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**IMPERIALISM, THE ARGENTINE STATE, AND THE
FALKLANDS CONFLICT**

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AMENDMENT TO THE CAROLAN, COLLINS ETC. RESOLUTION

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LATIN AMERICA AND THE FALKLANDS WAR: A NOTE

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INTRODUCTION

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

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'texts' of Trotsky and the 'revisionists' whose aim to analyse the real world rather than simply to rely on partially outdated writings and crude analogies with past political issues.

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

THE ISSUE OF IMPERIALISM

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

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

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

We can summarise these developments only briefly for now:-

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

class relations of these states.

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

IMPERIALISM AND LATIN AMERICA

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

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

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

THE CASE OF ARGENTINA

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

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

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

its territory with Europeans. Proportionately more Europeans emigrated to Argentina than any other country, including the USA in the 19th. The 6.5 million foreigners who arrived between 1856 and 1930 found a local population of only 1.2 million.

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

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

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

FORMS OF ECONOMIC CONTROL AND MODES OF POLITICAL DOMINATION

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

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

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

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

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

SUMMING UP ON ARGENTINA

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

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

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

DEPENDANCY AND DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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

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

PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BACKWARD NATIONALISM IN LATIN AMERICA

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