity, that is, the political prostration of the proletariat. Therein lies the complete meaning of defeatism and this meaning is entirely sufficient.

The methods of struggle change, of course, when the struggle enters the open revolutionary phase. Civil war is a war, and in this aspect has its particular laws. In civil war, bombing of warehouses, wrecking of trains and all other forms of military 'sabotage' are inevitable. Their appropriateness is decided by purely military considerations — civil war continues revolutionary politics but by other, precisely, military means.

However during an imperialist war there may be cases where a revolutionary party will be forced to resort to military-technical means, though they do not as yet follow directly from the revolutionary movement



Algeria wins independence. Revolutionists had a duty to 'aid the colonial slaves in revolt'

On the Sino-Japanese war: a letter to Rivera

Dear Comrade Diego Rivera:

During the past few days I have been reading some of the lucubrations of the Ochlerites and the Eiffelites (yes, there is a tendency of that sort!) on the civil war in Spain and on the Sino-Japanese War. Lenin called the ideas of these people "infantile disorders". A sick child arouses sympathy. But twenty years have passed since then. The children have become bearded and even bald. But they have not ceased their childish babblings. On the contrary, they have increased all their faults and all their foolishness tenfold and have added ignominies to them. They follow us step by step. They borrow some of the elements of our analysis. They distort these elements without limit and counterpose them to the rest. They correct us. When we draw a human figure they add a deformity. When it is a woman they decorate her with a heavy moustache. When we draw a rooster, they put an egg under it. And they call all this burlesque Marxism and Leninism.

I want to stop to discuss in this letter only the Sino-Japanese War. In my declaration to the bourgeois press, I said that the duty of all the workers' organisations of China was to participate actively and in the front lines of the present war against Japan, without abandoning, for a single moment, their own program and independent activity. But that is "social patriotism!" the Eiffelites cry. It is capitulation to Chiang Kai-shek! It is the abandonment of the principle of the class struggle! Bolshevism preached revolutionary defeatism in the imperialist war. Now, the war in Spain and the Sino-Japanese war are both imperialist wars. "Our position on the war in China is the same. The only salvation of the workers and peasants of China is to struggle independently against the two armies, against the Chinese army in the same manner as against the Japanese army." These four lines, taken from an Eiffelite document of September 10, 1937, suffice entirely for us to say: we are concerned here with either real traitors or complete imbeciles. But imbecility, raised to this degree, is equal to treason.

Ireland, Poland, Morocco

We do not and never have put all wars on the same plane. Marx and Engels supported the revolutionary struggle of the Irish against Great Britain, of the Poles against the Tsar, even though in these two nationalist wars the leaders were, for the most part, members of the bourgeoisie and even at times of the feudal aristocracy... at all events, Catholic reactionaries. When Abdel Krim rose up against France, the democrats and Social Democrats spoke with hate of the struggle of a "savage tyrant" against the "democracy". The party of Leon Blum supported this point of view. But we, Marxists and Bolsheviks, considered the struggle of the Rifians against imperialist domination as a progressive war. Lenin

wrote hundreds of pages demonstrating the primary necessity of distinguishing between imperialist nations and the colonial and semi-colonial nations which comprise the great majority of humanity. To speak of "revolutionary defeatism" in general, without distinguishing between exploiter and exploited countries, is to make a miserable caricature of Bolshevism and to put that caricature at the service of the imperialists.

In the Far East we have a classic example. China is a semi-colonial country which Japan is transforming, under our very eyes, into a colonial country. Japan's struggle is imperialist and reactionary. China's struggle is emancipatory and progressive.

No illusions about Chiang

But Chiang Kai-shek? We need have no illusions about Chiang Kai-shek, his party, or the whole ruling class of China, just as Marx and Engels had no illusions about the ruling classes of Ireland and Poland. Chiang Kai-shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the independence of China. Tomorrow he may again betray. It is possible. It is probable. It is even inevitable. But today he is struggling. Only cowards, scoundrels, or complete imbeciles can refuse to participate in that struggle.

Let us use the example of a strike to clarify the question. We do not support all strikes. If, for example, a strike is called for the exclusion of Negro, Chinese, or Japanese workers from a factory, we are opposed to that strike. But if a strike aims at bettering — insofar as it can — the conditions of the workers, we are the first to participate in it, whatever the leadership. In the vast majority of strikes, the leaders are reformists, traitors by profession, agents of capital. They oppose every strike. But from time to time the pressure of the masses or of the objective situation forces them into the path of struggle.

Let us imagine, for an instant, a worker saying to himself: "I do not want to participate in the strike because the leaders are the agents of capital." This doctrine of this ultra-left imbecile would serve to brand him by his real name: a strikebreaker. The case of the Sino-Japanese War, is from this point of view, entirely analogous. If Japan is an imperialist country and if China is the victim of imperialism, we favour China. Japanese patriotism is the hideous mask of worldwide robbery. Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive. To place the two on the same plane and to speak of "social patriotism" can be done only by those who have read nothing of Lenin, who have understood nothing of the attitude of Bolsheviks during the imperialist war, and who can but compromise and prostitute the teachings of Marxism. The Eiffelites have heard that the social patriots accuse the



Japan's attack on China. (From the Penguin Atlas of World History)

internationalists of being the agents of the enemy and they tell us: "You are doing the same thing." In a war between two imperialist countries, it is a question neither of democracy nor of national independence, but of the oppression of backward non-imperialist peoples. In such a war the two countries find themselves on the same historical plane. The revolutionaries in both armies are defeatists. But Japan and China are not on the same historical plane. The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China.

But can Chiang Kai-Shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle. It is necessary, however, to know when and how to transform political opposition into armed insurrection.

During the Chinese revolution of 1925-

27 we attacked the policies of the Comintern. Why? It is necessary to understand well the reasons. The Eiffelites claim that we have changed our attitude on the Chinese question. That is because the poor fellows have understood nothing of our attitude in 1925-7. We never denied that it was the duty of the Communist Party to participate in the war of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of the South against the generals of the North, agents of foreign imperialism. We never denied the necessity of a military bloc between the CP and the Kuomintang. On the contrary, we were the first to propose it. We demanded, however, that the CP maintain its entire political and organisational independence, that is, that during the civil war against the internal agents of imperialism, as in the national war against foreign imperialism, the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. We hold the same policies in the present war. We have not changed our attitude one iota. The Oehlerites and the Eiffelites, on the other hand, have not understood a single bit of our policies, neither those of 1925-7, nor those of today.

In my declaration to the bourgeois press at the beginning of the recent conflict between Tokyo and Nanking, I stressed above all the necessity of the active participation of revolutionary workers in the war against the imperialist oppressors. Why did I do it? Because first of all it is correct from the Marxist point of view; because, secondly, it was necessary from the point of view of the welfare of our friends in China. Tomorrow the GPU, which is in alliance with the Kuomintang (as with Negrin in Spain), will represent our Chinese friends

as being "defeatists" and agents of Japan. The best of them, with Ch'en Tu-hsiu at the head, can be nationally and internationally compromised and killed. It was necessary to stress, energetically, that the Fourth International was on the side of China against Japan. And I added at the same time: without abandoning either their program or their independence.

The Eiffelite imbeciles try to jest about this "reservation". "The Trotskyists," they say, "want to serve Chiang Kai-shek in action and the proletariat in words." To participate actively and consciously in the war does not mean "to serve Chiang Kai-shek" but to serve the independence of a colonial country in spite of Chiang Kai-shek. And the words directed against the Kuomintang are the means of educating the masses for the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek. In participating in the military struggle under the orders of Chiang Kai-shek, since unfortunately it is he who has the command in the war for independence — to prepare politically the overthrow of Chiang Kai-shek... that is the only revolutionary policy. The Eiffelites counterpose the policy of "class struggle" to this "nationalist and social patriotic" policy. Lenin fought this abstract and sterile opposition all his life. To him, the interests of the world proletariat dictated the duty of aiding oppressed peoples in their national and patriotic struggle against imperialism. Those who have not yet understood that, almost a quarter of a century after the World War and twenty years after the October revolution, must be pitilessly rejected as the worst enemies on the inside by the revolutionary vanguard. This is exactly the case with Eiffel and his kind!

L. Trotsky

The texts and the method

TIME AND AGAIN the same quotations from Trotsky have been used to justify a pro-Argentine stance in the Falklands/Malvinas war. But the main thing the quotations prove is the pro-Argentine comrades' lack of grip on the points in dispute.

Everyone in the WSL majority would agree that IF the comparison with China and the other colonies and semi-colonies of the 1930s referred to by Trotsky is legitimate, then we would not invoke the character of the Argentine regime as a reason for not siding with Argentina.

We could immediately arrive at agreement if the pro-Argentine comrades would — or could — tell us how, in what way, for what real national-liberation goals, or in what social/economic/political sense Argentina was fighting imperialism in the Falklands. But they can't.

Pro-Argentine comrades quote Trotsky (*Writings 1938-9*, p.34) saying that he would side with 'semi-fascist' Brazil against 'democratic' Britain in a hypothetical war because: "If England should be victorious, she will put another fascist in Rio de Janeiro [i.e. will control Brazil] and will place double chains on Brazil [i.e. conquer it, or force territorial concessions from it, or unequal treaties, or impose political conditions which tie it econ-

by Jackie Cleary

omically to Britain's empire]".

Trotsky was quite right, in our view. If a similar situation arises today, what he wrote will be a blueprint for our attitudes.

They quote Trotsky in 1937 rejecting defeatism for China which was, under Chiang Kai Shek, beginning to organise a national war of liberation to drive out the Japanese armies that had been on Chinese territory since 1931 and against which the Trotskyists had consistently called for a national war of liberation.

We believe Trotsky was 100% right about China. His comments as quoted would serve perfectly to guide us for any more or less comparable situation today.

But what Trotsky wrote about China naturally cannot serve as a concrete analysis of any situation today! That we must make for ourselves. And only on the basis of that analysis can we decide how much of Trotsky's blueprint is relevant to the given situation.

The comrades quote Trotsky advocating world working-class support for Mexico (*Writ-*

ings 1938-9, p.64), whose radical, perhaps quasi-revolutionary, bourgeois government had nationalised British oilfields.

Yes indeed, Trotsky was a good communist! But he was also a good Marxist.

They quote him pledging support for even the 'barbarian' Bey of Tunis to drive out France* (*Writings 1938-9*, p.66). Yes! Trotsky had attended the Second Congress of

* *The Bey (Regent) of Tunis was the local ruler within the Ottoman Empire, which controlled Tunisia from 1574 to 1881. In 1881 France seized Tunisia and made it (until 1956) a 'protectorate'. The Bey retained a nominal position, but control was in the hands of French officials.*

The immediate background to Trotsky's comment cited above was a protest in Tunis organised by the middle-class Neo-Destour (New Constitutional) party and the trade unions. French police opened fire, and killed or wounded 174 people.

The Bey had no part in this nationalist protest. Trotsky's point was that even under the leadership of the Bey (and in fact, later, in 1942-3, Munsif Bey did flirt with Neo-Destour), socialists should support the fight for national independence for Tunisia.

the Communist International. He even wrote its manifesto, which said this:

"The Socialist who aids directly or indirectly in perpetuating the privileged position of one nation at the expense of another, who accommodates himself to colonial slavery, who draws a line of distinction between races and colours in the matter of human rights, who helps the bourgeoisie of the metropolis to maintain its rule over the colonies instead of aiding the armed uprising of the colonies; the British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against London plutocracy — such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet, but in no case merits either a mandate or the confidence of the proletariat".

He had supported the wretched Negus, Haile Selassie, against the Italian invasion. He even wrote this, which is a tremendous statement of the principles that must animate us on the national question:

"What characterises Bolshevism on the national question is that in its attitude toward oppressed nations, even the most backward, it considers them not only the object but also the subject of politics. Bolshevism does not confine itself to recognising their 'right' to self-determination and to parliamentary protests against the trampling upon of this right. Bolshevism penetrates into the midst of the oppressed nations; it raises them up against their oppressors; it ties up their struggle with the struggle of the proletariat in capitalist countries; it instructs the oppressed Chinese, Hindus or Arabs in the art of insurrection and it assumes full responsibility for this work in the face of civilised executioners. Here only does Bolshevism begin, that is, revolutionary Marxism in action. Everything that does not step over this boundary remains centrism" ("What Next?").

But these quotations merely beg the question — are they relevant to the Argentine situation? Was the Falklands war remotely, or at all, comparable to what Trotsky is talking about? Essentially, no.

The issue: national liberation

Even in the shortest quote, the concrete issues involved — struggle for liberation against colonial armies, defence of the right of a backward state to expropriate foreign capital, etc. — is spelled out or referred to. Imperialism still operated through colonial empires, and the struggle for such empires and for their redivision was the substance of World War 2.

But Argentina was *not* threatened with double chains. The Argentine regime is a *protector* of foreign capital. They didn't even expropriate British capital as a gambit in the war.

Any comparison of Argentina with Tunisia, Mexico, or China of the '30s is preposterous. In terms of its level of development, role in its region, and place in the economic network of imperialism, it might be better compared with Italy or Japan of the 1930s — except that it is more developed than Japan was, and has a more or less fully-developed bourgeois social structure, which Japan and even Italy did not have.

The pro-Argentine comrades' way with quotations seems to me to be repugnant to the spirit of Marxism and the opposite of the practice of Marxist analysis. It rules out specific analysis, substituting instead dogmatic recipes and formulas. They mechanically apply texts derived from past use of the Marxist method in concrete circumstances of the past. Those circumstances are not with us any more. They have evolved and developed and permuted to the present situation,

which is different — more or less radically different, but certainly different.

Even where changes are not very profound or major, we cannot just *assume* that the Marxist text dealing with some apparently similar situation is a sufficiently detailed and concrete depiction. That is to operate blindly dogmatically.

It is possible to 'get by' when the changes are not all that great, and the chosen texts not too markedly ill-matched to the concrete situation (but that means that whoever matches them has done at least some work on the concrete situation). On the basic ideas worked out by the geniuses of our movement, it is possible to 'get by' for a very long time indeed.

How to use quotations

Even the most miserable of 'Trotskyist' sects works from a stock that retains a tremendous potency and relevance. But to adopt the method of dogmatic text-worship is to cut the roots of Marxism and to make renewal and living development difficult and ultimately impossible.

Sooner or later it is no longer possible to 'get by'. The texts become dogmas preventing us from relating to reality, acting like distorting spectacles.

The notion that what Trotsky wrote in a very different world (dominated by colonial imperialism, for example) about countries like China can provide us *directly* with answers to the Argentine war is ridiculous. The principles, methods, and ways of looking at the world, remain what they were when Trotsky wrote, but to conclude that the texts embodying their results when applied to working through a concrete problem, can directly offer us guidelines now, the comrades would have to establish that similar or roughly similar conditions exist — that *Argentina was faced with colonial invasion or something similar*.

Since many comrades in fact *admit* that there was no real issue of Argentine national liberation served by the seizure of the Falklands, it is a culpable departure from the Marxist method to pretend to call Trotsky's voice from the grave to tell us what he thinks we should do over the Falklands war, and to cite what he said about China's resistance to the Japanese invaders as his answer.

It is sleight of hand, sand in the eyes, asking the relics to speak — but not Marxism.

Marxists should use — or try to use — the classic texts of our movement in a different way: as models of analysis, and as guides and

checks in the practice of living Marxist analysis.

If you compare any of Lenin's serious work with the texts of Stalinism, from the '20s to the '60s, you cannot fail to see the difference between Marxism and pseudo-Marxist scholasticism. The Stalinists quote the classics (as it suits them, of course) as *themselves* proof, *themselves* giving answers. Thus, for example, the theory of 'socialism in one country' was 'proved' true and Marxist by a few lines from an article by Lenin written in 1915.

Lenin's writings are studded with quotations from Marx and Engels. He cites them to establish Marx's and Engels' views on a relevant issue at a given time. He then asks if the concrete reality has changed and evolved, and if so in what way, and how does it relate to other connected issues. He asks what modifications, additions, or deletions to the views of Marx and Engels must be made in accordance with their method, criteria, principles, in the light of developments.

He thinks, works it through, reworks it, concretises the answers for his own time and conditions, on the basis of scientific analysis. (See 'State and Revolution', for example).

He frequently insisted against all dogmatists and quotation-mongers that "the truth is concrete". Political development in a revolutionary Marxist spirit is possible only by an unrelenting struggle for concreteness, for science.

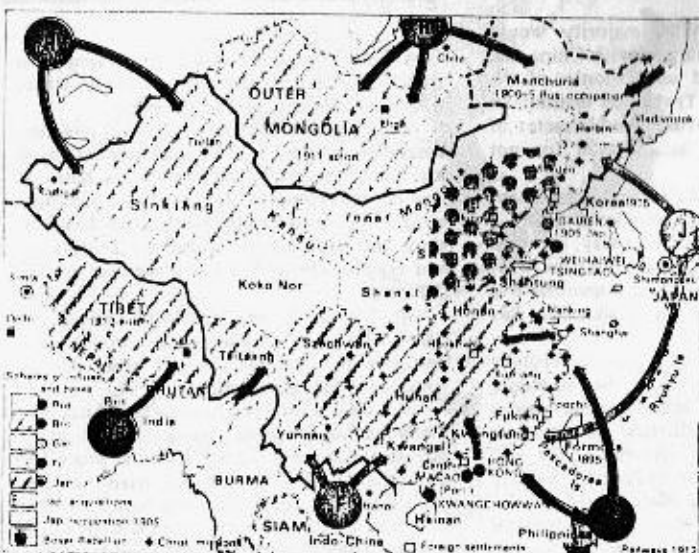
The classic texts here are our starting point, our models, our historic 'memory', our theoretical and political arsenal. We ourselves, however, must work out the political responses to our own problems and our own concrete reality. The books cannot think for us.

Quotation-mongering and 'proof from texts' was, and in some cases still is, the method of our anti-Marxist opponents. It is the measure of the state of the Trotskyist movement that the same quotations on China, Brazil and so on have been almost universally cited as if they could tell us anything directly about Argentina.

The letter to Rivera: analysis

It is worth following through in detail a key text of Trotsky's — his letter to Diego Rivera, a profound and brief text which applies the principles we all share to China in 1937.

What is the issue? *"China is a semi-colonial country which Japan is transforming, under our very eyes, into a colonial country. Japan's*



China carved up by imperialism: Russian, British, German, French, and Japanese bases and spheres of influence, 1912. (From the Penguin Atlas of World History).

struggle is imperialist and reactionary. China's struggle is emancipatory and progressive". 'Semi-colonial' meant that until the 1930s China suffered imperialist interventions, it ceded territories to the big powers, it ceded ports, it gave them special privileges – and then in 1931 it was invaded by Japan.

And Argentina? Argentina is a regional 'big power', dominating Uruguay and Paraguay, vying for influence in Latin America with Brazil, skirmishing with Chile over disputed territory. Its national integrity has been undisputed for 100 years at least. It is subordinated to imperialism not through the Falklands but by the agency of its own ruling class. Until 1930, or even 1948, it was one of the world's richer countries. It is a developed capitalist economy.

"Struggle for... the national independence of China"

"Today he [Chiang Kai Shek] is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan for the remainder of the national independence of China..." This was not a symbolic war in which an aspirant regional imperialism and agent of big-power imperialist penetration led a fight over an irrelevant issue – it was a real national liberation war, against national subjugation.

"The example of a strike"

The example of the strike has been scandalously misused by the IMG. The union exists apart from the hideous things its leaders may do – or even its members (racist strikes). We are for the union, despite everything. It is a class organisation. We criticise it fundamentally by way of fighting to transform it. Trotsky uses the analogy of the union to point to what is threatened and worth defending, irrespective of what Chiang Kai Shek may do: the freedom of the Chinese people from Japanese control.

The Argentine people were not struggling

to throw out an invader, they were not threatened with subjugation.

"Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive"

"If Japan is an imperialist country and if China is the victim of imperialism, we favour China. Japanese patriotism is the hideous mask of world-wide robbery. Chinese patriotism is legitimate and progressive. To place the two on the same plane and to speak of 'social patriotism' can be done only by those who have read nothing of Lenin..."

Argentina is not the victim of colonial imperialism (which Trotsky is talking about). It never has been. In his World War I writings, for example, Lenin distinguished Argentina from the 'semi-colonies' and bracketed it with Portugal (which itself had a vast colonial empire) as an economic satellite of Britain though politically independent. (Since then Argentina has long ceased to be an economic satellite of Britain).

The exploitation of the Argentine workers is in part conducted by foreign capital – in tandem with the Argentine bourgeoisie. What have the Falklands got to do with that? What did the war have to do with that?

Chinese patriotism was not primarily backward-looking, xenophobic, etc, but progressive. Why? Not because it had been entirely purged of those aspects, still less because those aspects could ever be progressive, but because it was the patriotism of a people rousing itself to modern political life, and rousing itself to struggle to throw out its conquerors. It was an expression of that struggle.

The attitude to the patriotism of the Chinese was determined by the real content of the struggle, which was a progressive struggle.

And our attitude to Argentine patriotism? We evaluate it as internationalists. We ask what cause it served, what role it played, how it related to the struggles which had to be fought. We cannot answer these questions

without an assessment of the issues in the war.

Argentine patriotism was as progressive as the cause it served – as progressive as the bourgeois military junta, on whose coat-tails the masses followed, tied by it. It was not progressive in the war. In relation to the Falkland Islanders it was chauvinist.

The sentence from Trotsky's article 'A Fresh Lesson' usually cited on support for Mexico against Britain is preceded by this comment: "we deem it not only the right but the duty of workers in these [backward colonial and semi-colonial countries] actively to participate in the 'defence of the fatherland' against imperialism, on condition, to be sure, that they preserve the complete independence of their class organisation and conduct a ruthless struggle against the poison of chauvinism." In the Chinese war of national liberation we would denounce as Chinese chauvinists any anti-imperialist militants – and especially any communist militants – who would treat any national, ethnic, or religious minority the way Argentina wanted to treat the Falklanders.

We might have to say: the Argentine masses are chauvinist on the Falklanders, but that's a detail – if it were a mere detail. It was not: control over the islands was the issue over which the rival ruling classes, guided by prestige and chauvinism, clashed.

In fact, the attempt to treat Argentine nationalism as pure anti-imperialism is nothing but wishful thinking as far as I can make out. The comrades do not present any arguments, but only assertions and assumptions. At best they derive the progressive character of Argentine nationalism from the reactionary character of British imperialism: but the conclusion does not follow. We do not always put a plus where our enemies put a minus.

It does not follow that because mass militant mobilisation even on the Falklands issue could have opened channels in Argentina blocked six years ago and (like the con-





sequences of any wild adventure or gamble usually do) created great dangers for the junta, that Argentine nationalism is progressive or that we should support it.

A movement is progressive by its goals and its own logic, not by its possible side-effects. If the nationalist upheaval opens opportunities for Argentine socialists, we should be glad of the outcome. We cannot derive our own assessment of nationalism from that fact.

... And Argentine nationalism?

Argentina suffered British and French intervention some 140 years ago. Modern Argentina, however, has essentially taken shape over the last 100 years. Argentina had no war of liberation. Its population is, to within one per cent, of European immigrant origin – most from immigration within the last 100 years. Its mass popular nationalism dates from the 1920s. This nationalism was, especially in its labour movement manifestations, shaped and consolidated by Peronism.

Peronism was not and is not fascism. But corporatism and fascism are its essential ideological sources.

Peron had been in diplomatic service in Italy at the end of the 1930s, and consciously copied fascism. Peronist nationalism is narrowly Argentine – directed against Chile and Brazil, for example. It has been antisemitic: the murder gangs sponsored by the last Peronist government (1973-6) daubed walls with the slogan, 'Kill a Jew a day' (There are about half a million Jews in Argentina).

The 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric of Peronism was a variant of the envious jingoism common to all fascist or fascist-coloured movements. It was hostile to the USA and Britain, and Brazil. In 1973 Peron called for a Spanish-speaking alliance against the English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Americans.

The anti-imperialism of the Peronists is like the anti-bourgeois sentiment of the fascists – imprecise, lacking scientific content, lacking definite, rational goals or means of struggle. It was and is harnessed by the bourgeoisie. To be progressive, the anti-imperialist sentiment needs to be refined and organised into an independent working-class movement with rational goals which will really strike at imperialism.

The pro-Argentine comrades' reply amounts logically to this: we must follow any predatory junta in a (relatively) backward country when it clashes with an imperialist power – for the sake of the symbolism of the clash! But no, comrades! We need an independent working-class point of view.

Communist anti-imperialism gives us that. It is not derived from a spurious two-camp pattern imposed on the world. It is derived from a unified working class viewpoint.

Everywhere that the working class exists, revolutionary Marxists identify it as the protagonist. Where national oppression exists, we still look to the working class as the protagonist.

From that point of view we approach a situation like 1937 in China where a Chiang Kai Shek may be beginning to fight 'our war'. We never abandon our own politics, which include the drive to replace the Chiang Kai Sheks – even during a life-and-death war like the Sino-Japanese.

In contrast, the pro-Argentine view would turn us into passive consumers of world politics. We must pick and choose within the options. We dare not refuse our support to one side, even in a miserable business like the invasion of the Falklands. We strap the distorting spectacles tightly on our eyes, and we see the world around us not in terms of facts, class rule, class interests, and real interactions – instead just imperialist and non-imperialist nations.

Obviously the hierarchy of the capitalist world economy is not irrelevant. But it cannot transform oppression into liberation, predatory pro-imperialist juntas into anti-imperialist fighters, concrete realities of the junta's petty land-grab into episodes of a supposed world drama.

The two-camp spectacles are altogether too crude, too thick with layers of petty bourgeois politics, with the layers of previous accommodation by the post-war Trotskyist movement to various national liberation and Stalinist movements (what is called 'Pabloism'). In the notion of treating Argentina as meaningfully anti-imperialist – and necessarily so, despite the issue it clashed with imperialism on! – a whole trend in post-war Trotskyism reached the outer limits of a recurrent swing away from class politics.

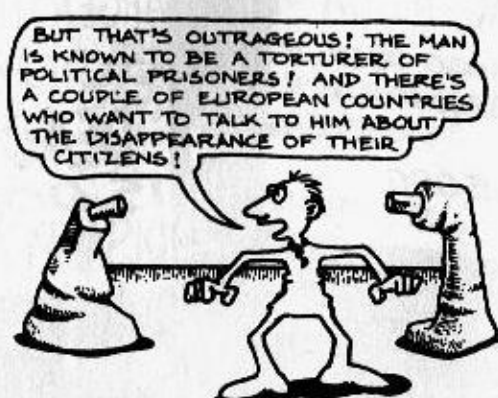
A necessary war?

"In a war between two imperialist countries, it is a question neither of democracy nor of national independence, but of the oppression of backward non-imperialist peoples. In such a war the two countries find themselves on the same historic plane. The revolutionaries in both armies are defeatists. But Japan and China are not on the same historic plane".

Note well: Trotsky uses not abstract categories and labels, or static comparisons, but dynamic interactions as his criteria. It is possible for countries to be on the same historic plane (in relation to a concrete conflict or issue) without being identical. The idea that there is an absolute and stable division between imperialist and non-imperialist capitalism is unhistorical and undialectical.

Trotsky did not get drunk on words and phrases, mistake images for concrete reality, or chase will-of-the-wisp 'symbols' into the

**CORMAC'S
NOTES**





Left and below: an Irish Republic - an view of the war, from An Phoblacht

misty realm of fantasy politics where Galtieri is designated the banner-bearer of anti-imperialism without reference to concrete analysis.

Trotsky continues: "The victory of Japan will signify the enslavement of China, the end of her economic and social development, and the terrible strengthening of Japanese imperialism. The victory of China will signify, on the contrary, the social revolution in Japan and the free development, that is to say unhindered by external oppression, of the class struggle in China"

This "terrible strengthening of Japan" would not be a matter of prestige, 'authority', or the fire it cut in the world. It would be strengthened by plunder of China and exploitation of hundreds of millions of Chinese - which was why Japanese victory would be the end of Chinese economic and social development.

What goal does Trotsky spell out for the Chinese war of liberation? "Free development unhindered by external oppression". And he speaks particularly of free development of the class struggle.

Concrete, precise, definable - not something derived from a different type of situation and imposed as a pattern on the Chinese events. The programme and attitude of the Marxists were grounded in the concrete situation, the real choices, and the consequent necessary development of the workers' struggle in China. Chiang Kai Shek was to be 'supported' with gritted teeth because the war was necessary and at that point he headed it. This did not mean political support to Chiang Kai Shek - on the contrary.

In Argentina? Few comrades would venture the view that the Falklands war was necessary. They would say only that defeat of Britain by the Argentine junta's army (not by the British working class) was necessary for its symbolic importance. The war was not necessary - but we should have supported Galtieri in the war because of the symbolic signif-

icance of it. And that despite the fact that no-one on the left would have campaigned for the starting of the war (the invasion), and many condemn it!

Wherever the pro-Argentine stance comes from, it is not from Trotsky's and other communists' attitude during the wars of the Chinese and others against colonial imperialism. That's for sure.

What does defencism mean?

Trotsky's attitude was: "But can Chiang Kai Shek assure the victory? I do not believe so. It is he, however, who began the war and who today directs it. To be able to replace him it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do that it is necessary not to remain suspended in the air but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, and the internal betrayal. At a certain point, which we cannot fix in advance, this political opposition can and must be transformed into armed conflict, since the civil war, like war generally, is nothing more than the continuation of the political struggle."

If Trotsky's arguments for supporting China were relevant to Argentina, then so also should have been this approach. Pro-Argentine comrades should have focused their criticism of Galtieri on his weakness and insufficient ruthlessness in fighting for the islands.

The Peronists of course did that, so, apparently, did the PST (Socialist Workers' Party, Morenist). But most pro-Argentine comrades shy away from this conclusion. Is it because they are half-aware of the falseness of treating Galtieri's war as a national liberation struggle?

Defencism and political independence

Further: for Trotsky defencism did not exclude working for civil war in nationalist China. On the contrary, the fight for national liberation demanded it - and anyway working class politics did.

Yet the WSL minority write:

"Defeatism means the defeat of your own ruling class by the working class. It means 'the main enemy is at home'. It means 'British workers and soldiers turn your guns on your own officers and ruling class', because our own ruling class is an imperialist ruling class. That is a basic Marxist position that we hold in all wars at any time which are being waged by our own ruling class. The question is, what position do we hold for the other side in the war, in this case Argentina? If we hold a revolutionary defeatist position for the Argentine working class, then we are saying, 'Both working classes defeat your own ruling class; the outcome of the war is irrelevant; a victory for one side would not be more progressive than the other'."

That's exactly what we are saying.

But you don't have to be a defeatist to say: 'Both working classes defeat your own ruling class'. That is what Trotsky said in 1937 - even while standing with Chiang Kai Shek against Japan. Not to say it is to abandon the ground of working class politics ('for the duration').

Pursuing the class struggle...

In China in 1937 it was a real struggle for liberation against imperialism. Chinese 'patriotism' flowed from our politics. We could therefore have an independent view on the matter from that of the Chinese nationalists.

We provisionally and conditionally arrived at the proposal of a national liberation bloc with them on the basis of our independent politics, which were never abandoned or shelved, never in any circumstances and not to the slightest degree.

On the Falklands, the pro-Argentine comrades have passively adopted someone else's viewpoint. They have proceeded not by analysing the concrete issues, but by fitting the war into a super-abstract image of the world as two camps, imperialist and non-imperialist capitalist states being separated by an unbridgeable chasm.

To fight in a war of liberation like the Chinese is not to abandon our politics - on the contrary, it is the only way we can maintain our class viewpoint as a living political force. By participating we serve, promote, and develop our politics. We serve our politics by following where the logic of the class struggle and the real struggle against oppression and exploitation directs us.

"We were the first to propose [a military



bloc of the CP with the KMT]. We demanded, however, that the CP maintain its entire political and organisational independence, that is, that during the civil war against the internal agents of imperialism [Chiang Kai Shek led one side against the regional warlords of Northern China], as in the national war against foreign imperialism, the working class, while remaining in the front lines of the military struggle, prepare the political overthrow of the bourgeoisie. We hold the same policies in the present [anti-Japanese] war. We have not changed our attitude one iota. The Oehlerites and the Eiffelites, on the other hand, have not understood a single bit of our policies, neither those of 1925-7, nor those of today."

Likewise in 1982 the Oehlerites and Eiffelites of the right fail to understand. In China there was an anti-imperialist war – defined as such by an independent Trotskyist assessment of the issues. The Oehlerites refused to support it because they reckoned that would mean identifying politically with Chiang Kai Shek. Over the Falklands, today's 'Oehlerites of the right' supported the war as anti-imperialist on the basis of a general, vague identification with Argentina as 'an oppressed country' – and reckoned, therefore, that it was their anti-imperialist duty to forget about an independent judgment on the issue of the islands.

Either there is or there isn't a real issue of national liberation. If there is, then we have our own criteria, and a vast range of political independence in relation to a Chiang Kai Shek (or a Galtieri). If there is not, and if we side with Galtieri for the symbolic anti-imperialist significance of his war, then for all the concrete issues we have to accept (for the time being) someone else's viewpoint.

If we go begging to the table of the Argentine junta for symbols, then we must take what we get – take things as they define them, rally to the issues they raise (which 'in themselves' we may not even accept). We have to dance to their tune, on their terrain.

For the Trotskyists in China, the starting point was: this is *our* war. They started from the issues. In contrast, a position on the Falklands war which starts from a vague, symbolic 'anti-imperialist' identification with Argentina can only proceed by *shelving independent judgment* on the issue of Argentina's claim to the islands and adopting *someone else's* judgment instead.

This is the method pursued by Trotsky's epigones for 30 and more years. It is not Marxism. It is not building in the class struggle.

It is instead an utterly artificial approach: the un-concrete, un-Marxist construction of a scenario, a world-picture, in which comrades ascribe an anti-imperialist role (that it isn't playing) to the pro-imperialist and sub-imperialist ruling class of the comparatively developed capitalist state of Argentina.

Facing reality...

... or reading off scenarios

The scenario approach comes from a vision of two great camps, imperialist and non-imperialist. We have argued that this is a falsely static and undialectical view of capitalism. It seems to me that the comrades are borrowing a pattern from the view of the world as divided between the Stalinist states and capitalism.

Now between the USSR and imperialism there is a difference of class character. For imperialism and 'non-imperialism', both 'camps' are capitalist.

The vision is therefore false. But the method of taking sides on issues automatically with the 'progressive' camp is radically false even for the USSR.

A model of how to judge from an independent proletarian standpoint even those states (China in the '30s, the USSR) that we have good and imperative reason to support, is given in a discussion by Trotsky with a Chinese comrade.

"Trotsky: ... The slogan 'for revolutionary unity with the Soviet Union, with the proletarians of the whole world' should rather be, 'Unity with the proletariat of the whole world, and for an alliance with the Soviet Union on the basis of a concrete programme in the interests of the liberation of China'. The Soviet Union is now the bureaucracy – no blind confidence in the Soviet Union!"

Li Fu-jen: If the Nanking [Chiang Kai Shek] government should enter into an alliance with the Soviet Union, and the alliance should be of such a nature as to harm China and benefit only the Soviet Union, what should our attitude be towards it?

Trotsky: A military alliance against Japan would be in any case preferable for China, even with the bureaucracy as it is. But then we must say that we demand that the Soviet Union deliver munitions, arms for the workers and peasants; special committees must be created in Shanghai, in workers' centres; the treaty must be elaborated with the participation not only with the KMT but also with the worker and peasant organisations.

We ask for an open proclamation from the Soviet bureaucracy that at the end of the war no part of China would be occupied without the consent of the Chinese people, etc.

Li Fu-jen: Do you then think that the Soviet Union could be capable of conducting an imperialistic policy?

Trotsky: If it is capable of organising frame-ups, killing the revolutionaries, it is capable of all possible crimes".

(Trotsky on China, p.562-3, emphasis added).

Remarkable dialogue! Carefully, precisely and with the brutal honesty we need in order to be revolutionaries able to grasp and change reality, Trotsky sizes up the allies he is supporting (and he supported the USSR against imperialism unconditionally).

Would Trotsky be capable of forgetting about the concrete issues like the Falklands, or consoling himself with the idea that Argentina was non-imperialist and therefore the junta could not possibly conduct an 'imperialistic' policy?

No he would not. He did not accept the Chiang Kai Shek clique or the Stalin bureaucracy for their symbolic value. He had concrete class reasons for allying with them. Those set the limits of the alliance. There was

no ideological or political subordination. He never ceased to look at them in all their details with the eyes of a mortally hostile opponent. He never let the dark shadows of their imperialist opponents obscure the hideous anti working class features of Chiang Kai Shek or Stalin.

The truth – no matter how bitter

Trotsky could never have fallen into the method which allowed comrades to reach pro-Argentine conclusions on the Falklands.

This method was to take the elements in the situation (war, working class chauvinism in Argentina expressed in Peronist 'anti-imperialist' terms, etc.) and rearrange them into a superoptimistic scenario culminating in revolutionary working class victory.

The chauvinist mobilisation on the political coat-tails of the bourgeoisie became transformed – in some people's heads – into a mobilisation against the system.

Everything 'favourable' to the scenario was highlighted, the rest faded out. The most blatant example was when the USFI press cited a speech by the junta's foreign minister, Costa Mendez, as anti-imperialist good coin. More widely, much was made of a jingo Argentine demonstration where the slogan was chanted, 'Malvinas Yes, Galtieri No'. Faded out was the other part of the same chant – according to the *Economist* – 'The Malvinas are Argentina's, the people are Peron's'. And Peron's legacy was what Galtieri was trying to appropriate, he was attempting to answer the call of the Peronist leaders for a new caudillo.

The scenario was constructed; then, in deference to the great revolutionary prospects, assessment of the war was read backwards from the scenario. The sordid details of Galtieri's sally were transmuted by the assurance that it was only the first stage of a process due to culminate in the most militant anti-imperialist struggle.

This has been the method of 'Pabloism' (a bad term, but a common one) for 30 years. It is not Marxism. It is even below the level of the serious bourgeois commentators. It breaks with what Trotsky defined as a cardinal rule of the Fourth International: "To face reality squarely... to call things by their right names, to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be".

In the final analysis 'scenario' politics is fantasy politics, and fantasy politics is passive politics. Instead of using Marxist realism as a preparation for a revolutionary changing of the world, it means 'changing the world' in our heads by way of wishful thinking.

The logic of the class struggle

It means failing to follow the cardinal injunction of Marxism, expressed by Trotsky in the Transitional Programme thus: "To be guided by the logic of the class struggle".

The 'logic of the class struggle' includes for us the logic of genuine liberation movements. These can be complementary to, and not counterposed to, the class struggle of the working class internationally and in the oppressed country. But if there is no issue of liberation struggle actually involved in the war, then it becomes possible to take sides only outside of the logic of the class struggle.

In the letter to Rivera Trotsky describes the sectarians as following closely behind and 'correcting' him, adding a moustache where he draws a woman's face and an egg where he draws a cock and so on. He did not foresee that 45 years later most of those calling themselves Trotskyists would use the art of collage to cut out the picture he drew of China in 1937 and to paste it over the figure of Argentina in 1982 – an Argentina that has more in common with the Japan of 1937 than with the China of that time.



Waging an anti-imperialist war?

Argentina and the world economy

by Bob Sutcliffe

THE current debate on the British left about whether to support Argentina in the South Atlantic war has raised important questions about the role of Argentina within world capitalism.

Some who argue for supporting Argentina contend that, since it is an oppressed, semi-colonial nation, its fight against an oppressor, imperialist nation, Britain, must be supported regardless of the political nature of the military regime.

On the other hand, some of those who believe that socialists should condemn the war and argue for defeatism on both sides have argued that Argentina is not a semi-colonial nation.

In the context of this debate, therefore, the nature of the Argentinian economy and its relation to the world economy has become a controversial issue. And it produces a need for discussion of modern imperialism.

The main purpose of this article is to present and analyse the known historical and contemporary facts which might help to clarify these questions.

Its subsidiary purpose is to argue that, even if the nature of the Argentinian economy could be clearly established (which I believe it cannot in terms of the categories of the debate), this would not be decisive in settling the dispute about whether or not to support Argentina.

At the end I shall summarise the reasons why I personally believe socialists should give no support to either side.

The rise of Argentine capitalism: 1870-1929...

Back in the 16th and 17th centuries when beef was neither corned nor refrigerated and when the plunder of gold and other treasures was the basis of conquest, the land which is today Argentina was a neglected outpost with few inhabitants, settler or indigenous.

Only with the exodus of Italians and Spaniards in search of land and livelihood in the later 19th century did the Republic of Buenos Aires and then Argentina become economically significant. Between 1857 and 1930 Argentina received 6,296,300 immigrants,

78% of them from Spain or Italy.

In the 40-50 years before World War 1, Argentina's development was prodigious. A well-known economic historian has said that at that time "Argentina witnessed one of the highest growth rates in the world for such a prolonged period of time." (1)

The growth was primarily based on rapidly expanding export markets in Europe first of all for wool and hides, then for wheat and finally, with the advent of maritime refrigeration, meat.

Between the late 1860s and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Argentina's population grew from 1.7 million to 11 million. Its area sown with crops grew from about 580,000 hectares to over 25 million hectares. Its railway network from 503 miles to over 38,000. (2)

Although primary agricultural exports were the foundation of the expansion, Argentina also experienced considerable industrial development which was closely linked with rural growth.

By 1930 nearly a quarter of the labour force worked in the industrial sector, many of them still in industries closely related to agriculture.

Much of the capital which financed Argentina's growth was, of course, not local but came from the advanced imperialist countries, especially Britain.

In 1900 long-term foreign investment in Argentina amounted to \$1,120 million; this was 32% of the fixed means of production in the country.

By 1913 foreign investment had risen to 48% of the total, an enormously high proportion. After the war it fell back again to 34% in 1927 (worth \$3,474 million).

The largest investor by far was Britain. In 1900 its share was 59%, a proportion it maintained until World War 2. Up to then between one-third and a half of the investment was in railways and another third in government bonds. (3) This was a typical pattern of 19th and early 20th century foreign investment similar to that in the USA, Australia, Russia and other countries. (See Table 2).

In the period after World War 1 growth and foreign investment continued but at a lower level as a result of the problems of the world economy.

Nonetheless one basic pattern of

Argentinian development was maintained from 1860 to 1930: a relatively open economy, participating in the rapidly changing world division of labour by specialising in a few primary products (meat, grain and linseed) for which world demand was strong and at the same time beginning a domestic industrialisation. Foreign capital and foreign trade were both very important: exports and imports were each worth over a quarter of the value of GNP; between one-third and one-half of capital was foreign owned.

There is controversy among economic historians as to whether in terms of income per head Argentina was ahead of or lagged a little behind Australia and New Zealand in 1900; but the pattern and speed of development of the country was very similar up to 1929.

Argentina was one of the few countries of the capitalist world outside of Europe and North America enjoying the status of an economically advanced country. It was one of the 12 richest nations in the world. By and large, up to 1930 Argentina, like Australia, was being developed rather than underdeveloped by world capitalism. It was not, however, a significant imperialist power in the sense that its bourgeoisie did not play a politically important or independent role on the world political stage.

Australia went on to keep up with or overtake the economically advanced countries of Europe and North America while Argentina did not. The reasons for Argentina's later failure have been analysed a good deal less than those for its earlier relative success.

... And the decline

Some economists date the dividing of the ways long before the Great Depression of 1929. Andre Gunder Frank, for instance, concludes that Argentina first "missed the economic boat" in the late 19th century: "Between 1880 and the First World War the relative weakness of the working class and labour movement relative to the export interests led to excessive agricultural export orientation instead of industrial protectionism. Thus Argentina never realised the 'Australian model' of development (for which it had certain advantages over

Australia) and missed the boat in its direct competition with Australia. (In Australia the relative strength of the working class imposed a much more protective infant industry policy on the agricultural interests). The result was that the development of Australia, with only half the population of Argentina, has far outpaced that of Argentina since then." (4)

Even if there is some truth in this, the evidence still suggests that the growth of Argentina's national income per head was ahead of Australia's until 1930.

Some of the decisive reasons for the setback to Argentina's development, therefore, must be sought after the onset of the Great Depression.

Paradoxically this period is always pointed to as the major period of Argentina's industrialisation. The country's primary exports were cut off by the depression and so this forced Argentinian capitalists to seek out new sources of profit.

At the same time the worldwide collapse of industry meant that Argentinian industrialists had less competition to face. In any case the government began to raise a high tariff wall around Argentinian industry. Argentina, however, unlike Australia, was excluded from the discriminatory trading blocs into which the post-1929 world was divided, though it made some trade agreements with Britain, for instance.

The protectionist policy was maintained through World War Two when the situation was improved by a boom in primary exports as well. By 1945 it had "produced an important industrial bourgeoisie and working class and petite bourgeoisie." (5)

The old agricultural exporting interests lost political power to the benefit of the growing national industrial bourgeoisie and the strengthening, organised working class — two potentially antagonistic groups who could be temporarily allied only through industrialisation, protectionism and political nationalism.

It was on the basis of such an alliance that Peron and his followers built his

TABLE 1.

Argentinian exports — growth and composition.

Total exports (Index 1875-79=100)	1875-79 100	1900-04 391	1925-29 *
Percentage composition			
Wool	52.9	22.0	8.2
Hides and skins	38.1	11.2	8.1
Meat	8.2	7.7	15.4
Wheat and corn	0.7	35.1	40.7
Linseed	nil	9.5	12.2
Others	0.1	15.5	15.4

Source: Diaz Alejandro, pp.5 and 18.

*=not available

nationalist, populist regime from 1945 until 1955. It remains today the strongest latent force in Argentinian politics. The various military regimes from 1955 to 1973 were all obliged, like it or not, to continue the protectionist, nationalist policies of Peronism in order to placate the dominant forces in Argentinian politics.

During this whole period Argentina retreated from being an open economy with high penetration by foreign capital towards relative autarky.

Exports and imports had both been over a quarter of the GNP in the early part of the century. Since 1940 they have been well under 10%.

The total value of foreign private investment was \$3,136 million in 1913; withdrawal of capital and liquidations in the Great Depression had reduced it to \$2,580 million by 1940.

Peron's nationalisations of the 1940s and further withdrawal of capital cut it to about \$1,255 million by 1949. There it stayed until a sudden and short build-up in the early '60s to send it up to about \$1,800 million by 1965.

Over the next ten years of political upheaval some foreign capital entered Argentina on the one hand (mainly to buy up existing firms for petroleum production) while capital left mori-

bund industries on the other hand. So by 1975 the total had only been raised to \$2,000. (6)

The claim made in a recent article in the *Militant* (weekly magazine of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States) that "the reason for the gap between [Canada and Argentina] is explained by the principal difference between them: Argentine economic development has been deformed and distorted by the predominant role that foreign capital has played in the development of industry, and by the fundamental influence that imperialist companies exert on the Argentinian state" (7) is, therefore, extraordinarily wide of the mark.

One of the striking features of the last 50 years of Argentina's development is in fact the extremely small amount of foreign investment which has taken place. The real value of foreign owed capital in Argentina today is far less in absolute terms than it was in 1913! In 1955 foreign capital was only 5.1% of total capital stock, and it cannot be much higher than that today. (8)

About 1,000 out of Argentina's 133,000 industrial firms are foreign-owned.

That is not to say foreign capitalists

TABLE 2.

Foreign Investment in Argentina.

	1913	1940	1949	1965	1975
Total value of foreign capital (US \$m)	3,136	2,580	1,255	1,800	2,000
Percentage of total capital stock	47.7	20.4	5.4	*	*
Share of					
USA	1	20	*	*	55
UK	59	60	*	*	
Others	40	20	*	*	45
Share invested in					
Railways	33	UK only 60	US only *	*	*
State Bonds	21	20	*	*	*
Industry	46	4	67	*	66
Other		16	9	*	22
Petroleum	nil	nil	24	*	12

Sources: Aldo Ferrer, *The Argentine Economy*; Raul Neyra, "Las inversiones extranjeras en Argentina", *Informacion Comercial Espanola*, 1980; Diaz Alejandro, *Essays*.

*= not available.

are not influential. In part foreign industrial capital is concentrated in a few key economic sectors and in the largest firms. Taking only the 100 largest of Argentina's industrial firms, then 60% of their total sales are the sales of foreign owned businesses.

In the politically unstable period since 1955, US and European capital has seemed more interested in controlling Argentinian industry than in developing it. It has repatriated a notoriously high proportion of its local profits and its policies have helped to hold back private capitalist industry in Argentina.

Role of the state

Apart from a number of important holding companies, Argentinian capitalist firms are relatively small. It is the state which since the Peron period had been the major capitalist enterprise in Argentina. The large public sector now dominates energy and transport and includes armaments, most of the steel industry, and some major branches of agricultural marketing.

The state also plays a very important role in Argentina's exceptionally highly developed financial system. 47% of total deposits are held in state-owned banks, 38% in Argentinian-owned private banks and 15% in foreign-owned banks.

The potential economic power of the state has not been successfully employed to speed Argentina's growth not only because of internal contradictions but also because of restrictions imposed from outside on a debtor government. In particular there was the notorious set of austerity measures imposed by the IMF on Argentina in the mid-1960s.

The IMF's policies were an early attempt by imperialist interests, in alliance with sections of the Argentinian ruling class and military, to break the mould of Peronist economics and create a more welcoming climate for foreign investment.

But, in spite of the growing encouragement of pro-imperialist governments ever since 1955, foreign capital has generally shunned Argentina in favour of other countries like Brazil and some South East Asian countries.

Frank sees the period since 1965 as "a permanent political emergency in which the agro-export interests, in alliance with sectors of the big industrial bourgeoisie (now increasingly allied with American and continental European instead of traditional British capital), have sought to discipline the labour force sufficiently to impose an Argentinian version of the Brazilian, or at least the Mexican model" (9). He concludes that "the strength of the Argentinian working class . . . prevented the measures that superexploit labour — the measures necessary for a smooth functioning of the 'Brazilian model'."

Compared with 1929 the Argentina which Peronism created and which persists to a great extent today was protectionist and isolated. Government policies had obstructed the further growth of primary exports and created a quite widespread and integrated industrial sector, but one which was incapable of competing in world markets. Growth was continuous but grindingly slow. Argentina failed to share fully in the great post-war boom. Its rank fell from one of the top twelve

capitalist nations in 1929 to number 31 (in terms of GNP per head) in 1980.

During the course of this debate the historical comparison of Argentina with Australia has frequently been supplemented by a contemporary comparison with Canada, whose population is very similar, but one which is much more dominated by foreign, particularly US capital. The comparison shows, of course, a very wide economic disparity. Argentina is a far poorer and less developed country; its national income per head is only 23% of that of Canada, its manufacturing output 29% of Canada's and so on. Though it has been distorted in the left press (10) those differences are important and certainly constitute evidence of a qualitative difference between the two economies.

But it is also relevant to make a parallel comparison with another country, say Zaire, whose population is almost the same. That comparison shows that the disparities between Argentina and Zaire are in most respects much wider than those between Argentina and Canada. Zaire's GNP per head is only 12% of that of Argentina, its manufacturing output less than 2%. Its death rate is 18 per thousand compared with Argentina's 8 per thousand (Britain's is 12 per thousand), and so on.

It is hard to conclude very much from such simple quantitative comparisons about the role of countries in the world economic system. But I think that they suggest that it is as difficult to place Argentina in one politico-economic category with Zaire as it is to place it in the same category as Canada. This is further evidence that an understanding of the workings of the world capitalist system requires a more subtle categorisation than the crude contraposition of advanced imperialist nations and backward oppressed ones.

After 1976: from protectionism to a new model

Nearly all economic commentators agree that the 1976 coup marked an attempt by the Argentinian military, along with (especially American) imperialist interests, to end the long political and economic crisis.

The intention was to take the Argentinian economy back to its heyday before the 1930s — to dismantle tariffs and protectionism opening up the economy to imports; to restore the central importance of primary exports, this time including oil; to extend a welcoming embrace to foreign investment; to break the old alliance between national industrial capital and the workers by the ruthless elimination of lame industrial ducks, the destruction of the unions by a huge cut in the real pay of Argentinian workers and incidentally to curb the astronomical inflation.

As with Thatcherism and Reaganomics, the junta's plans entailed the fact that the economic situation would have to get worse before it got better. But it was supposed to worsen briefly to pave the way for a truly epoch-making improvement.

Instead, the experiment has gone increasingly wrong. A huge industrial slump has happened and weak indus-

tries have been bankrupted by the score. And the real wages of workers have been cut in half.

But exports have failed to boom and foreign capital has remained wary of coming in. A brief inflow between 1977 and 1979 has been offset by the closure and withdrawal of a number of foreign manufacturing firms — their local market had vanished and they could or would not export.

Inflation has been reduced but not controlled and a financial crisis has been developing; several major banks have failed over the last 18 months.

These policies led both to a sharp decline in the profits of private and public companies and to a sharp increase in the government deficit. Both of these situations led to a staggering increase in Argentina's foreign debts, public and private. They probably amount to around \$35,000 million — more than ten times the value of productive foreign capital invested in Argentina.

This situation would have brought Argentina close to a major default even without the South Atlantic war. It should not, however, be exaggerated.



Peron

One of the reasons for the high level of official debt is the fact that the government has since 1976 maintained very high real interest rates and because Argentina has a relatively highly sophisticated banking and financial system which has attracted foreign short-term deposits in Argentinian banks, coming both from imperialist and from other Latin American countries.

Hence as short-term debts have grown so there has been a huge counterpart growth in Argentina's gold and foreign exchange reserves which at the start of this year were worth \$10 billion.

In addition, and much less generally known, Argentina as well as having large foreign debts has almost equally large foreign assets. The only recent estimate of these puts them at \$30,000 million, almost as large as the debts, though they are extremely difficult to estimate exactly (11).

Overall, therefore, contrary to general belief, Argentina may not be a

debtor country. Those who are obliged to pay the foreign debts, however, are not the same as the holders of the foreign assets. Some are held abroad in the personal bank accounts of the bourgeoisie and military hierarchy against the day when they find it wise to leave; some are held by banks; and a few Argentinian companies have themselves invested money in other Latin American countries.

In March this year, therefore, Argentina's large international assets were not in such a form that they could alleviate the deepening economic and financial crisis or avert the threatening political crisis of Galtieri's regime to which it was leading.

Galtieri and his economics minister Roberto Alemann planned a sudden last ditch attempt to implement the junta's long term economic plans — a tightening of monetary control, a new purge of inefficient firms, new cutbacks in government spending and higher taxes and wholesale hiving off of the public sector. Such a plan would be bound to excite renewed workers opposition and signs of a new militancy had been emerging ever since mid-1981.

It was in that context that the junta planned its invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas. Given the continued strength of the Peronist-led workers opposition, the junta attempted to use what seemed the only way of neutralising the obstacles to its economic policies — to excite a wave of national chauvinism. Having failed to eliminate the old national bourgeoisie/organised working class alliance the regime sought to politically assimilate itself to it while economically attacking it.

Neither semi-colonial nor imperialist

The analysis of this article leads me to conclude that Argentina cannot be defined as either a semi-colonial or as an imperialist country.

There are many on the left who might say that statement was illogical in that every country has to be one thing or the other. It is true that at the beginning of this century that Marxist analysts revealed how the development of capitalism had led to a new hierarchy of nations — a select group of economically advanced, oppressor nations and the great mass of economically backward, colonial and semi-colonial nations. Politically this provided a theoretical background to the view that there existed both reactionary (imperialist) and progressive (anti-imperialist) forms of nationalism.

Later Marxists have rightly used this distinction to argue that in certain cases socialists should support the actions of even reactionary governments in semi-colonial countries because they were directed against national oppression.

These points, if correctly employed, can still provide insights. But they can also be abused. It is wrong to say that imperialism or the epoch of world-wide capitalist domination resulted in an unalterable division of the world into two types of nation. Just as earlier socialists recognised the changing hierarchy of nations so we should observe

that it has continued to change — in two ways in particular. One is the emergence after World War 2 of a single dominant imperialist power, the USA, which even today produces a quarter of the world's output. The second is the emergence, or rather cultivation, of a few countries at an intermediate level of economic development which act economically and militarily as subalterns of imperialist hierarchy of nations. In any case there is no rigid coincidence between the economic level of a nation and its status in the hierarchy of world power.

Neither from the point of view of its relative level of economic development, nor from the point of view of its relations with the rest of the capitalist world, nor finally from the point of view of its role in the capitalist hierarchy of nations, is it possible to allocate a country like Argentina between two mutually exclusive categories of nation. From all these standpoints it occupies an intermediate position.

'Sub-imperialism'

In Latin America some Marxist writers have devised the term "sub-imperialist" to describe these countries. The most frequently cited examples are Brazil since 1964, South Africa and Iran under the Shah.

There are, of course, many extremely economically backward nations which have pro-imperialist rulers. But the sub-imperialist countries are a special case because their relative economic advancement gives their rulers an element of real independence and initiative on the world stage as well as the material resources on which to base an active, interventionist repressive role in relation to lesser countries.

Argentina in some ways fits this description and in some instances has acted as a sub-imperialist power. From its social and demographic structure it looks more like a poor mature capitalist economy, rather than an underdeveloped one. And for a century it has been a big power in its region. But it has not become one of the elect because of its inherent economic and political instability. And that, as I have argued, is related to the intimidating strength of its working class.

It is important to clarify all these aspects of Argentina's economy and class structure for many reasons including the analysis of the present conflict and its causes. But I do not think that such a clarification would decide the question of whether socialists should support Argentina in the present war.

Even if it could be unambiguously established that Argentina was an oppressed, semi-colonial nation that, in my opinion, would not convert its role into an anti-imperialist one independently of its aims and of the origins of the South Atlantic dispute.

Galtieri's aim was to assume, by force against the will of their largely non-exploiting inhabitants, sovereignty of the islands — a move which if it were accomplished successfully would objectively do nothing, either actually or potentially, to increase the living standards or independence of the people of Argentina. Galtieri himself is presumably well aware of this. In any case his purpose in making the invasion was to produce a wave of nationalist sentiment in the shelter of which he might

impose further economic hardship and political repression. He did it as a desperate last attempt to avert the demise of his regime.

The arrogance of Thatcher's reaction does not alter the totally reactionary motivation and context of the Argentinian invasion and should not, in my view, stop socialists in Britain and Argentina from arguing for an instant cessation of the reactionary acts of both governments. It does not convert the struggle into a war between two camps, one of them being objectively progressive. And for socialists to interpret it in that way leads to a loss of an independent vision of a world based on humanity, freedom and justice and not on a choice between evils.

NOTES

- (1) Carlos Diaz Alejandro, *Essays in the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*, New Haven and London, 1970, p.3.
- (2) C. Alejandro, *Essays*, p.2.
- (3) All data from Diaz-Alejandro, *Essays*, pp.29-32.
- (4) Andre Gunder Frank, *Crisis: In the Third World*, London 1981, p.20.
- (5) A.G. Frank, *op cit*, p.20.
- (6) All figures from Raul Neyra, "Las inversiones extranjeras en Argentina", *Informacion Comercial Espanola*, 1980.
- (7) Will Reissner, "How Britain and the United States 'underdeveloped' Argentina", *The Militant*, May 7, 1982.
- (8) Aldo Ferrer, *The Argentine Economy*, p.229.
- (9) Frank, *op cit*, p.21.
- (10) *Imperialism and the Militant* (USA) use figures (without sources) which considerably exaggerate the differences shown by the most authoritative available statistics produced annually by the World Bank (*World Development Report 1981*).
- (11) Carlos Abalo, "Argentina 1976-81", *Comercio Exterior* (Mexico), June and September 1981.



Against neutrality: defend Argentina

Many within the WSL disagree with the present majority position on the Falklands which is one of defeatism on both sides linked to demands for the withdrawal of Argentinian troops from the Falklands and self-determination for the islanders.

Unfortunately there seems to be a lack of clarity as to what defeatism on both sides actually means for our position on the war.

Contrary to the impression which may be given, to call for defeatism in Britain *does not* imply a call for the victory of the Argentine forces over British forces. We have to be absolutely honest and say that it means neutrality in the military conflict between Britain and Argentina. There has been agreement on the call for the defeat of the British forces but *not* by the Argentine forces.

What defeatism means

Defeatism means the defeat of your own ruling class by the *working class*. It means "the main enemy is at home". It means: British workers and soldiers turn your guns on your own officers and ruling class because our own ruling class is an *imperialist* ruling class. That is a basic Marxist position that we hold in *all* wars at *any* time which are being waged by our own ruling class. The question is, what position do we hold for the other side in the war, in this case Argentina? If we hold, as we do, a revolutionary defeatist position for the Argentine working class, then we are saying: Both working classes defeat your own ruling class; the outcome of the war is irrelevant; a victory for one side would not be more progressive than the other. In other words, we are *neutral* in the military conflict between the two state powers, both in the final outcome and in particular battles or clashes. This is often a correct position to hold. We would always hold it in the case of a war between two imperialist powers. It would often be our position in the case of a war between non-imperialist powers — like Iran and Iraq. In the case of a war between a major imperialist power and a non-imperialist power, however, it can be fundamentally wrong. It even questions whether we

would favour the defeat of the British forces by the Argentine forces if it happened.

Such a position of neutrality reflects in part the very different material conditions prevailing at present in Britain as against those facing the Argentine workers. In Britain of course there is no conscription, no danger of air strikes at our mainland, no enemy fleet cruising 12 miles off the coast threatening to attack any ship or aircraft which ventures out of port, and no overt austerity measures.

Conditions in Argentina

Conditions in Argentina are very different. The working class cannot escape from the fact that their country is under attack. The whole male population has been conscripted; and there is a foreign, imperialist navy offshore with guns and missiles trained on Argentine targets. The imperialist response to Galtieri's adventure in invading the Falklands has in turn triggered a wave of anti-imperialist militancy. In the mass mobilisation on the streets can be seen the most advanced, class conscious elements in the Argentine workers' movement, exploiting the opening in the repression to put forward the slogan "Malvinas yes — Galtieri no!"

Effects of the war

It is in this context that *every* major current of Trotskyism, with the exception of the WSL, has concluded that the war creates conditions to *raise* the consciousness of the Argentine working class and develop the struggle against imperialism. The closer we get to Latin America, the more unanimous are political tendencies that a victory for Argentina would create *better* conditions for the struggle to oust Galtieri and the junta. Yet from England, the WSL majority tells them all that they are wrong.

Indeed, since the majority position suggests — at least implicitly — that the cause of the Argentine workers might be better served by a military victory of British imperialism than by an Argen-

tine victory, it is worth looking a little more closely at this scenario. Would a defeat for Galtieri precipitate a resurgence of workers' militancy in Argentina, a resumption of the mass action which pushed Galtieri into his initial invasion, and produce a heightened confidence among workers of their ability to topple the imperialist-backed junta which has so savagely repressed them?

This might be argued to be the case were it true that the predominant mood among the workers was hostility to the war. But all the signs are that the workers identify with the fight against British imperialism. They would regard a setback in that war as a setback for *them*. We have no reason to presume at present that under the blows of such a setback the working class — which had not been strong enough previously to



topple the junta — will suddenly find renewed strength. Indeed a beaten and isolated Galtieri could even seek ways to utilise such a situation to rally "national unity" in a beleaguered Argentina, and implant the Malvinas diversion as a central obstacle to further moves of the working class.

Outside Argentina the masses of Latin America would witness a bloody setback inflicted upon a whole nation by imperialist armed force. We cannot precisely 'quantify' such a blow to the consciousness of the masses; but it would certainly shape the thinking and thus the actions of those in struggle against imperialist control.

The majority comrades have placed great score in the nature of the Argentine regime. But to stand for the defence of Argentina in the war does not imply, of course, support for the blood-drenched military junta. It means standing with an oppressed nation against an oppressor. The government of the day in the oppressed nation is an important issue which we have to address ourselves to, but it is *secondary* to the struggle against imperialism.

Trotsky's very clear views on this in the cases of Brazil, China and Mexico have been quoted by every major Trotskyist grouping to illustrate the point. Naturally the majority comrades reply to this with the time honoured answer to all quotes — that they are "torn out of context". As always the use of historical examples can provide no perfect parallels, but the point is does the central point being made have validity?

Repeatedly, on numerous conflicts Trotsky argues that it is perfectly possible to stand on the side of a reactionary regime when imperialism is on the other side. The similarities between the Falkland conflict and the Japanese attempt to conquer China can be debated, but what cannot be debated is that he argued for standing on the side of a mass murderer of communists. He polemicalised against those who could not draw a correct line because they started from the nature of the Chiang Kai-Shek regime.

Having drawn this distinction, Trotsky goes further and connects this with the way revolutionaries intervene and fight for leadership in the mass movement. He says:

In the midst

"Chiang Kai-Shek is the executioner of the Chinese workers and peasants. But today he is forced, despite himself, to struggle against Japan". "(It is) the duty of all workers' organisations of China to participate actively and in the front lines . . . without abandoning for a single moment their own programme and independent activity . . . To be able to replace him (Chiang) it is necessary to gain decisive influence among the proletariat and in the army, and to do this it is necessary, not to remain suspended in the air, but to place oneself in the midst of the struggle. We must win influence and prestige in the military struggle against the foreign invasion. [Trotsky uses the word 'invasion' because he is referring to an invasion, on Brazil he talks about 'military conflict'] and in the political struggle against the weaknesses, the deficiencies, the internal betrayal."

Whilst accepting all the differences between the Japanese invasion of China and the Falkland war, how does that measure up to what the WSL is saying to the Argentine working class, who have a long and proud history of struggle. We are saying that despite the fact that the war is being waged against British imperialism by the Junta, *oppose the war*. Campaign for the *withdrawal* of the troops who are locked in combat with Thatcher's army. Black war supplies, campaign against the war effort.

Such a position, were we in Argentina, would completely separate us off from the entire working class not only of Argentina but of Latin America as a whole. Far from fighting for leadership in the anti-imperialist movement we would simply become known as those who opposed the anti-imperialist war against Britain.

The majority comrades tackle Trotsky's views in several other ways. First, they question whether Argentina is in fact a non-imperialist power, and define it as "sub-imperialist". Secondly, they say that Trotsky's position would



Trotsky

only apply in the case of an invasion of the Argentine mainland aimed at the conquest and military suppression of Argentina. (Something which is absolutely inconceivable). But these two positions are contradictory. The first backs up an often-expressed view of the NC majority comrades that Argentina is a middle-ranking capitalist power little different to Britain. The second says that in the event of a war of conquest against Argentina it *would* be regarded as fundamentally different and Trotsky's view would apply.

The NC majority say that they would support Argentina in a war against imperialism only if national liberation was involved. And national liberation is defined to mean *only* the struggle to remove, or defend against direct imperialist rule through conquest. What the comrades have done is to define national liberation and war in such a way that they will never be called upon to defend Argentina.

But the facts are that Argentina is subject to national domination by imperialism. National rights are involved — the right of a non-imperialist nation to recover what it thinks is its property from imperialism, without having to face attack and discipline from the military force of imperialism. Argentina

is a non-imperialist dependent state. And it is at war, in defence against imperialist attack.

The majority comrades argue at great length, and place great score, as to whether we have changed our position or not (although they would be better discussing whether we are *right or wrong* rather than if we have changed). There have certainly been mistakes since April 2nd by a majority of comrades in the leadership. The estimations of the war by the majority (not the majority as it now stands) have varied between treating it as a joke to a consistent underestimation of its significance. From then until the first bombing of Port Stanley airstrip, a majority view held that the most likely outcome would be military intimidation to back up diplomatic moves limiting military action to "skirmishes". Pressure for this came from comrades who now form the majority.

A third strand of argument is to brand the anti-imperialist mobilisation of workers in Argentina — or even Latin America as a whole — as no more than "chauvinism". This position yet again obliterates any distinction between the status of imperialist Britain and dependent, non-imperialist Argentina. And it ignores the very real contradictions within the mobilisation of the masses that has followed the escalation of the war. The hundreds of thousands of workers on the streets are denounced in one lump as "chauvinists" — thus dismissing any prospect of developing the anti-imperialist dynamic of this movement in the direction of the overthrow of the nearest element of imperialist control — the junta itself. To make calls for the arming of the workers, expropriation of imperialist holdings and overthrow of Galtieri a reality, it is necessary to find a point of connection with the most advanced workers. That connection is plain only from the standpoint of defending Argentina against imperialism — combined with the exposure and political struggle against Galtieri's junta.

The position of the minority is consistent with the TILC resolution adopted at Easter, which said the following:

"While recognising that the present conflict is restricted to the Falklands issue, in the event of a full-scale war between Britain and Argentina we would be unequivocally for the defence of Argentina."

(The majority comrades now invoke the first sentence to nullify the paragraph but since any war and any scale of military action which arises out of this conflict will be ostensibly "over the Falklands" it is obviously a false interpretation).

This paragraph is important, because although we may disagree now over what constitutes an all-out war, the paragraph clearly shows that the resolution saw a war between Britain and Argentina as *something different* to an inter-imperialist war. It recognised that a stage could arise when we would have to defend Argentina and made provisions for it.

Stage of development

If the nature and stage of development of Argentine capitalism and the decline of British imperialism as the

comrades argue invalidates a comparison with Trotsky's views (quoted above) now, then the same was the case on April 9th at the TILC meeting. If the view that Argentina and Britain are similar middle-ranking capitalist states is right now, it was right then. The view of course does not hold. Militarily there is no comparison. Argentina is economically dependent on imperialism, mainly US imperialism. Like most of Latin America, it is a producer of primary commodities, in its case grain and beef, for export. Argentine private industry is heavily dependent on foreign, mostly US, investment, and the state industries and services are heavily dependent on vast loans from foreign banks resulting in the current huge debts.

Loans to Argentina

The Telegraph City Comment of May 18th gave some interesting figures on recent Western bank loans to Latin American countries (which should be seen in relationship to GNP):

"Since the Falklands crisis, international banks have been taking a hard look at the extent of their involvement in loans not only to Argentina, but to the whole of Latin America, with the result that many have begun to regret their past generosity. The latest figures from the Bank for International Settlements make it easier to understand why. The bank, which monitors offshore lending by international banks, reveals that Latin America continued to attract the 'lion's share' of new bank loans right up until the end of last year.

"In the fourth quarter of 1981, international banks lent an extra \$17,000 million to developing countries. Of that, nearly \$12,000 million went to Latin America. Mexico alone borrowed an additional \$5,400 million while Brazil took \$4,200 million worth of new loans. Argentina, though less avid for new money, borrowed an extra \$1,300 million. The BIS figures also show that at the last count, banks had a total of \$182,000 million out on loan to Latin America. Against that, deposits from the area, which are seen as the first line of defence in the event of payment problems, amounted to just \$58,000 million."

So, if the objection based on Argentine economic development is not valid, has the war reached the stage of an all-out war? It is certainly true that such a stage was never adequately defined at the TILC meeting. In debate, views were expressed that this stage would come in the event of an attack on the Argentine mainland. This was plainly inadequate, and has to be reassessed in the light of the unfolding of real events. A full-scale war involving the destruction of most of the Argentine navy and air force and much of its army could clearly take place without ever involving the Argentine mainland. It is a false distinction to hold a neutral position on a bloody war raging between Argentine state power and British imperialism in the South Atlantic and on the Falklands and be prepared to defend Argentina only in the event of air strikes on mainland bases — which would be a part of the same war.

Already there are many reports of British forces operating on the Argentine mainland, preparing military operations against bases and installa-

tions. Where would we stand on these? Would we defend Argentina against them whilst remaining neutral in battles with the ships which landed them there?

In the first stages, when the task force was dispatched, it was not at all clear that Thatcher would be prepared to launch a war if diplomatic efforts failed. The South Georgia operation was conducted without bloodshed and the officers invited to dinner afterwards. It changed with the bombing of Port Stanley airstrip, the sinking of the Belgrano and the Sheffield, the shooting down of aircraft and the extension of the total exclusion zone to cover the whole of the South Atlantic up to 12 miles off the Argentine coast, preventing Argentine ships from leaving port. At the same time the size of the task force was doubled and the number of troops at sea trebled. The decision had been taken to go to war.

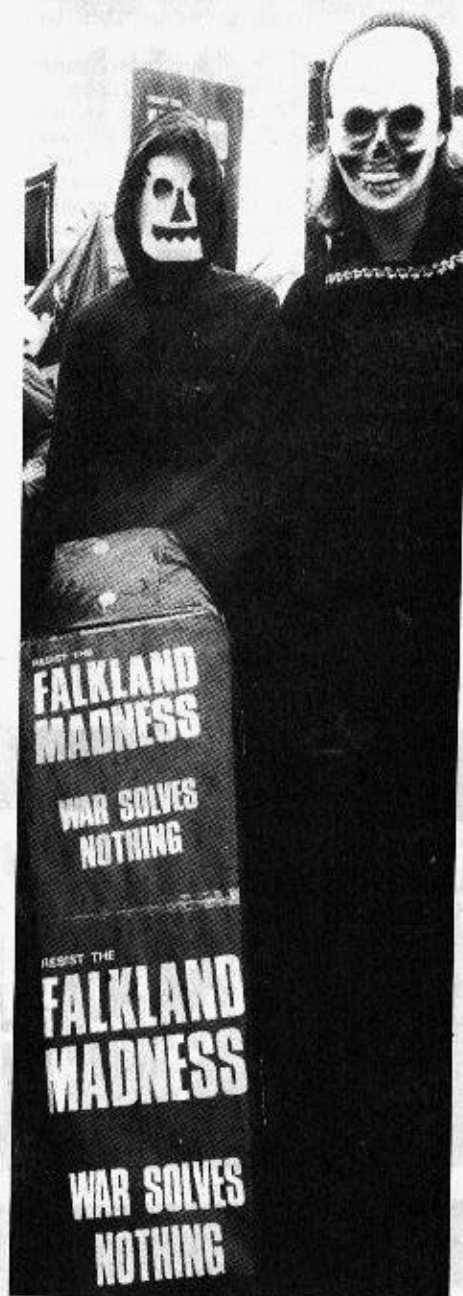
Whatever assessment we had made of the previous period, and whether we had been right or wrong in our assessment of Thatcher's intentions and the

probable course of events, all became irrelevant. It was now in our opinion an undeclared war and should be treated as such. On that basis we proposed at the EC on May 9th to change our attitude to the war in line with the contingency agreed in the TILC resolution, and switch to a defence of Argentina position.

This does not alter our assessment of Galtieri's motives in his invasion of the Falklands. It was to head off a confrontation with the powerful Argentine working class and therefore entirely reactionary. Galtieri's anti-imperialism is phoney because he rests on imperialism. He wanted to invoke the strong anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist sentiment in the Argentine working class for his own ends. But he clearly miscalculated the response of British imperialism, which saw it a threat to its authority and an opportunity to re-establish some of the past glory of British imperialism, and establish a position where the forces of British imperialism has a record of military intervention far beyond Ireland. Galtieri's problem was that he could not stand against the British assault without bringing forward the Argentine working class and inflaming the strong and progressive anti-imperialist sentiments, something which could dig his grave at a later stage.

Nor does it alter the rights or wrongs of the Argentine claim of sovereignty over the Falklands. We cannot ignore the fact that the Falklands were taken by force from Argentina as part of Britain's policy of colonial expansion. We recognise that they were used by Britain as a naval base to guard the passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic ocean, but if the settlers were a distinct and viable community and were asking for self-determination, we would support them. Geographical or historical arguments would not apply. But they are *not* asking for self-determination. They are militantly pro-imperialist and determined to stay that way. On top of this, they are a population, as was said in an earlier debate, the size of three streets in Islington, and declining all the time. A third of them are there simply because they are employed by Coalite Company, who run the place like a company encampment. Obviously their views and fears are a consideration and could be decisive under different conditions. But we cannot subordinate the world political situation to the Falkland settlers and give them an imperialist veto. To do so would ignore the class politics involved. The question of self determination of the islanders has equally become an irrelevant issue. We cannot allow the international class issues involved to be subordinated to 1,800 people who as far as can be seen could call in the fleet to throw the Argentinians out if they were given a choice.

It is the international struggle against imperialism which should come first for us now it has reached this stage. The war has changed the parameters of the situation we are dealing with. In other words, the international dimension becomes paramount. Britain is doing what the USA has been unable to do in any real war since the Vietnam war, to impose its will on a non-imperialist power. It is indeed a war of imperialist



authority. The main plank of Thatcher is that Britain is now upholding international law and order as US imperialism claimed in Vietnam and Korea. What Thatcher means is law and order as defined and interpreted by imperialism. The implications of this are that the *outcome* of the war will have a profound effect on the world political situation afterwards. A *victory* for Britain would increase the confidence of world imperialism in using military force, and would begin to establish the use of military force against non-imperialist nations as the norm. Whilst a *defeat* for Britain would deny the imperialists of such a boost and emphasise their inability to use force successfully.

Neither is it just a matter of British imperialism, US imperialism, which hesitated for weeks, came down on the side of Britain. Like Thatcher, Reagan would prefer a negotiated settlement on Britain's terms forced on Argentina by military threats and intimidation. But since this is not possible, with the junta caught between British imperialism and the anti-imperialist sentiments of the powerful Argentine working class, Reagan was forced to openly state his position. The USA is now clearly backing Thatcher with considerable military aid. Fuel supplies for ships and in-flight refuelling is now readily available to the task force. Sophisticated radar cover is now being supplied to the extent of a specially launched 'Big Bird' spy satellite orbiting constantly over the South Atlantic. There is no doubt that an unlimited amount of combat and logistical equipment will be made available to Britain from the USA as and when it becomes necessary. (Only a persistent anti-war feeling at home has prevented Reagan from carrying out similar adventures of his own). To back this up they are also using the EEC as a pro-imperialist political block.

The escalating military conflict to war proportions put an end to Haig's mediation and Reagan's prevarication. Though their overall interests are by no means identical, the USA's decision to back Britain was based on the assessment that this would best serve its world interests. The risk of severe disruption of the USA's relationship with

the South American states, through undermining the Rio Treaty, OAS, etc., were regarded by the US government as less damaging than weakening links with Western European NATO states and their common anti-USSR cold-war policies.

For us to call for the withdrawal of the Argentine troops from the Falklands, which the majority of the comrades argue for, under these conditions is incredible. To do that now the war has started would hand Thatcher a massive victory on a plate, particularly if the invasion of the islands had started and a land war was taking place. (Neither is it parochial to say that such a demand for withdrawal if carried out would result in another Tory government with a massive majority since it would be an event of world significance).

For British Trotskyists to call for the withdrawal of Argentine troops is thus doubly unacceptable. But of course this does not mean that the issue is not a perfectly legitimate question for debate within the Argentine workers' movement, as part of a struggle which should centre around the slogans "Defend Argentina: No Confidence in Galtieri". The line of argument would then be obvious:

1) Argentina is under attack and must be defended against imperialism.

2) But who is best placed to defend Argentina? The Galtieri junta, hatchet men of imperialism, whose crazy diversionary adventure started a war over a side issue instead of over the expropriation of imperialist holdings? The Galtieri junta, who sent young conscripts into the invasion with orders not to shoot back, who still shrink from any break with imperialism, who keep thousands of militants in their prisons? Or the workers' movement, organised in detachments to drive off the imperialist aggressors and seize their real bulwarks in Argentina — their factories, banks and land?

3) The workers have been placed under conscription — let the unions now organise the arming and training of their members in independent workers' detachments. Let the rank and file soldiers organise their own committees,

and elect officers in whom they have confidence to wage the struggle against imperialism! Down with the officer elite; down with the Galtieri junta!

4) Argentine workers have no interest in the armed occupation of the Falklands against the wishes of the population — most of whom are exploited workers. But in the present conditions it would be worse for the masses of Latin America as a whole if we were to concede a victory to armed imperialist aggression. A withdrawal of imperialist forces is the precondition for the Argentine workers' movement to take up the issue of the rights of the Falkland islanders as part of the fight on every level for democratic rights and the overthrow of the Galtieri junta.

It was also argued that a victory of the Argentine forces would strengthen the junta and would therefore be negative. There are two points about this. Firstly, since the war is now a major world issue, and its outcome will affect the relationship of class forces on a world scale, the strengthening or weakening of the junta could not be a determining factor. But secondly, it would *not* necessarily strengthen the junta in the long or medium term. Whilst it is not true to say that Argentina is sub-imperialist, the junta does of course rest entirely on imperialism. Military juntas in non-imperialist countries are the stooges of imperialism. Like a foreman's relationship to an employer, or a lieutenant's relationship to the generals. Therefore if imperialism is weakened, as in the event of a British defeat by Argentina, the dependent military dictatorship must ultimately be weakened and Galtieri would face that situation under conditions where the Argentine working class would be definitely *strengthened* by the military victory.

Despite this debate about the implications of the call for defeatism in Argentina, we must not for one moment be deflected from our total involvement in anti-war work in Britain. For this, defeatism in Britain gives us the basis for the slogans we need to place at the front of our work: Down with Thatcher's war! Withdraw the Fleet! Black war supplies! The main enemy is at home!



TILC resolutions

April 1982

1. The Falkland Islands are a relic of British imperialism to the sovereignty of which the British ruling class has no legitimate claim, and which in the recent past it has even tried to relinquish to Argentina. Since that point it has become clear that the islands themselves and the adjacent area of Antarctica seem certain to be rich in oil and minerals, offering a substantial material incentive for the British imperialists to maintain their territorial claims – or at least to exchange them only for a guaranteed share of the possible mineral pickings.

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

3. We call for the immediate recall of the British battle fleet, and campaign against any military action or war over the Falklands, which can only be designed to preserve a relic of empire and shore up the prestige of British imperialism. Any such war could have only reactionary consequences in the form of loss of life and a chauvinistic fervour in both the Argentine and British working classes.

4. But the pretext on which the Argentine junta has embarked upon the invasion of the Falklands is equally contrived. In taking its action, the junta has acted not against imperialism, but in a populist ploy designed to divert and unite the Argentine masses behind the Generals' own repressive rule.

5. In doing so the Argentine dictators have 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 does nothing to build anti-imperialist consciousness in the Argentine working class, but rather seeks to generate chauvinism and 'national unity'. We do not support this action, and call for the withdrawal of Argentine troops.

6. We condemn the jingoism of most British Labour leaders, and call for labour movement action against the war through public agitation and through blacking military supplies.

7. While recognising that the present conflict is restricted to the Falklands issue, in the event of a full-scale war between Britain and Argentina we would be unequivocally for the defence of Argentina. Despite the leftist rhetoric of the Labour leaders about the 'fascist' nature of the junta – with whom they traded happily while in government – such a war would not be a war for democracy but a war for imperialist authority.

8. In any event we call upon the British and international working class to render all possible assistance to the Argentine workers in their struggle against the Galtieri dictatorship, for the establishment of a genuinely anti-imperialist workers' government in Argentina. Instead of assisting the Tories in their crisis by 'patriotic' support for the government, the British labour movement should be using the crisis to hasten Thatcher's overthrow in the interests of the working class, and giving all material and political support to the Argentine workers in the fight for democratic and trade union rights.

APRIL 12 1982. Proposed WSL. Voting for: WSL, TAF. Against: LOR, RWL. Absent: Socialist Fight.

August 1982

1. In the Malvinas war, it was the duty of revolutionaries to call for the unconditional military defence and victory of Argentina, an oppressed nation, against Britain, an imperialist power.

2. This position of revolutionary defensism on the side of Argentina and revolutionary defeatism on the side of Britain could in no way relieve Trotskyists of the obligation to expose the motive of the Galtieri invasion of the Malvinas as an attempt at diverting the rising mass struggle against the brutal regime into support for the regime's seizure of the Malvinas. Such a position of defensism implies no confidence in the Galtieri regime's ability to wage a genuine anti-imperialist war effectively.

3. Trotskyists in Argentina should have intervened in the mass mobilisation Galtieri could not avoid by pointing out that the anti-imperialist masses could not rely on the Galtieri junta, hatchet men of imperialism, to defend Argentina and wage a consistent fight against British imperialism. Rather, the masses must look to the leadership of the mighty Argentine workers' movement, organised in detachments to drive off the imperialist aggressors and to seize the real bulwarks of imperialism in Argentina – the imperialist-owned factories, banks and land.

4. In the struggle to turn the war over the Malvinas into an enlarged and thoroughgoing struggle against imperialism and the reactionary junta, Trotskyist militants should have attempted to support and provide consistent leadership to the whole range of tactics needed to advance this struggle, especially the occupation of factories and other facilities directly controlled by the imperialists. Such occupations should be linked with the struggle to

split the army by reaching soldiers drawn from the working class around issues arising from the junta's attempts to suppress such militant actions by the anti-imperialist workers. With the mass of Argentine workers already conscripted, Trotskyists should have called for the unions to arm and train their members in independent workers' detachments; and for rank and file soldiers to organise their own committees and to elect their own officers. Through the course of the military mobilisation, Trotskyists should have raised the slogans, 'Down with the officer elite', 'Down with the Galtieri junta'.

5. Argentine workers have no interest in the oppression or abuse of the Falkland Islanders. But concern for the fate of the Falkland Islanders must not divert attention from the serious harm done to the struggles of the Latin American masses as a whole by the victory of Britain's armed imperialist aggression in this war.

6. Throughout the Malvinas war, Trotskyists should have struggled for the international working class and for the British working class in particular to render all possible assistance to the Argentine workers both in their struggle against British imperialism and in their struggle against the Galtieri dictatorship.

AUGUST 2, 1982. Proposed RWL. Voting for: RWL, LOR, TAF. Against: WSL. Absent: Socialist Fight.

It was wrong for the April 1982 resolution to state that "any such war could have only reactionary consequences in the form of loss of life and a chauvinistic fervour in both the Argentine and British working classes". Nationalism and nationalism are two things, and the nationalism of the Argentine workers is not reactionary, but a progressive and legitimate anti-imperialist current.

Furthermore, the resolution says of the Argentine troops on the Malvinas that "In taking its action, the junta has acted not against imperialism, but in a populist ploy..." Yet the junta has, in fact, under the pressure of the masses – but via a populist manoeuvre – challenged imperialism. And, as the bonapartist dictatorship it is, naturally it did not mobilise the masses for a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless we regard the junta's step as objectively anti-imperialist and historically progressive.

The self-determination line on the islanders was also wrong. It implied that the real problem with the imperialist war was that it did not benefit the islanders (and cost human life). Therefore a class struggle against the war must be waged in Britain and Argentina.

But it is a question of *settlers* on the Malvinas. Since when has it been Trotskyist policy to support imperialism's settlers?

AUGUST 2, 1982. Proposed. TAF. Voting for: RWL, LOR, TAF. Against: WSL. Absent: Socialist Fight.



MARTIAL LAW IN POLAND

Resolution of the TILC, December 1981

The declaration of martial law by the leader of the Polish CP and Prime Minister General Wojciech Jaruzelski is aimed at smashing the independent trade union 'Solidarnosc', and stemming the revolutionary struggle of the Polish working class.

The determination of the regime to accomplish their objective is shown by the shooting down of miners and other protestors and the mass internment of all Solidarnosc activists, including the imprisonment of Lech Walesa.

The institution of the Military Council of National Salvation is not a military coup. It is the use by the leading elements of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy of the state power at their disposal. Indeed the 'Council' includes several ministers and deputy ministers. The dictatorial power which preserves the position of Stalinist bureaucracies throughout Eastern Europe has in Poland come out into the open.

The 'Martial Law' decision shows the impossibility of the bureaucracy ever co-existing with genuinely independent trade unions as the organisations of the working class. The bureaucrats only allowed these unions to exist for a brief period in Poland

because their own power had been weakened by the mass movement of the Polish working class.

Yet from the outset they had employed a twin tactic. On the one hand they sought to suck in the leadership of Solidarnosc and integrate it into the bureaucracy; on the other they used the time created by their temporary concessions to regroup and better prepare their counter-attack if their bid at integration failed.

There will now be no compromises made by the bureaucracy. They are desperate and ruthless in their drive to stamp out the rival power of Solidarnosc. Any independent voice of the working class must stand as a threat to the bureaucratic power and privilege of a bureaucracy which feeds off the country's nationalised property relations.

Who calls the tune?

The Thursday before the Martial Law saw a visit to Poland by the Russian head of the Warsaw Pact. No doubt he informed Jaruzelski that if he and the Polish bureau-

cracy did not act then the Warsaw Pact would. Indeed it is the leading caste of the armies of Eastern Europe which are the forces closest to the Kremlin bureaucracy. Not only were the Eastern European states created under the protection and watchful eye of Stalin's Red Army, but so were the post-war officer corps. There are constant joint manoeuvres, and most of the present leading officers including Jaruzelski are Russian-trained. The coup itself was planned months ago, but it is clear that not only did the USSR prompt the move, but that if Jaruzelski had not done the job, Soviet troops would have moved in, despite the enormous problems that would have caused the Kremlin bureaucrats.

But if the threat was most directly aimed at the Stalinist bureaucracies of Eastern Europe and the USSR, another prime motive force behind the Martial Law has been the Western banks.

They are owed no less than \$27 billion by the Polish bureaucrats. A delegation representing the country's main creditors was in Warsaw only ten days before Martial Law was declared. They told the Government that unless they paid \$500 million in

Solidarność

GDAŃSK sierpień '80

interest by the end of 1981, then they would be declared to be bankrupt.

No wonder therefore that the Wall St. Journal said that Martial Law could be a good thing. One West German banker told the Financial Times, 'I now see a chance for Poland to return to a more normal working schedule and this could be a good thing for the banks.'

For the world's imperialist leaders now to denounce the crackdown is a classic example of hypocrisy. The measures taken in Poland are precisely the kind of measures the imperialists themselves sponsored in Chile and seek to impose via the IMF on their puppet regimes around the world. Only a few months ago Reagan himself was jailing strikers in the USA. Thatcher is preparing draconian anti-union laws in Britain.

But of course the Stalinists have handed a propaganda weapon to imperialism, and thus fuelled the very anti-communism they claim to be combatting. Hence it is inevitable that the international [and national] opposition to the Martial Law will bring together a confused and heterogeneous mixture of reactionary nationalist and pro-imperialist forces as well as working class militants voicing a healthy opposition to Stalinist oppression.

Marxists must determine their policies independently of the pressure of imperialism and bourgeois public opinion: and we must not restrict our defence of Solidarnosc simply because empty statements of 'support' are being made by Reagan, the Pope and the Thatcher government. But we must combine our solidarity campaign with class demands that clearly distinguish our position and offer Polish workers an independent way forward.

The call for self-determination, as part of a programme for political revolution for all the Stalinist bloc, will arm revolutionaries in Poland to undercut reactionary nationalist forces and to rally the working class for an internationalist perspective.

The Church

The first person in the West to know about the military moves in Poland was the Pope. The Polish ambassador to Italy phoned him to tell him of the moves and to tell him that the Church had to play a role of reconciliation. This was at 1am on Sunday morning. A few hours later at Sunday Ser-

vice Archbishop Glemp, in a statement broadcast on official radio, obediently called for acceptance of Martial Law. 'Pole should not fight Pole', he declared — as Polish troops arrested and beat up Polish workers.

A week later, even after Church people had begun to be arrested along with militants, and after miners had been shot down by troops, Glemp made a similar broadcast. One of his emissaries struggled to persuade Walesa to go on television to appeal for calm. The Church, as on previous occasions, has emerged as the ally of the bureaucracy against the Polish working class.

Leadership

The leadership of Solidarnosc from the outset wanted only to reform the system and did not recognise the necessity for a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy. The Polish Martial Law — implemented by a vicious and desperate native ruling caste and not, as in Hungary 1956 or Czechoslovakia 1968, by a Soviet invasion — underlines the fact that reformism is just as pernicious in a deformed workers' state as it is in a capitalist state. Despite its nationalised property relations, a deformed workers' state is not half-way towards being a healthy workers' state. It remains a counter-revolutionary apparatus, committed to preserving the atomisation of the working class and the preservation of the power of the bureaucracy through dictatorial means at home and maintaining a 'balance' with imperialism and the working class internationally.

The weakening of the power of the ruling bureaucracy, by a programme of radical reforms, can only be the prelude to the decisive confrontation. In that conflict the proletariat must either be prepared to challenge for power, smash the existing state machine and replace it with its own organs of class rule — which alone can defend the nationalised property relations and develop a planned economy — or face defeat at the hands of the existing armed forces and repressive apparatus. In this sense, Poland is the Chile of Eastern Europe.

But the leadership of Solidarnosc limited the struggles of the working class at the very time when the bureaucracy was at its weakest — despite the fact that the rise of

the mass movement had seen the emergence of a soviet-type body in the Gdansk MKS.

In the run-up to the Martial Law Solidarnosc gave no lead to struggles that could weaken the military forces. Walesa and others repeatedly talked about military moves but never acted seriously upon their own warnings. Even at the Praesidium meeting of Solidarnosc on the night of the Martial Law there was talk of troop movement — but no notice was taken.

In contrast the bureaucracy had prepared their ground well. In mid-September, 10,000 troops had been used to work in the mines. At the end of September Jaruzelski was applauded in the Sejm when he said that the military would be used to end 'anarchy'.

At the end of October, troops were used to 'assist' in 2,000 towns and villages. At the beginning of November the Sejm called for an end to strikes and threatened to ban them. Most importantly, on 3rd December the military was used in a raid on the occupation by cadet firemen who were fighting for the demilitarisation of the fire service and to separate it from the security system.

This raid tested the willingness of the troops and riot police to act against the workers; and it also tested out the Solidarnosc leadership.

This raid tested the willingness of the troops and riot police to act against the workers; and it also tested out the Solidarnosc leadership.

Instead of calling for an immediate general strike against this attack, Walesa called for 'restraint'. The union was put on alert — but called no action. In the end, they promised a demonstration in Warsaw two weeks after the raid.

In this way the initiative was handed to the bureaucracy.

But there was growing opposition to this line within Solidarnosc. At the September Congress there was a substantial vote for candidates standing against Walesa. But the leadership managed to contain the rise in militancy — and when they responded, it was too little too late.

At the end of October there was a one-hour strike against the police crackdown. But immediately afterwards Walesa met with Glemp and Jaruzelski to set up a body for 'national conciliation'. When the state attacks continued Walesa broke this off, and

declared that confrontation was inevitable: but he did nothing to prepare for it — and the bureaucracy were able to use his own words against him while not feeling the effect of any action.

Indeed when Solidarnosc threatened a General Strike in protest against a law due to be debated in the Sejm banning strikes, Walesa turned this into a 24-hour General Strike.

Even so there was some doubt as to whether the Sejm would pass the law. And it was obvious that if they did, Solidarnosc would take action. This is why the week the Sejm was due to meet was the week Jaruzelski imposed Martial Law.

The Stalinist Parties

The crackdown in Poland has brought forth varied reactions from the other Stalinist parties. While of course Jaruzelski's sponsors in the Kremlin and his colleagues in Eastern Europe have warmly welcomed what they regard as a belated move to reassert the totalitarian rule of the Stalinist bureaucracy, the Communist Parties of Western Europe have been less enthusiastic.

The French CP, in what could lead to a significant rift with the Mitterrand government, has supported the Martial Law and echoed the Stalinist claims that it was the 'excesses' of Solidarnosc which forced the clampdown. This stance by a Marchais leadership already weakened by its electoral setbacks seems likely to prompt a further development of crisis in the French CP.

In Italy the Berlinguer leadership has condemned the coup, but in the context of bowing to bourgeois public opinion and trying to strengthen its links with the bourgeoisie and the parties of the government. For the same reasons, in Spain too, Carrillo's party has come out vociferously in opposition to the Martial Law.

In Britain the CP has found itself divided. A substantial minority of the Party voted only two weeks ago against their leadership condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This same hard-line Stalinist

minority has pressed for the Morning Star to support the Polish Martial Law. But the 'Eurocommunist' majority — including for instance Party chairman Mick McGahey — has opposed Jaruzelski's moves. The Polish events can only compound the world of Stalinism — and create new avenues for Trotskyists, who alone can consistently oppose those reactionaries who use Stalinist repression in order to vilify the name of communism.

Programme

Throughout the 18-month period of its existence Solidarnosc has lacked a leadership which grasped the importance of transitional demands which could mobilise workers for political revolution. As reformists, the Solidarnosc leaders saw their job simply as a pressure group.

Yet many opportunities were present. In periods of police attacks, independent patrols were mounted by Solidarnosc — which could have become the basis for the formation of workers' defence squads.

Throughout the unfolding economic crisis the bureaucracy has retained a monopoly and control over information on the economy: the demand to end the secrets of the bureaucrats and open up their secret discussions with the USSR, the other bureaucracies, and the imperialists, could have won wide support and greatly weakened the bureaucrats.

The promising struggle for 'workers' self-management' and the strikes to force the removal of certain managers and even local governors could have been built into a genuine struggle for workers' control: but they were watered down and rendered meaningless by the leadership.

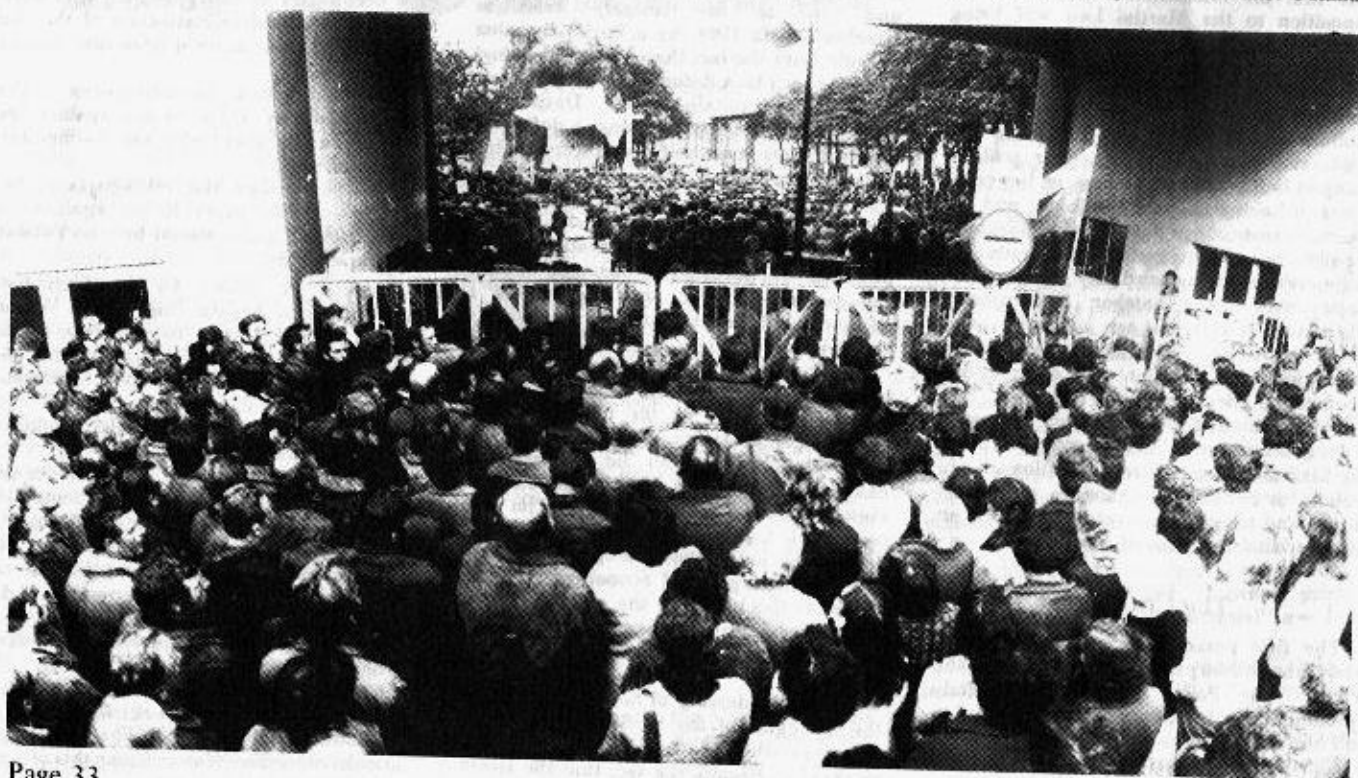
Indeed even on democratic demands such as the right to strike the leadership made continuous concessions to the ruling bureaucracy.

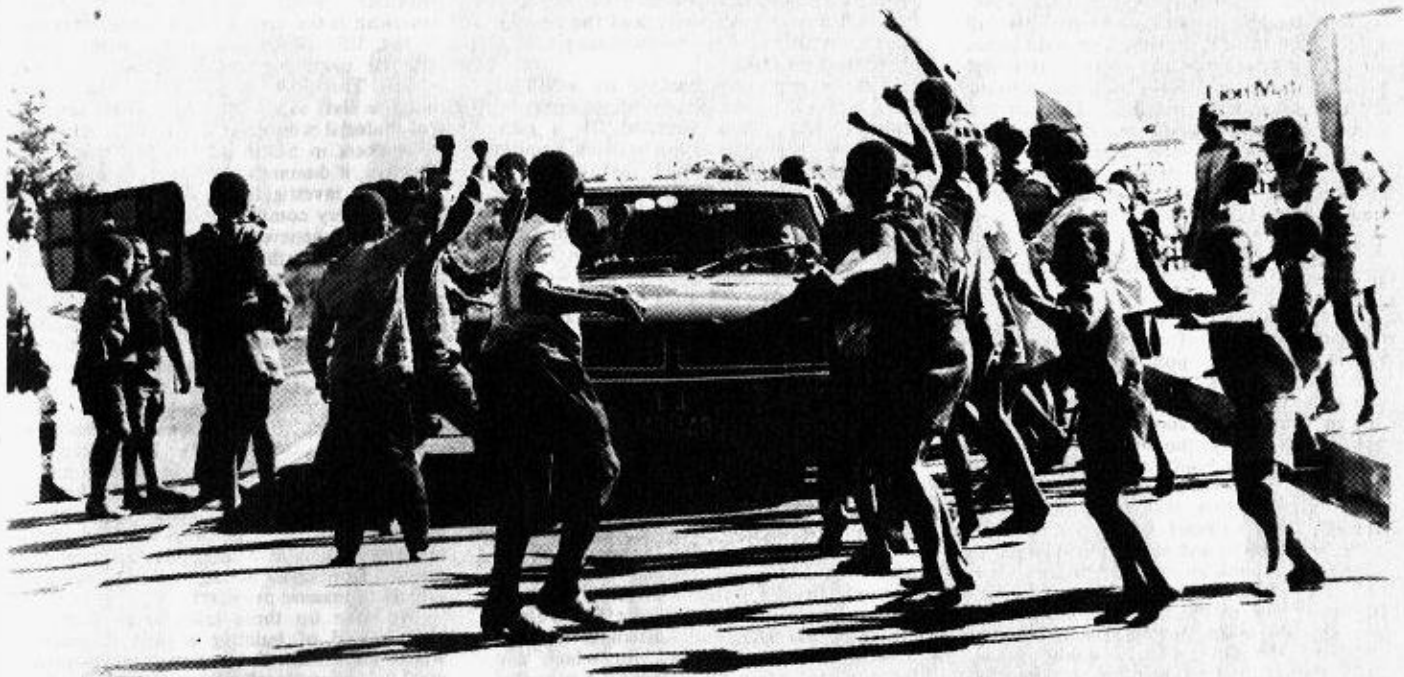
But in the course of the revolutionary crisis the development has more and more clearly been seen of a current among the activists and even among the leaders of Solidarnosc which is confused and heterogeneous but clearly evolving towards the

perspective of the destruction of the bureaucratic power and its replacement by the power of workers' councils. Nothing less than this was shown by the debate on the 'workers' chamber' that developed at the congress of Solidarnosc and the setting up inside Solidarnosc of groupings of a revolutionary socialist tendency like the 'Working Group for the Inter-regional Co-operation initiative of Workers' Councils' (known as the 'Lublin group'). These forces represent in the last analysis the tangible expression of the profound significance of 18 months of the revolutionary upsurge of the Polish working class.

Yet the fact is that in fighting for an independent trade union as the organised expression of the demands and aspirations of the working class and a challenge to the totalitarian control of the bureaucratic state, the leaders of Solidarnosc helped the Polish workers take a major step forward in their struggle against Stalinist dictatorship. The courage and tenacity of the resistance to the Martial Law is an expression of how deep Solidarnosc has sunk its roots into the flower of the Polish proletariat and is living proof of the potential for political revolution in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe: a potential whose realisation requires the building of Trotskyist parties as sections of a reconstructed Fourth International.

- Down with the Martial Law!
- Defend the workers of Poland!
- Support the call for a General Strike. For trade union blacking of Polish goods for the duration of such a strike.
- Release all political prisoners!
- For trade unions independent of the bureaucratic regimes throughout Eastern Europe — spread the Solidarnosc movement! Break links with the police state 'unions'.
- Polish soldiers: support Solidarnosc, don't shoot the workers! Arm the Polish working class!
- Down with the bureaucracy: for workers' power in Poland based on genuine workers' councils!
- Stop any Soviet or Warsaw Pact invasion: for the right of self-determination to the Polish people!
- For an independent socialist Poland!





S. Africa: workers against apartheid

Resolution of the TILC, December 1981

FIVE years ago, the South African capitalist state tried to drown the awakening movement of workers and youth in blood. But the hundreds of murders at the hands of the state did nothing to destroy the underlying militancy and determination of the working class. The initial state response was met not by a retreat, but by an escalation of struggle. First the youth in other parts of the country and then the workers added their strength to the action which had developed in Soweto.

Helicopters, armoured cars, tear gas, mobilisation of sections of the army, indiscriminate shooting by the police—none of this could defeat an emerging class movement. The class stepped back from total confrontation because it could see no clear way forward, and because it was given no clear way forward by the reformists and Stalinists of the ANC. These 'leaders' could not keep up with events, let alone lead them. There followed a lull in struggle, as the class assessed and assimilated its experience, looked at the lessons of the last phase of struggle, gathered its forces and prepared for the next.

Once again workers began to move into action, now on more specific demands relating to day-to-day grievances. Strikes spread from one part of the country to the next, from one group of workers to the next. Almost every single strike triggered off a response amongst other workers in the same area or industry. The motor workers, textile workers, miners, municipal workers, transport workers, media workers power workers,

food and canning workers—these and others have all taken action, despite repeated arrests, nonstop police intimidation and victimisation by employers, despite prohibitions on almost every single meeting and the fact that every single strike which has occurred has been illegal.

Growth of the unions

Union membership has grown enormously, more than doubling in a year. The vast majority of workers are not unionised, but millions more look to the unions for a way forward. Even where workers are not formally organised, struggle after struggle has shown a level of informal organisation which extends through vast sections of the class. Several employers have formally recognised unions, often being forced to in the course of strikes. Whether the unions have formal recognition or not, the employers and the government have been forced to recognise the living reality of the workers' organisation. Strike after strike has forced wage increases—sometimes as much as 100%. As the confidence of workers grows, wage demands are being made which reflect workers' needs. For the capitalists, who have relied on massive repression to provide them with cheap labour, these demands sometimes involve increases of 500% or more. Even on the issue of the Pass Laws, absolutely central to state control over

workers, concessions have been forced through workers' collective action (Crossroads).

Widespread action from the schools has forced a massive increase in government spending. United action from students and workers has forced the transfer of officials, changes in the syllabus, withdrawal of exam fee increases. Strikers have forced improvements in working conditions. The threat of mass action has repeatedly forced the government, its stooges and employers to hold back bus fare increases (Soweto).

Of course in this phase of struggle there have been setbacks and specific defeats. But so great has been the forward drive of the class that nothing the government or bosses have done has been able to contain demands, and force workers back. None of the gains made in struggle has been enough to meet workers' needs. And the working class is saying that in action. A few days after one strike had forced a 60% increase in one car plant, workers were voting in favour of striking for more. In one factory, workers won a strike for higher overtime rates. A few months later, they were on strike against compulsory overtime. Students have forced school principals to withdraw disciplinary action against militants, and then have taken action to demand the removal of those principals. From this period of struggle the working class is standing more confident, more militant and more organised than ever before.

This growing class movement has at each stage thrown the ruling class into deeper division and political crisis. And now the fall in the price of gold has laid bare the full extent of a deepening economic crisis. The ruling class has no option—it must lash out in an attempt to claw back every gain won by the workers, smash the strength of the working class, and force workers to pay the full price of the capitalist crisis. The state lashes out from its own position of confusion and division, but this makes the blows nonetheless real and nonetheless powerful. The last few months have seen a significant increase in the level of repression—the arrest of union leaders, the arrest of strikers, massive police and army pass law raids, the fire bombing of union buildings.

Real allies for black workers

The stage is set for the inevitable deepening and escalation of conflict. The state is forced to launch political, physical and economic attacks against workers. The working class is determined not only to defend what it has, and what it has gained, but also to carry those gains forward. In that struggle, the South African workers will need the programme and perspective of Marxism. And they will need, increasingly urgently, international working class solidarity. The lackeys and stooges of imperialism who do not blink an eyelid in ordering their own troops to mow down striking workers are happy to pose as the allies of South African workers and make stirring attacks on apartheid at the OAU. Trade union bureaucrats who each day knife the workers they represent in the back are quick to denounce apartheid. The Stalinists who prop up decaying imperialism with their policies of peaceful co-existence and class collaboration attack apartheid. Sections of the capitalist class who grow rich each day off the exploitation and oppression of workers make speeches in which they criticise the way that exploitation is organised in South Africa. Even the imperialist backers of the bosses' apartheid regime claim to be anti-apartheid. But if it is ever to be carried through to victory, the struggle of the black workers and oppressed people in South Africa must be developed as the workers struggle for power. No-one who exploits or oppresses workers anywhere can ever be the real ally of the black workers of South Africa. Their real struggle is to destroy all oppression and exploitation, not reorganise it.

Unlike the Stalinists and the reformists, the TILC does not approach questions of the class struggle by seeking 'progressive' capitalist governments with which to ally ourselves. Nor do we seek to develop class struggle through debates and speeches at the UN. At every point, we base ourselves on the independent interests and strength of the only force which can successfully lead the struggle against apartheid—the revolutionary force of the working class.

Despite imperialist backing for a halt of arms supplies to the South African regime, arms are still being supplied. It is only through working class action to black supplies of arms and related materials that this supply can be stopped. Only through the struggle to open the books, and against all secret diplomacy can the realities of imperialist connivance with their ally in South Africa be uncovered, and laid before the working class, so that effective arms blacking can be implemented.

Strikes and blacking

The TILC will build and support the symbolic protest actions which are regularly called, seeking at every point to locate these within the labour movement. We recognise in them an important arena for education and agitation. In addition, such demonstrations of solidarity can boost the morale of South African workers and combat the constant attempts by the state to create a sense of isolation amongst those workers. But we also recognise the persistent attempts by the reformists and bureaucrats, for whom any independent action by workers is a potential threat, to turn symbolic acts into a substitute for further, and more decisive solidarity action. In no way will TILC allow the feeling of solidarity felt amongst many militants and workers with South African workers to be trapped in a dead-end of merely symbolic acts. Much more is necessary. And much, much more is possible. We will take into such mobilisations and demonstrations the perspective of Trotskyism. We will seek to deepen and develop the hatred for apartheid into an understanding and hatred for the class basis on which it arises and is maintained. We seek to orientate those involved in such demonstrations to the working class, to take up the struggle for the most effective solidarity action—working class action.

Supporting strikes and blacking action are weapons which the working class internationally can wield, and must be mobilised

and led to wield. The South African ruling class is inextricably entwined in international finance capital. Again and again there are strikes in factories in South Africa which are subsidiaries of companies based in the imperialist countries. The biggest South African companies all have investment in other countries. South African owned Anglo American is the biggest single foreign investor in the US. There are many major international companies which invest in South Africa. The goal of the TILC will be to mobilise class solidarity action which can add real material weight to the specific struggles of workers in South Africa. For this to be effective, it demands the struggle to open the books, to investigate the direct and indirect links of every company with South Africa. In that way, whenever a struggle emerges at a company in South Africa, the basis has been laid for immediate and effective supporting blacking or strike action. This requires too the building of direct workplace to workplace links, so that workers can be directly informed of the demands, needs and action of their South African class brothers and sisters. Too often has such information been swallowed up in tortuous bureaucratic processes and manoeuvres. In seeking to promote such links, by the labour movement, the TILC will emphasise and take into account the immediate security problems facing South African workers and their organisations, where any direct appeal for support from inside South Africa is illegal and subject to massive penalties.

We take up these tasks as part of our overall goal of building a class movement which can force the nationalisation, under workers' control, of each company trading with South Africa. In this way, we take up the struggle to bring all aspects of international economic links with South Africa under the control of the working class—the only class whose power and control can ever serve the interests of South African workers.

The struggle of South African workers is part of the world struggle of all workers against all forms of capitalist exploitation and oppression. The imperialist system, of which the black workers of South Africa are such oppressed victims, is a world system. Every blow struck at the international capitalist class enemy is a blow struck for the international workers' victory. The greatest blow that could ever be struck by workers anywhere to aid the South African revolution is the defeat of the capitalist class enemy and the workers' seizure of power. That is the task to which the TILC is committed.





Socialist Party finance minister Delors (right) reassures French bosses' leader Gattaz

Mitterrand and the bourgeoisie

Resolution of the TILC, December 1981

THE reformist leaders of the French working class are now in a bourgeois government, while a major economic crisis rages with no substantial recovery in sight. Even if the workers at present are vague about what they expect from the government, and are willing to give it time, sooner or later they will demand answers from their leaders. Major opportunities are probable to organise substantial sections of workers around a revolutionary programme.

1. The crisis of Gaullism

Gaullism hoisted itself to power on a coalition of diverse groups. Once in power, it pushed through a substantial development and rationalisation of French industry in alliance with big capital, and was able to discard many of its initial supporters (e.g. the Algerian colons). But Gaullism also meant the domination of the state by the mafia of the

Gaullist movement, the clogging of normal safety-valves of bourgeois democracy, growing inequality and class tensions which exploded in 1968.

The 1968 general strike mortally wounded Gaullism. The 13 years since then have seen repeated diverse efforts to 'recompose' an adequate political party for the French bourgeoisie resulting so far only in further chaos in the bourgeois camp.

2. The reformist parties since 1968.

1968 immeasurably increased the audience for revolutionary politics in the French working class. It also strained and permanently loosened the internal connecting fibres of the CP. Yet the CP's membership has actually increased since 1968.

The SP only got five per cent of the votes in the 1969 presidential election. Since then it has reorganised itself to become electorally the biggest party in France. Its membership

has also flowered. Although the CP remains the most important party of the industrial working class, SP influence has increased in the CP-dominated CGT, and the Socialist-sympathising CFDT has gained relative to the CGT, including in the CGT's industrial bastions.

"Before exposing their bankruptcy before the whole class", wrote Trotsky in July 1936, "the opportunist parties become for a short while the refuge of the very widest masses". Such a process is at work here, though of course at a slower tempo than in the 1930s.

Since the creation of the Union of the Left, the CP has been caught in an insoluble dilemma. Either it fully backs the Union of the Left—and risks gradually losing out to the SP, which is the more effective party of reformism. Or it attacks the SP and brands itself as sectarian and Stalinist. This dilemma is the fundamental factor behind the CP's twists and turns over recent years. Direct

pressure from Moscow plays a secondary role, though probably an important one.

The CP have switched from uncritical unity, to denunciations of the SP as being the same as the Right, back to accepting ministries all without the least basis in principle. They have not hesitated at the vilest demagoguery, as when the CP mayor of Vitry led a physical attack on an immigrant workers' hostel to back up the CP's demands for a total ban on immigration and for fewer immigrants in CP municipalities.

This desperate demagoguery has brought its just reward, with a huge loss of votes for the CP at the recent elections (specially in its working class strongholds) and a severe crisis inside the CP.

For some years before May 1981, the Left was clearly near an electoral majority in France. What finally tipped the scales in the May 1981 presidential election was not a further shift to the left, or a working class upsurge, but further disintegration of the right, with sections of the centre going over to Mitterrand who seemed well in control of the CP 'threat'. The ensuing National Assembly elections, however, showed a real rallying of workers round the victorious left.

Bourgeois sectors were rallied behind Mitterrand on the argument openly proclaimed by the SP (with the covert assistance of the CP, which demagogically promised mass strikes if Giscard was re-elected) that only a Left government could prevent a future working class upsurge.

This argument was the basis for Mitterrand sticking to the 'union of the Left' strategy after the CP had rejected it, and his inclusion of CP ministers.

'Unity', therefore, has been used to restrain the working class. But this unity has its own contradictions. As the Left government proves itself incapable of dealing with the crisis, the mass sentiment for unity can turn into a mass drive for united workers' action, in conflict with the government.

3. The nature of the government.

The Mitterrand/Mauroy government is a bourgeois government. It is, indeed, more closely committed to NATO and the Cold War than the previous right wing governments (for this reason Moscow was openly more favourable to Giscard than to Mitterrand). Its Third World policy actively seeks to preserve imperialist domination, even if more by diplomatic and reformist methods than by the direct military intervention characteristic of the Giscard regime.

Its economic reforms fall within a Keynesian strategy which, if unusual in the big capitalist powers just now, is nevertheless a solidly bourgeois strategy. For the working class there are indeed only a few crumbs like an increase in the minimum wage but unemployment continues to rise, and the government's programme on this question consists mainly of pouring money into the pockets of the bourgeoisie and imploring them to take on new investments and new labour.

The government includes openly bourgeois ministers, most notably Pompidou's ex-deputy Michel Jobert and Left Radical Michel Crepeau.

Despite a few reforms in the direction of administrative decentralism, the basic structure of the 5th Republic remains intact. Indeed, Jobert explains his allegiance to Mitterrand on the basis that Mitterrand is the best man to conserve and operate the institutions of the 5th Republic.

The bourgeoisie has kept up a noisy clamour against the government. Some of the clamour doubtless expresses a sincere hatred for the Socialists and Stalinists on the part of right wing businessmen. But the chief meaning of the clamour is as a stratagem to ensure that the government's policy is constantly bent in the direction of minimising the reforms for the working class and maximising the pay-outs to the bourgeoisie. The almost-complete gutting of the government's wealth tax is an example.

By such methods, the bourgeoisie may get as good service from the left government than from a right wing government less able to con-

trol the working class and more prepared to stand up for its own ideas.

4. The working class and the government.

Mitterrand's victory was a blow to the bourgeoisie in France and throughout Europe, and a boost to the confidence of the working class in France and throughout Europe. Promises such as the 35 hour week are a further boost, despite all the questions about when, or what conditions and indeed whether this promise will actually be kept.

Because of its class nature the government can resolve nothing for the working class. The scene is thus set for a clash between the government and the hopes it aroused in the working class. But mechanical analogies with 1936 are dubious.

In 1936 the Blum government came to power on a tremendous upsurge of working class militancy. After its election the June general strike broke out. Once installed in office, Blum with the help of the CP 'knew how to end' this strike. But big concessions had to be granted. The bourgeoisie then went on the offensive to win back ground. Despite the mass strikes in 1938 the workers' movement failed to respond adequately, and finally the Popular Front parliament collapsed into voting full powers to Pétain.

Today the first wave of militancy—analogue to June 1936—has yet to come. There have certainly been no big concessions. And the immediate crushing threat of war and fascism is not there as in 1934-40.

So far workers' struggles since the May election have been few, often limited to minorities. The working class, it seems, is still mostly in a waiting mood and tolerant towards this government.

Already the tolerance is beginning to fray. The open criticism of the government by CFDT leader Edmond Maire must be a sign of that. (The CGT remains almost uncritical of the government; FO criticises the government from a right wing standpoint).

The task for revolutionary Marxists must be to argue for:

- *self reliance and no illusions in the government;

- *for the CP and SP, including in the government, to break with the bourgeoisie (in this context, but not as a self-sufficient central demand, it is appropriate to call for the removal of the bourgeois ministers from the government);

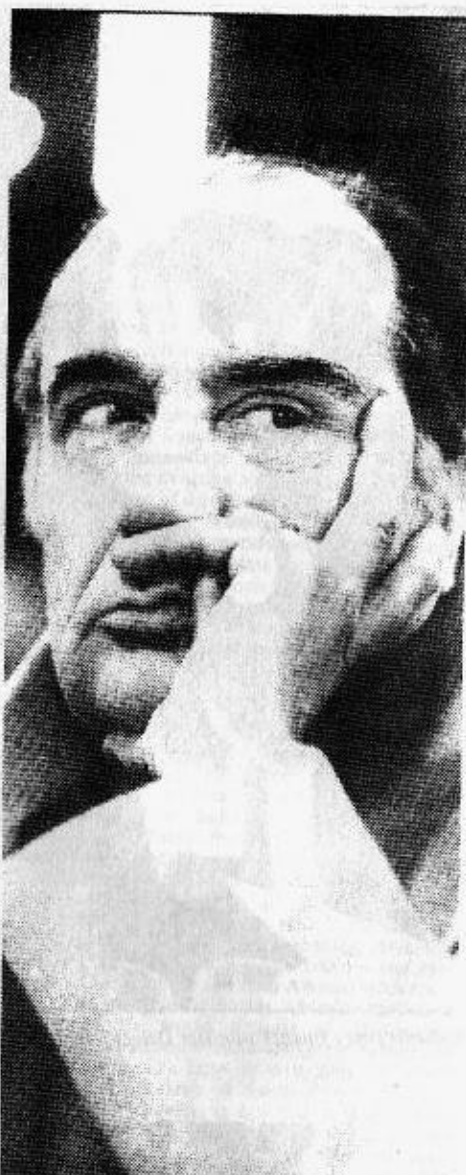
- *for the trade unions to assert their independence from the government, and management, at the same time as making demands on the workers' parties; in any case, for independent workers' organisations at factory level (strike committees, and workshop councils—to be interpreted as independent workers' committees of struggle democratically elected by all workers, unionised or not). The government's plans for supplementing the statutory joint union/management committees (law since 1945) with worker directors on management boards in the nationalised industries, should be opposed.

A precise formulation of political demands is possible only on the spot, in connection with day-to-day practice. More important than the details of the following rough outline is the appropriate general approach: a programme of demands analogous to Trotsky's Action Programme of 1934, with demands posed not merely as objects for immediate sectional direct action, but also as demands on the government: making demands on the government not as pleas directed to Mitterrand/ Mauroy, but as focuses for working class action to call the reformist leaders to account.

- *35 hour week immediately and without conditions. Sliding scale of hours. No compensation for the big shareholders of nationalised enterprises; no nuclear weapon programme; use the resources instead for a programme of useful public works at trade union rates. No sackings: open the books to elected workers' committees, occupy, impose workers' control, demand nationalisation.

- *Full equal rights for immigrant workers; scrap all immigration controls.

- *A programme of demands is also needed for the small farmers. And to both the chaos of the EEC and the CP's chauvinist campaigns



Mitterrand.....a bourgeois government

against a 'German Europe', against Spanish imports, etc., the perspective should be counterposed of the United Socialist States of Europe.

- *Withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance; unilateral nuclear disarmament; opposition to overseas military intervention; self-determination for the DOM and TOM.

- *Soldiers' rights; disbanding of the police, especially such squads as the CRS. In line with the development of the struggle, the call for trade union defence squads can be advanced concretely from time to time, including against fascists.

- *Against the relegation of women to part-time jobs: for a woman's equal right to a job. Free abortion on demand. Free fully comprehensive child care provision under community control.

- *Demands for the development of free fully comprehensive social services under workers' control.

- *Moratorium on nuclear power programmes unless and until certified safe by trade union inspection.

- *Gay rights.

- *No incomes policy: sliding scale of wages, price index compiled by working class committees. A decent national minimum wage, protected by a sliding scale.

- *Demands should be raised against the decayed-Bonapartist institutions of the 5th Republic (e.g. for the abolition of the presidency) in the spirit of the 1934 Trotskyist Action Programme for France: "We demand from our class brothers who adhere to 'democratic' socialism that they be faithful to their ideas, that they draw inspiration from the ideas and methods not of the Third (cf 5th!) Republic but of the Convention of 1793..."

A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers . . ." And the opening of the books of the old state apparatus should be demanded.

*For the workers' organisations to break from the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state; for a workers' government, based on the organisations of the working class and acting against the bourgeois state.

In a situation of acute and continuing economic crisis, the stability of the government cannot be confidently predicted. In the case of a serious effort by the bourgeoisie to dump the government or to obstruct its repressive measures, revolutionary Marxists would be in the forefront alongside the reformists against the bourgeois offensive. However, there is no evidence for the OCI's theory (based on one sentence of the Transitional Programme grabbed out of context) that the government must inevitably lead either to socialist revolution or to a fascist coup.

With beaming foolishness, hypnotised by formulas, the LCR welcomed the CP's involvement in the government as a step forward for workers' unity. Marxists in contrast should explain the reality: the purpose of having the CP in the government is to subdue the working class—to persuade the workers to grant social peace in exchange for a few ministerial armchairs for their 'leaders'.

Revolutionary Marxists must develop a tactical approach to the memberships of the CP and SP. We propose demands such as those sketched above. We propose to CP and SP members that they fight for their leaders to implement such demands. We propose they demand those leaders sweep away such obstacles (or excuses) as the bourgeois ministers. We ask them the question: if your leaders are not implementing such measures in government, then what are they doing there?

Thus we prepare the way to relate to movements for democracy in the workers' parties; movements to oust right wing leaders from those parties, or moves from the CP to break from the government, which (given that the CP generally has a closer relation to militant sections of the working class than the SP has) could arise in a situation of sharp class struggle. Our basic line is that the memberships of the workers' parties should demand that their parties break with the bourgeoisie and that leaders who refuse to break with the bourgeoisie should be replaced.

5. The would-be Trotskyist Left in France.

The tactic followed by the OCI since Mitterrand's victory could best be rational-

"It is necessary for us to understand that the next strike will be directed in all likelihood not against the Blum government, but against its enemies: the 200 families, the Radicals, the Senate, the upper bureaucracy, the general staff, etc . . . We do not put Leon Blum in the same bag with the de Wendels and their de la Rocques. We accuse Blum of not understanding or foreseeing the formidable resistance of the de Wendels . . . This is a very important distinction, even a decisive one, for the coming period. It is in this sense that systematic propaganda has to be carried on for the second general strike, not to overthrow the government but to break the obstacles before it . . ."

The OCI focuses its agitation on the obstacles presented by the 5th Republic institutions, the top officials, the bosses, etc., and constantly repeats the alternative: act against the obstacles, or act against the workers.

As we argue above, the 1936 analogy is not good. Mitterrand's self-presentation as not being able to change too much too quickly (because of the economic crisis), but nevertheless being the only man capable of preventing a working class explosion, is hardly the same as the SP and CP semi-revolutionary rhetoric of 1934-6.

But in any case:

a) The OCI hardly even accuses Mitterrand of 'not understanding or foreseeing'.

b) Not only its agitational material, but its considered assessments, are wildly imbalanced: the Mitterrand victory, they say, is the concentrated climax of all the workers' struggles back to 1968, and can lead only to socialist revolution or a fascist backlash.

c) The OCI's material has no clear direction towards working class self-reliance, and the demands it puts forward seem more like proposals to the government.

d) The OCI's orientation goes beyond the necessary tactical approach to reformist workers, to explicitly proposing the misleading notion that a stable anti-capitalist government could be formed simply on the strength of the SP-CP majority in the National Assembly—a sort of parliamentary road. (Besides the call to get rid of the bourgeois ministers is not raised at all boldly, the OCI explaining—no doubt accurately—that the workers do not see these ministers making much difference to the government).

Additionally invalidating the OCI's presumably tactical approach towards workers who support the government is the fact that the policy is put forward (as usual with the OCI) in the most bombastic, self-proclamatory tones, with a rigidity more suitable for genuinely advanced principles than for the OCI's rather modest proposals.

And the demands the OCI puts forward are not adequate to the task of presenting a

rounded political alternative to reformism. The main demands are (speech by Lambert, IO 1023; Political Bureau statement IO 1021):

*End the sabotage of the capitalists and bankers.

*Workers' control in the banks.

*Sack all top officials appointed by Giscard.

*No sackings, cut hours, take on new labour.

*Real control of prices.

*Sliding scale of wages, no incomes policy.

Some of the same confusion affects the LCR. They also raise, for example, the demand for price control (by the government) which cuts across the sliding scale demand and is illusory, because such controls are necessarily a sham within capitalism, short of a war-type economy which also imposes strict controls on the working class. And practically all their agitation takes the form of demands for the CP and SP to do things. The LCR focuses its agitation heavily around the demand for a 35 hour week immediately and unconditionally—an emphasis which may be correct—but hardly puts forward a rounded programme.

As with the OCI, there is an allegedly tactical approach in the absence of anything but speculations and doctrinal formulas to indicate the gearings and connections through which this tactic will prompt a socialist struggle. That there is genuine confusion is shown by the fact that the LCR denounced LO for standing candidates in the National Assembly elections—not on the grounds that the LCR had found a better way of warning against the limitations of reformists, but on the grounds of the alleged sectarianism of LO's 'scowling expression' in the midst of general rejoicing. The LCR considered itself part of the 'presidential majority'.

LO has maintained political firmness towards the government (without shrill denunciation) better than the OCI or the LCR. Unlike them it clearly brings forward the question of working class self-reliance. But it veers towards syndicalism by proposing exclusively industrial self-reliance, by proposing demands on the reformist trade union leaders but not the reformist party leaders of the working class, and by practically confining its political demands to the sliding scale of wages and the sliding scale of hours.

As well as organising such solidarity as is possible with struggles in France, the organisations of the TILC should aim to develop a dialogue with Trotskyists in France, to clarify our ideas, to seek to gain sympathisers, and to make a contribution towards the building of a revolutionary proletarian party in France.



French capitalists in conference

Workers' Socialist Review

Magazine of the Workers' Socialist League, affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

No. 2, SEPTEMBER 1982.

EDITORIAL

The arithmetic of class struggle	page 1
Lebanon: with the PLO against Israel (resolution of the TILC)	page 3
The struggle in Central America (resolution of the TILC)	page 5

FALKLANDS/MALVINAS: WHOSE WAR?

<i>Editorial: A war where workers could win nothing</i>	page 10
<i>Trotsky on war and revolutionary politics</i>	
Introduction: Learn to Think, by Jackie Cleary	page 12
Learn to Think: a friendly suggestion to certain ultra-leftists	page 13
On the Sino-Japanese war: a letter to Diego Rivera	page 15
<i>Polemic</i>	
The texts and the method, by Jackie Cleary	page 16
<i>Background</i>	
Argentina and the world economy, by Bob Sutcliffe	page 22
<i>Polemic</i>	
Against neutrality, defend Argentina, by WSL minority tendency	page 26
TILC resolutions on Falklands/Malvinas	page 30

DOCUMENTS OF THE TILC

Martial law in Poland	page 31
South Africa: workers against apartheid	page 34
Mitterrand and the bourgeoisie	page 36

*Published by the Workers' Socialist League, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, and
printed by Calverts North Star Ltd (TU).*