

Workers Power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

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Thatcher's victory - workers' defeat

THATCHER'S "VICTORY" IN the Malvinas holds not a shred of benefit for the working class - British or Argentine. Indeed, for the British working class it is an unqualified and shameful defeat.

The Argentine workers have made, and may yet make, important gains from their military oppressors' inadvertent war with British imperialism. Galtieri's involvement in war has allowed the Argentine workers' movement a period of semi-legality, the ability to publish papers, demonstrate and mobilise for the discovery of the fate of the thousands of political prisoners who have "disappeared". Argentina's struggle, objectively a justified national struggle against British imperialism, will have weakened the pro-imperialist forces in Argentina.

The junta, the imperialists and all those who sought to hand over Argentina's industries and resources to foreign investment have suffered a major blow. Though they wanted to redouble the super-exploitation of Argentina's urban and rural workers for the benefit of the British, US and European banks, they have seen their links with their masters put under severe strain, though, of course, not severed.

The possibilities for the overthrow of the junta, for an end to military rule, are better, not worse as the result of an open clash with Britain.

In Britain the results of "victory" for the working class are a hundred times worse. Its results are a simultaneous strengthening of the ruling class and a weakening of the working class. Like all the most serious defeats, the working class suffers, this was self-inflicted. To be more precise, it was inflicted by disastrous leadership by

willing or unknowing agents of the class enemy. In terms that some may claim are overworked and old-fashioned, but which remain none the less true, the British working class was BETRAYED by its leaders.

Thatcher and her hard line faction within the Tory party, within the military hierarchy and within the ruling class in general have won a triple victory. They have won a victory over the "moderate" Carrington wing of Thatcher's own party. They have defeated the Labour Party and the Labour movement. They have even scored a victory over their "closest allies", the US and Common Market leaders.

By a judicious alternation of fake negotiations and military escalation, Thatcher had the initiative at every stage and made her rivals dance to her tune. She turned the initial debacle of the Falkland's "loss" to good effect by purging the Carringtonites - a job in which she was helped immeasurably by the purblind Labour front bench, who thought that their orgy of chauvinism in the first Commons debate would allow them to outflank and even oust Thatcher.

Having gained the support of "the House and the Country" *nam con* for the sending of the Task Force, the Tory "wets", the Labour Party and the SDP/Liberal alliance were all tied to the wheels of her war chariot.

Internationally, Thatcher used Britain's key position as go-between between the European and North American imperialist blocs. In a fickle anti-American inclined EEC, America's "staunchest ally" could, in the last analysis, call the shots against a US semi-colony. Reagan, Haig and Jean Kirkpatrick doubtless ground their



Judith Passow (Network)

Crack thugs trained by the British Army embark on the QE2. They were to be in the final attack on Porto Argentina / Port Stanley

teeth as their plans to utilize Argentina as a Trojan horse for counter-revolution in Central America were put in jeopardy by their European "ally". They may have quaked in their boots at the prospect of setting all their carefully installed and expensively nurtured juntas against them by openly aiding the British attack. But in the end, Thatcher simply had to say "No" to their US-sponsored compromises and call in Reagan to make good his support for Security Council Resolution

502 which demanded an Argentine withdrawal.

Thus Thatcher and the "Big Defence" spending lobby in the Tory Party, the Army and Navy chiefs and their backers, have achieved a powerful and, for the moment, dominant position within the ruling class. Thatcher will now seek to gain from her victory the fruits of considerably increased defence spending, and a new hard-line trouble-shooter role for Britain throughout the semi-colonial world. Thatcher

wants her big navy to police the imperialised world.

Thatcher has been able to unleash a wave of chauvinist venom of a crudity that would have been laughed at in the '60s or '70s. In this she was aided by the reptile press - The Sun, Express and Mail - and abetted by the more hypocritical and circumspect Mirror. Although it may appear tasteless to the

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Strike against Tebbit's law!

WORKERS IN THE Health Service and on the railways are prepared to do battle with the Tories over pay and jobs. A whole host of unions are formally committed to "Days of Action" and even strike action against Tebbit's law. What is at stake is whether the hatred felt by thousands of workers for this government can be welded into a general struggle to defeat its pay-policy and its anti-union laws.

Despite its special conference and much-publicised cheque-swapping, the TUC has given no lead. It is terrified of a showdown with the Tories that could get out of its control. It is terrified of a trial of strength that would threaten its funds and security. So it offers up the pitiful spectacle of local "Days of Action", of leaflet campaigns around public places.

This feeble reply by the official labour movement to the Tory onslaught must make Tebbit feel confident that he can press home his attack.

Tebbit's law will outlaw all solidarity action. Blacking will be illegal. It outlaws union action against the use of non-union labour. It bans political strikes and all industrial action in pursuit of international solidarity. This law, together with Prior's Employment Act, constitute a legal noose around the neck of effective trade unionism. It shows that this government is a determined, class conscious enemy of the working class and its right to organise. Only decisive action on the part of our class can stop this government's assault.

Every strike in solidarity with the health workers, every joint

picket line, is a challenge to Tebbit, and the Tories know that. Mass pickets and industrial stoppages aren't simply the best means to back the health workers - they're the means of building the forces to smash Tebbit now!

Arthur Scargill has declared of action by NUM members in solidarity with health workers: "If we see in violation of the Tory government's legislation then so be it." Fine words. Miners and health workers must hold him to them. The NUM machinery should be used to build up the campaign for strike action in every pit. Scargill must turn his words into action, action that is consciously aimed at helping the health workers, and defeating Tebbit.

It is vital to organise rank and file militants to defeat Tebbit in the workplaces, mines and hospitals.

This means forming delegate action committees representing the organised workers in every area. It is these committees that should coordinate solidarity action with the health and railworkers. They should ensure that militants from the health and rail speak in every plant. They should organise factory and shop meetings to explain and organise against Tebbit's law.

Of course every union must be committed to non-recognition of the laws and non-compliance with any court that tries to implement them. But the workers' movement cannot defeat Tebbit with resolutions. We must demand that the TUC immediately breaks off all negotiations and discussions with this hateful anti-working class government. Murray and Co should leave all joint committees and procedures. Instead they should declare

war on the Tory government.

In every strike and on every picket line, militants must bend their efforts to linking up their struggle with those of other workers. The Tories' attack is aimed at the whole class. Every striker from every industry will be affected by Tebbit. We must respond by mobilising the whole of our class to smash these anti-union laws.

In this war with the Tories, the working class needs the weapons that can guarantee it unconditional victory over its enemy. Against Tebbit, against the Tory anti-union laws, we need a **General Strike** until the laws are wiped off the statute book. Solidarity stoppages, mass pickets, must be seen as our means of launching our counter-offensive against the Tories and organising our forces to destroy them. ■

COMMUNISM AND THE TEST OF WAR

THATCHER'S "WAR DRIVE" has long been the subject of left wing literary discussion. In an area that no-one expected, and with a country with which the Tories had formerly been developing friendly relations, that "war drive" suddenly became an awesome reality.

The events of one weekend were sufficient to call forth the full fury of British imperialism. The seizure of the Malvinas by its rightful owners proved to be an unendurable slap in the face for both British and world imperialism. Without hesitation, and with the blessing of the Labour Movement's traitorous leaders, Thatcher responded to that slap with an all out war. For the first time since Suez, a British task force has joined battle on a scale vaster than anything seen in Britain's various "counter-insurgency" wars, from Aden to Ireland.

The war in the South Atlantic demands a clear and unambiguous response from all those on the left who claim to be revolutionary. The task now is to go beyond speculation towards an explanation of, and decisive opposition to, the war.

The causes of the present war lie far deeper than the superficial and immediate factors that precipitated the actual fighting. Marxists recognise that wars arise out of contradictions and conflicts that have their roots in the social and economic fabric of the world order.

The present world order is dominated and regulated by imperialism. We live in the imperialist epoch. What we mean by this is that developed capitalism has gone beyond the stage of consolidating national economies and the corresponding national states. It has gone beyond the progressive role that it played in Europe and America in the nineteenth century. Having consolidated their national markets the major powers are driven to search out and dominate new sources of raw materials, new reservoirs of cheap labour and new areas to which capital can be exported in order then to repatriate ever greater profits. Capitalism's remorseless logic — to grasp after and accumulate profits — stands in contradiction to the limitations imposed on it by its own national boundaries. It is forced to reach out beyond them. In order to secure its profits as it expands, imperialist capitalism is also forced to subjugate the nations whose markets, resources and workers it is exploiting.

In its early phase of development, imperialism did this by direct conquest and colonial rule. The British Empire was the classic form of early imperialism. The armies of the British state secured for the capitalist magnates direct rule over India, whole chunks of Africa, Asia, a myriad of islands in every ocean and, of course, the Malvinas.

The convulsions of the twentieth century, two world wars and countless nationalist uprisings, have forced imperialism to modify the form of its exploitation of the imperialised world, but not the content.

Today, Britain has very few colonies that it rules directly. West Germany has none. Does this in any way mean that these countries have ceased to be imperialist? Not at all. Britain, Germany and the other major imperialist powers, e.g. the USA, Japan, Italy, France and Canada, have maintained their domination by economic means and by incorporating the national bourgeoisies of the imperialised countries into their world system through organisations like the UN and the IMF. The aid given by imperialism to Mugabe's newly established Zimbabwe is but the latest example of this process.

It is the contradictions lodged within this imperialist world order that produce wars. Marxists are clear that the imperialist epoch, in which capitalism has completed its historical role and become entirely reactionary, is an epoch of wars — and of revolution. From what we have said the reasons should be clear. The drive by imperialist powers to dominate the world is carried out as a *competitive race*. There is no honour among thieves. They will happily cut each other's throats in the drive for profits.

An early example of imperialism's ugly visage was the scramble for Africa in the 1880's and 90's. The foundations of European and American capitalism were laid on the backs of slaves from that continent. In the late nineteenth century, England, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Portugal went further and set about enslaving whole territories within the continent. This did not only mean violence against the indigenous peoples. It also stored up the potential for violence between the rival imperialist brigands. The events leading up to the First World War revealed this potential. The clearest example was the Morocco Crisis of 1911 over control of North West Africa. This pitted Germany against England and France both of whom were concerned at Germany's rise to industrial strength and her ensuing colonial appetites. The avoidance of a military clash at this time merely postponed the inevitable conflict. Economic competition and the drive for plunder lined the imperialist powers up against one another and in 1914 the first major inter-imperialist war broke out. The working class of Europe paid dearly for that war in its own blood.

These years of carnage revealed, however, that war did not depend on the *policies* of governments. War could not be prevented by mere changes of policy. Of course war could be offset by peaceful policies and attempts at cooperation. However, this could only have a temporary effect. So long as imperialism exists then so too does the drive towards war.

Only twenty one years after the governments of the disfigured European continent had signed the Versailles "peace" treaty, the conflict between German imperialism and Anglo-French imperialism, between two robbers in different political disguises, erupted once again, drawing all the imperialist powers into World War II.

In the aftermath of that war, the rise to world dominance of the USA and the strengthening of the degenerated workers' state, the USSR, offset the inter-imperialist rivalries. Under US hegemony, imperialism presented a united front against the USSR. This imperialist united front, which aspires to sustain itself through the eventual reopening of the workers' states to imperialist designs, is strategically set on a course for war with the USSR. Yet this does not mean that the inter-imperialist conflicts have disappeared. The strains in the Western Alliance, the conflicts within the EEC and the occasional trade wars with Japan, all indicate that although the rivalries have muted they are still a feature of the imperialist world order. If a united imperialism were to be victorious against the Soviet Union it would only foreshadow new and ever more violent rivalries over the division and redivision of its reactionary conquests.



Lenin

Imperialism means war. Its crisis-ridden nature and its instability mean that wars will break out sporadically, as has the present war with Argentina. It also means that such wars signify worse to come. The present war should serve to remind the complacent that the threat of world war, thirty seven years after the last one, looms once again. This time humanity's very existence is at stake.

In conflicts between imperialist powers the position of revolutionary Marxism was made clear by Lenin in 1914. He had to fight the majority of international Social Democracy (the Second International) who had stamped into support for the imperialist bloodletting in the name of "defence of the Fatherland". Against this position, Lenin argued for revolutionary defeatism, "A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must precipitate its overthrow. Only a bourgeois who believes that a war started by governments must necessarily end as a war between governments, and wants it to end as such, can regard as 'ridiculous' and 'absurd' the idea that socialists of ALL belligerent countries should express their wish that ALL their 'own' governments should be defeated. On the contrary, it is a statement of this kind that would be in keeping with the innermost thoughts of every class-conscious worker, and he is in line with our activities for the conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war." (Socialism and War)

For Lenin it was not enough to say that the workers wanted an end to the war. It was necessary to add that the workers themselves, through their opposition to "their" government in the war, would bring about peace by revolutionary means, up to and including civil war.

Every victory for an imperialist power strengthens it. It strengthens its ability to oppress its own working class and the workers of other countries. It

weakens and demoralises the working class. Defeats, on the other hand, demoralise it, weakening its government at home and abroad. This is to be welcomed and should be furthered by the workers who should fight intransigently for their own interests even in war time.

This does not mean that, in an imperialist war, revolutionaries favour a victory of a foreign imperialist. That is to miss the essence of Lenin's policy. Trotsky explained what Lenin meant, "Unscrupulous enemies have tried to interpret this to mean that Lenin supposedly approved collaboration with foreign imperialism in order to defeat domestic reaction. In fact, what he was talking about was a parallel struggle by the workers of each country against their own imperialism, as their primary and most immediate enemy." (Lenin and Imperialist War)

The slogan, "The Main Enemy is at Home" is entirely applicable for an inter-imperialist war. It does not mean that, 'my enemy's enemy is my friend', merely that it is not the principal enemy. It is the principal enemy that has to be fought and that means organising to defeat it by revolutionary means.

At the heart of this position is a complete rejection of patriotism in the imperialist countries. Patriotism implies that there is a national unity, a common cause of the bosses and the workers. This is a falsehood. The only thing that the workers of an imperialist country have in common with their bosses is geographical proximity. Patriotism, in these circumstances, precisely means saying that the bosses, and workers, of another country are the main enemy. The implications of patriotism are that, for the course of the war, differences with one's own bosses should be set aside. This is why the 'social patriots' in the Labour Party entered coalition governments during two world wars — to unite the nation. The workers' interests were sacrificed — Labour bitterly attacked miners who went on strike over pay in the Second World War on the grounds that they were sabotaging the war effort.

In fact, patriotism means defending British imperialism's "right" to exercise political and financial dominance over other countries. As Lenin argued, "Social chauvinism (i.e. patriotism in the ranks of the workers' movement — WP) which is, in effect, defence of the privileges, the advantages, the right to plunder and pillage, of one's 'own' (or any) imperialist bourgeoisie, is the utter betrayal of all socialist convictions." (Socialism and War)

Concretely, a rejection of patriotism and the call for defeatism in an imperialist country, like Britain, in a war, would mean no political support at all for the government waging the war. Communist MP's would denounce the war in Parliament, vote against the government and against granting it a penny for the defence of imperialism. It would also mean building working class action against the war — by blacking military supplies, calling demonstrations and strikes against the war, agitation amongst the troops against the war and against the privileges and rights of their officers.

Of course, the cry that rings out when such slogans are raised is that we are betraying "our boys" who are fighting. The wretched and reformist "Militant's stand on the Malvinas conflict gives this refrain, a refrain more familiar from the mouths of Healey and Callaghan, a "Marxist" colouration. "Our boys" become "workers in uniform": "The LPYS (controlled by Militant - WP) recognises that rank and file members of the armed forces are 'workers in uniform'" (Militant 16/4/82).

T.I.L.C. SPLITS OVER WAR

THE WAR in the South Atlantic threatens to wreak havoc with the Trotskyist International Liason Committee (TILC), which was formed in December 1979.

Its largest grouping - the Workers Socialist League - is now the major sponsor of the paper "Socialist Organiser", and has refused to take a position in support of Argentina against Britain.

But at least two other sections, the Italian LOR and the American Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), have declared their support for Argentina in its war with British imperialism.

In the May 1982 issue of their paper, the LOR carried the following statement of position on the war: "By unmasking the pseudo anti-imperialist demagoguery and rhetoric of the Argentine junta, Trotskyists are able to avoid every ambiguity by whatever means, and openly affirm unconditional support to Argentina against England, but naturally from the point of view of the proletariat" ("Politica Operaia" May 1982. Our translation and emphasis).

The TILC is not meant to be, as yet, a democratic centralist organisation. It set itself the task of becoming one "within two years" (Declaration of Intent, April 1980). However, the voting system of the TILC guarantees a built-in majority for the British WSL over all the other groupings combined! As a consequence the position of the TILC on Thatcher's imperialist war is defeatist on both sides.

It is hardly surprising that the TILC groupings outside Britain should adopt a position of support for Argentina. The majority of groupings on the international left which claim to be Trotskyist have also taken stands supporting Argentina in the war. It is only in Britain where "war fever" and anti-Argentine chauvinism is strongest that many groups have taken a "defeatist on both sides" position. But it remains to be seen whether the TILC sections who have taken a principled position on this question have either the will or the ability to counteract the British WSL and the national pressures which have led it to take an opportunist line on this question.

The founding document of the TILC, "The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle" was largely a restatement of principles a document of timeless truisms which provided no basis as a guide to action for a revolutionary tendency. We said in a letter to the TILC: "We think that there is a real danger in your position of building an international tendency on the basis of agreed principles, while differences over (national) tactics are either covered over or not seen as important. Of course this was the method of the International Committee and the OCRF, and in both cases it led to federalism and splits" (Letter to TILC/WSL July 18th 1980).

The war against Argentina has sharply highlighted this specific inadequacy that lies at the very heart of the TILC's founding document. As we have made clear, the WSL's line on the war has thrown overboard a whole series of positions traditionally held by revolutionary communists - the attitude to imperialist wars, to settler populations and self-determination, and to the very nature of Lenin's theory of imperialism as applied to modern semi-colonies like Argentina.

To these questions the founding document of the TILC provides no guide but only anodyne generalities. Hence it could serve as the basis of formal unity between disparate tendencies but not as a guide to action in the sharp test of war.

We are not saying that there will never be opposed positions within an international tendency, or that an adequate programmatic document will provide "answers" to every eventuality of the international class struggle. But a difference on such a question as whether one is for or against the defeat of Argentina, reveals deep programmatic differences - on imperialism and the national question for example.

A simple choice faces the non-British sections of the TILC in its first serious test in the international class struggle. Either they will succeed in correctly resolving and accounting for the errors of the TILC in this war, or these errors will be systematised and compounded. ■

The logic of this position was made perfectly clear at a Labour Party meeting in London when a supporter of Workers Power moved a resolution calling on the Parliamentary Labour Party to oppose any war credits to the government. A Militant supporter countered this with the pro-imperialist argument that to vote against credits would leave the "workers in uniform" defenceless. Such elaborate logic is designed for one purpose alone — to justify Militant's refusal to oppose the war. What they oppose is simply the Tories' prosecution of the war. They make their battle cry the call for a general election, without saying whether or not a Labour government so elected should immediately and unconditionally end the fighting. "In Britain we demand a general election and the coming to power of a Labour government on a socialist programme as a means of appealing to Argentine workers." (Militant 21/5/82)

Lenin's slogan "turn the imperialist war into a civil war" is rendered more profound by the Militant's cry — turn the imperialist war by Britain into a vote winning issue for Labour!

It was an easy jump for Militant, therefore, into the camp of the right wing of the Labour movement. Denouncing Benn and Hart for their calls for the withdrawal of the fleet, the Militant praises the chauvinist stand taken by the National Union of Seamen "Despite their hatred of Thatcher the majority of workers have felt a sense of solidarity and sympathy for 'our boys' at war ... The support for the war and the hatred for Thatcher both came out, for example, at the annual conference of the National Union of Seamen where delegates overwhelmingly supported the Task Force, but, at the same time, gave loud applause to general secretary Jim Slater when he delivered a stinging rebuke to Thatcher." (Militant 28.5.82)

Slater's anti-Tory demagoguery was a handy smoke-screen for his rabid chauvinism — and the Militant portray this as a more honourable stance than that taken by people calling for the withdrawal of the fleet. Militant may not explicitly support the war. They have yet to prove themselves to be unconditionally against it.

Their shameful excuse about defending "workers in uniform" is only that — an excuse for chauvinism. Let's be clear, the British Army is NOT a conscript army, is not made up of 'workers in uniform'. Of course, young men are recruited from the working class, driven to become professional killers by a capitalism that can offer them no useful work and would pauperise them if they stayed on the dole. However, once in the professional army, these young workers are inculcated with a discipline and ideology that is absolutely pro-imperialist. Their actions are necessarily pro-imperialist in every war they fight. We are in favour of agitation to try to break them from their ways of thought. We are for fraternisation to win them to the side of the workers. This cannot be done by conceding that the British Army is simply a grouping of workers, just like any other workers except that they are in uniform. It can only be done by breaking up that army, destabilising it through trade unionisation of the ranks and the formation of soldiers' committees. However, even with the formation of such bodies, as long as the political control of the army lies with the capitalist state, we will always and absolutely oppose the military use of that army by imperialism. To do otherwise would be to concede that the imperialist war can be justified from a working class standpoint. It cannot.

The "our boys" argument and the "workers in uniform" argument are, therefore, patriotic deceptions. They can only weaken working class opposition to the war and strengthen its imperialist prosecutors.

The peoples of the imperialised world have not been simply passive spectators of the brazen acts of robbery perpetrated against their countries by the Great Powers.

Resistance to imperialist domination has been a major source of war in the twentieth century. As Marxists we do not, in any way, equate such wars — always objectively anti-imperialist when fought against an imperialist power — with inter-imperialist conflicts. The war waged between Vietnam and the USA, or between the forces struggling for a united, independent Ireland against Britain, are wars waged against imperialist domination itself.

The present world order of exploitation and oppression is a product of the plunder of the world by the institutions of imperialism. Massive profits are drained from the exploited states by the dominant imperialist states. A chain of military bases and murderous client dictatorships underwrite this system with the threat and reality of armed force. The working class in the imperialist countries has a common interest with the peoples of the imperialised world in destroying the imperialist order that is its exploiter too. Therefore whenever the forces of the oppressed take up arms against imperialism, Marxists in the imperialist countries do not simply declare that "The main enemy is at home". In the Vietnamese and Irish wars, for example, they had to declare that those fighting "our class enemy" — the National Liberation Front or the IRA — were in fact "our allies", were waging a struggle against imperialism which we support. "The main enemy is at home" — yes, but also "Our allies are those who fight them"!

The ultimate source of all that is reactionary in the present world order is the imperialist system itself. Only its destruction can pave the way to a new world system founded on the international solidarity of the working class and oppressed masses. Only its destruction will destroy the material and military base of the vicious military dictatorships that, as a rule, turn the imperialised countries into prison camps to facilitate imperialist plunder.

Because imperialism is the basis of the present world order, Marxists therefore have no hesitation in supporting wars against imperialist powers waged by oppressed peoples. We place no conditions on that support. As a rule those struggles are led, at least in their initial stages, by forces who have no intention of establishing the world order that revolutionary Marxists advocate. Petit bourgeoisie nationalists, Stalinists and clerical nationalists have all proved capable of inflicting blows against imperialism without being able to destroy the beast itself. In such struggles, therefore, revolutionary Marxists organise to ensure that the working class and peasants — with their own independent organisations and revolutionary party — fight for leadership in the struggle against imperialism.

We are not uncritical and passive supporters of the leaders of anti-imperialist wars. But we say that the task of overthrowing reactionary leaders in the camp of the oppressed and exploited is a task of the oppressed and exploited themselves *not* of the armies of imperialism. Therefore we do not make the overthrow of such leaders a condition of our full support for the war against imperialism. We unite with such leaders and fully participate in the war — but with our own slogans and organisations. Defeat for imperialism is our prime and driving objective in an armed clash between the armies of an imperialist and imperialised state. By playing a full role in such a struggle the communists can win the confidence and leadership of all the toilers, and carry through the struggle to the socialist revolution.

What is at stake in the war over the Malvinas? The military government of a dependent semi-colony has struck out to seize a British colony off the Latin-American coast. It does so not because it itself is anti-imperialist, but because the mass of Argentines historically see the existence of the British colony as an affront to their national rights. The ailing junta hoped to repair its tattered image and recoup the initiative at home, which it was losing in the face of intensifying working class opposition to its rule. It hoped that its loyal services to Haig and Reagan would insure it against imperialist attack and enable it to pose as a victor against imperialism, to the dependent and imperialised Argentine people. This is the contorted and contradictory road that led an agent of imperialism to strike a blow at imperialism itself.

Reactionary forces being driven into conflict with imperialism is not a new phenomenon. In Turkey in the early 1920s, Kamal Attaturk, the butcher of the Armenian people, found himself at the head of a national revolution, and in a bitter proxy conflict with British imperialism, then using its Greek pawn. In China, Chiang Kai Shek, a murderer of workers and communists, led a nationalist struggle against the Japanese, a struggle communists were duty bound to support. The motives of these men in waging their wars did not matter one jot to Marxists in answering the cardinal question — "Whose side in the war?"

As Marxists, we answer by determining the nature of the war, not the immediate apparent causes or pretexts of that war, or the political character of the regimes fighting that war. We do not think that Chiang Kai Shek was any better than Galtieri. Both men were (and are) enemies of their own working class and it was the task of the Chinese working class, as it was the task for the Argentine wor-

Socialist Organiser fails the test

The Marxist position on war is, in all truth, a difficult one to argue inside the labour movement. Britain's imperialist past has poisoned the ranks of the movement with a heavy dose of social chauvinism. To argue for Britain's defeat at this stage of the conflict will earn revolutionists ferocious hostility from the reformists within the working class. To argue, as a revolutionist has to, for the victory of Argentina has led to WORKERS POWER being harassed on demonstrations and in labour movement bodies by the reformists. They have not stopped short at threatening the use of the police against us. This pressure is inevitable in the early period of a war. It has to be resisted. Ability to resist it depends entirely on the programmatic coherence and correctness of our arguments and our willingness to put forward these arguments in the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Centrists, those on the left who are revolutionary only in words, who vacillate between reform and revolution, those who will not fight for a consistent if unpopular, position for fear of splitting with their reformist friends, are incapable of resisting such pressure. They inevitably bow to it. Their "Marxism" is skin deep, and bears only a passing relevance to their practice. Classically centrist in the present conflict are the positions put forward by the disparate and shaky alliance of forces grouped around the newspaper "Socialist Organiser".

From the start of the conflict, Socialist Organiser has set course for a position safely in the camp of Labour's peace-lobby. As we explained in the May issue of our paper, they tried first of all to ignore, or to deliberately obscure, the fact that Argentina is a dependent semi-colony. Throughout April, Socialist Organiser refused to recognise that Argentina was imperialised. This made life simple, because clutching at the 1,800 Falkland Islanders' supposed "right to self-determination", they could declare a plague on Britain and Argentina, telling them both to get their military machines away from the Falklands.

As May proceeded however, Socialist Organiser became less clear about the nature of Argentina,



Militant's view that the armed wing of the state is composed of "workers in uniform" leads them both to accept chauvinism during war-time, and to fail to realise that the armed forces need to be smashed. As to bringing back the fleet — WORKERS possess the power — by mass demonstrations and opposition which shake the Tories' confidence in having "the nation" behind them, and by strike action in those industries which supply the armed forces.

king class, to settle accounts with these butchers. But both men found themselves leading their semi-colonial countries into wars with imperialist powers — China in the 1930s, Argentina today.

"Who fired the first shot?" "What were their motives?" "Was the war a diversion from domestic difficulties?" These are the questions that preoccupy the middleheads and moralists of the reformist and the centrist left. They tell us nothing about the actual nature of the war now being fought. Is it an act of imperialist aggression by Britain against a non-imperialist power? Will a defeat for Argentina strengthen the international working class and weaken world imperialism and its order, or is the opposite the case? These are the real questions to be confronted. Regardless of Galtieri's motives, we are clear that a victory for Argentina in this war would weaken imperialism. That is decisive. It enables us to say without hesitation that on Argentina's side, this is a *just* war. Zinoviev, the Russian communist leader, spelt this out in 1916:

"Wars conducted by peoples against imperialists upon whom they are dependent are just wars of defence. Imperialist wars against colonial peoples are unjust wars of aggression".

This is the criterion we must use in the present war.

The position to be adopted by those who claim to stand in the tradition of revolutionary Marxism

would seem simple enough. We support any blow that weakens our mortal enemy — imperialism and its ability to police and exploit the world. Imperialism without the Malvinas would be weakened to the extent that its direct access to a military base from which to police Latin America and to prospect for mineral wealth would have been limited or curtailed.

It is because this is what was at stake that Thatcher sent the fleet, and Reagan, Schmidt and Mitterand gave her their blessing. They all knew that a victory for Galtieri would have signalled to the peoples of the imperialised world that their jailer and exploiter was growing weaker, that the property and investments of imperialism were ripe for seizure.

A defeat for Britain would therefore be a blow for the oppressed against imperialism. That is why we have called for Britain's defeat. However, on the battlefields of the Malvinas and in the waters of the South Atlantic, defeat for Britain must mean victory for Argentina, for its right to repossess the Malvinas and drive out the armed forces of British imperialism. We do not flinch from this logic precisely because Britain and Argentina are not both imperialist powers, because we are not experiencing a re-run in miniature of the inter-imperialist wars that have ravaged the globe this century, but a highly contradictory, but nonetheless real, war of an imperialised nation against imperialism.

though no less un-Marxist in the attitude it adopted to Argentina's war. The May 6th Socialist Organiser offered "our support to the Argentine workers for a genuine anti-imperialist struggle against the banks and the multi-nationals — and against Galtieri". Does this mean that Argentina is imperialised? Martin Thomas at the end of May tried to resolve the issue when he revealed with dazzling insight that "Argentina is not an imperialist big power like Britain" (SO 27/5/82) Magnificent! But unfortunately he didn't see fit to unveil any more of his wisdom. Is it then a *little* imperialist power? Or not imperialist at all? It has taken Socialist Organiser over two months to tie themselves in ever more intricate knots on this question. And they still have not come up with an unambiguous answer.

Whatever the nature of Argentina — a little imperialism that can wage an anti-imperialist struggle, perhaps — it isn't really a problem for Socialist Organiser. Under pressure from the International Workers League (who sent SO statements of their position for publication), and, perhaps, the voices of their own collaborators in Italy and the USA, Socialist Organiser had to concede that it was theoretically feasible that Argentina could wage anti-imperialist struggles and Britain could wage imperialist wars, even from the Falklands. But Socialist Organiser insisted that this was not the character of the war that was actually taking place over the Malvinas.

Britain's armed response was explained by the election-conscious Socialist Organiser as a "war to save the face and the prestige of Thatcher" (SO 6/5/82) — doubtless from the forward march of the left of the British Labour Party. Imperialism's eye for mineral resources in the area could be discounted as a motive: "developing the oilfields of the South Atlantic is a task for decades, and can hardly be guaranteed by Britain these days through sending the fleet" (13/5/82).

It is conceded that Britain might use the Falklands as a military base against anti-imperialist struggles...one day! "It is of course possible to imagine circumstances where an attack on these imperialist interests in Argentina — through expropriations and the repudiation of debts to Western bankers —

might conceivably have triggered off a military response from Britain or the USA, in the course of which there might have been an attempt by the imperialists to use the Falklands as a base for their operations" (6/5/82).

But don't worry, Reg Race or Tony Benn, this is only idle musing on the part of Socialist Organiser. Thatcher's war is about saving her prestige! It is about boosting the flagging fortunes of Margaret Thatcher's Tory Party, not about imperialism at all! The Argentine junta, for its part is not waging an anti-imperialist struggle. Only if Britain shot first from her island base in the Malvinas, against a regime that was expropriating imperialist assets would our Socialist Organiser "Marxists" consider it defensible for the Argentine army to seize the islands. Given that no-one was expropriating stocks in Argentina. Given that Britain was minding its own business in South Atlantic, and 1800 kelpers were doing no one any harm in settling a base that "could" be used to wage imperialist aggression, given all these things, it is Galtieri who has disturbed the peace and thrown a "red herring" into relations between Britain and Argentina. Because, after all, the Falklands "were not an outpost for British domination of Argentina" (SO 6/5/82).

If Britain had been using the Falklands to direct imperialist operations, then Socialist Organiser declares that "In such a situation, plainly an Argentine invasion of the Falklands would have been part and parcel of a genuine anti-imperialist struggle, and would have to be defended" (6/5/82). But nothing of the sort had happened! The Argentine junta fired the first shot, thankfully allowing Socialist Organiser to slip off into social pacifism: "But instead the whole invasion has been a red herring designed purely and simply to divert the Argentine workers away from their mounting mass struggles against the junta" (6/5/82).

This position explains the war in terms of Thatcher's and Galtieri's policies. It ignores the rapacious logic that compels imperialism to strive for domination. It ignores the contradictions that wreck national bourgeoisies in the imperialised

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LABOUR'S WAR PARTY

THE BRITISH ATTACK on the Malvinas-Falkland islands is an act of unmitigated imperialist aggression against Argentina. This war is being fought to defend British (and US) finance capital's economic domination over Argentina itself. It is being fought to defend Britain's control over the natural resources on and around the islands, and over the potential wealth of Antarctica. Thatcher has gone to war to defend a vital military base for imperialism in the defence of its world-wide interests.

The generals, admirals and hard-nosed men of the City want Thatcher's Task Force to demonstrate in Argentinian blood that no third world country can threaten the interests of imperialism in any part of the globe. That is why the blood-stained Reagan administration and the vultures of European imperialism have backed the murderous adventure of Margaret Thatcher. What is at stake is imperialism's ability to police and exploit the world.

The war has lit up with a flash of gunfire, the whole political terrain of British society. The bellicose Tory back-benchers, the gung-ho admirals and the hysterical 'Sun' newspaper have proved to be the voice of the bourgeoisie determined to defend its interests in a crisis. They are not laughable marginalised cranks. The urbane Tory negotiations and the Liberal and Labour peaceniks have either fallen silent, changed their tune or dropped into helpless mutterings.

The Labour party's right wing leadership have responded to the war in a predictable fashion. Healey, Shore, Silkin and Foot have constituted themselves as the labour movement's very own war-party. They may prevaricate more than the Tories, but they are no less ready to support every military action authorised by Thatcher or Admiral Woodward once it has taken place. In office there is little doubt that they would authorise such action themselves. The leadership of the Labour Party has long been, and remains, a guardian of Britain's national, imperialist interest. Their commitment to international working class unity expressed in their membership of the Second (Socialist) International, is a

decorative relic not a real and operative principle. Indeed this war finds the Latin American bureau of the Second International supporting Argentina's claim to the Malvinas, while Foot has denounced that claim: "There is no question in the Falkland islands of any colonial dependence or anything of the sort."

The followers of the Socialist International, as happened in 1914-18, find themselves enemies of each other on opposite sides of a shooting war. Foot and Healey have, by their action, confirmed that the Labour Party is a party for the bosses. Anyone with lingering doubts on this score should ponder the full implications of Michael Foot's speech on April 3rd. Without a thought for the interests of British or Argentinian workers he placed the Labour Party at Thatcher's disposal and goaded her into taking 'action':

"We are permanently concerned, like I am sure the bulk of the House... about what we can do to protect those who rightly and naturally look to us for protection. So far they have been betrayed. The responsibility for the betrayal rests with the Government. The Government must now prove by deeds—they will never be able to do it by words—that they are not responsible for the betrayal and cannot be faced with that charge." (Hansard Vol 21 No 92).

Thatcher obliged by sending the task force two days later. Since then, despite occasional queasiness at the thought of the fleet being used, Foot and Healey have stood by their initial support for the Government: On their behalf Labour Weekly explained:

"The logic of sending the task force was that its very strength would be enough to bring an Argentine withdrawal from the Falklands and get the Junta to negotiate." (7th May 82).

But when that failed the other logic of sending the task force, which was made clear by Thatcher from the very beginning, became clear—it attacked the Malvinas, and Foot and Healey supported it.

Dennis Healey, the man who has apparently taken over from Foot as the leading public spokesman for Labour on this issue, has, in the time honoured fashion, dressed up this imperialist adventure as a noble cause: "The causes at stake in the Falklands—human rights,

self determination, resistance to aggression and support for the United Nations Charter are good and worthy. They are the only causes for which any Labour Government would ever ask our people to risk their lives." (Labour Weekly 28th May 82).

Healey added that without the task force: "Democracy and socialism would have lost our voice in the world."

Perhaps Healey can explain how the sinking of the 'General Belgrano'—an act he has refused to condemn—which was 200 miles away from the nearest task force surface vessel, was a blow for democracy and socialism? This wanton savagery by the aptly named hunter-killer submarine shows that the fleet is in the South Atlantic as an emissary of imperialism and agent of death. Woodward and his cronies are not noted for their commitment to democracy, let alone socialism.

Healey's other 'causes at stake' in the conflict are, similarly, subterfuges. The new found concern for human rights should be measured against Labour's record in office. During the 1970s one third of Argentina's military supplies came from Britain. Between 1976 and 1979, under Labour, UK exports to Argentina doubled—from £63 million worth to £128 million. Most of these exports were the gruesome array of guns and ammunition that the Junta needed to repress the Argentinian working class. Labour's support for the Junta was given during its bloodiest years. That is why we think that the claims by bourgeois trash, like Healey and Silkin, to support the attack on the Malvinas in the interest of opposing fascism are shameful lies.

The call for self determination and resistance to aggression do not stand up to serious examination. Self-determination is a principle that the labour leadership have risked 'our people's lives' to suppress, many times in many countries. On television Healey boasted about Labour's role in Borneo in putting down a nationalist rebellion. More recently Labour authorised the use of troops in Aden and Ireland to kill and brutalise people who were/are fighting for the right to self determination. As for resistance to aggression Healey must be asked to explain why Labour fully supported American aggression in Vietnam and why it used thousands of police to attack demonstrators protesting in Britain over

that aggression. In point of fact neither of these principles apply in the Malvinas. Healey has invoked the as convenient excuses to justify his, and Foot's, servile support for an imperialist war against an 'upstart' nation.

The one position on which Healey has been consistent is the demand for a major role for the UN. Unlike the lefts who dress this demand up as an alternative war, Healey clearly recognises it as a means of securing a favourable outcome from the war. He declared in Parliament on May 20th:

"We would insist that any new military actions must be designed to create the possibility of more fruitful



Healey

LABOUR'S LEFT: FOR BRITISH IMPERIALISM

THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY of the Labour left has lined up behind Foot and Healey throughout the Malvinas crisis. The Tribune group of MPs (supposedly some 80 in number) has tagged behind Foot with only the mildest of complaints. Only after seven weeks, six parliamentary debates and hundreds of deaths, did 33 Labour MPs have the elementary courage to vote against Thatcher's imperialist outrage—and their number included noted rightists like Faulds, Dalryell and Abse!

Apologists from the ranks of the pro-Benn left have been quick to point to contingent reasons for their failure to organise effectively against the war. Reg Race excused his own impotence thus: "The left, having lost control of the National Executive, could not use the Party machinery to win support for demonstrations and action against the government." (Labour Herald 7th May 82). London Labour Briefing blamed the Labour Left's failure to mobilise significant action against the war on the local election campaigns: "Because of the council elections, few constituency parties had the opportunity to meet and condemn the support of Labour's front bench for this imperialist war. But now the elections are out of the way, we confidently expect a flood of resolutions demanding that the fleet be recalled and calling on the Labour leadership to abandon its chauvinist and imperialist stance." (June 1982).



Benn

These excuses reveal a great deal. If Race is saying that the left needs to control the NEC before it can mobilise against this war then he is admitting to the chronic weakness of the left's support in the localities. He is also putting forward a recipe for doing nothing about the war and instead centring on capturing the NEC. But the fact is that if Benn, Race, Hart and Co had put out repeated calls for action, had seriously attempted to mobilise, and repeatedly voted against the government's war plans from day one of the Task Force's dispatch then the anti-war movement would be far stronger. And the labour movement could have been saved the demoralising wave of chauvinist poison that has been unleashed upon it.

As for Labour Briefing's argument—if the Labour Party had made the war threat an issue in the local elections—instead of brushing it under the carpet—then the election campaigns themselves could have become a focus for anti-war work. Instead the 'left' council chamber cretins want to get on with getting elected first, and then oppose the war!

According to Labour Weekly, a mere 100 resolutions concerning the war have been sent to the NEC in two months of crisis. Of these only half supported the call for a return of the fleet. Time and momentum have been lost. They will both be difficult to make up notwithstanding Briefing's belated call to turn from electioneering to building an anti-war movement.

But the weakness of the 'lefts' is not the result of these contingent factors. The truth is that they are no match for Foot and Thatcher because they share the basic assumptions on which the murderous adventure has been justified by the warmongers. They share the objectives of the Thatcher and Pym. They object only to the means being adopted to achieve these ends.

Despite their emotional appeals to internationalism at heart they derive their standpoint from their own purely national viewpoint. They constantly fear to 'divide the nation', to injure the national interest or be seen to oppose 'our navy' and 'our boys'. Speaking in Trafalgar Square on May 23rd Benn attempted to turn patriotic support for 'our' troops against Thatcher and Pym: "Those who speak out for peace are called traitors by ministers who sold arms to the fascist junta, to kill our men in the Falklands now."

They share the view of Foot and Healey that there is a 'we', a British nation, within which the warlords, the press chiefs and the mass of the working class can have a common interest. This means they are powerless in the face of the patriotism spewed from the press. They denounce patriotic 'excess', as 'jingoism' but are unable to challenge the fundamental assumption of the patriotic poison, however it is presented.

Beneath the verbiage the lefts differences with Foot and Thatcher are over means, not ends, over tactics not strategy. They have consistently argued that the use of force was premature and that there were alternative means available for forcing the Argentinians to relinquish their claim to the Malvinas. The left have never hidden this.



Chris Davies

McDonald, voice of the bosses' misinformation machine, faces the world's press with a backdrop of maps and flags. The lies put out are eagerly taken up by the lap-dogs of Fleet Street, who are only too willing to comply with both distortion and censorship to help the war.

They have been at pains to express the unanimity between themselves, Foot and Thatcher in condemning Argentina's justified seizure of the Malvinas. Benn argued in the debate in Parliament as late as April 28th: "The reality is that there is unanimity in the House on the question of opposing the aggression of the Junta. There is also unanimity on the right of self defence against aggression." (Our emphasis).

Gavin Strang, who resigned over the Labour Front Bench's support for the invasion argued: "The need to resist the aggression by the fascist junta is not in dispute." Here we have two leading 'anti-war' spokesmen voicing support for 'resistance' or 'self defence'—which can only mean war at some stage. Countless similar statements pepper Tribune and the speeches of the lefts. What is revealed by this is that they oppose the war now, not from a position of firm principles but because other options have not yet been tried. But once you support Britain's right to maintain a colony off Latin America and deny Argentina's right to defeat British imperialism and its plans to exploit the military and mineral potential of the region then what is your real difference with Thatcher and Foot? The lefts have blathered and bleated about the need for negotiation rather than military confrontation. What they fail to understand is that war and negotiation are not alternatives or opposites. War is the continuation of the policy of negotiation by violent means. Thatcher, Healey, Pym and Foot all know that. Having failed to persuade Argentina out of the Malvinas, and subsequently having failed to negotiate Argentina out with the backing of the armed Task Force they have gone to war to drive Argentina out.

What would happen when, or if, the Argentinians refused to leave the Malvinas as a result of negotiations? What would Labour's anti-war lobby do then? Would they concede defeat? To do so would be to concede the impotence of their own imperialism—an imperialism that they are tied to by strained, but nonetheless real threads—ideology, jobs, lifestyle. More likely in long term these heroes and heroines of peace would 'reluctantly' march the working class into war, just as a crusade against fascism and tying the working class to the interest of the class enemy. This contradiction lies at the heart of the lefts' positions.

The only consistent basis for opposing Thatcher's adventure is to oppose root and branch Britain's right to decide the fate of the Falklands and this must mean supporting Argentina's right to prevent Britain determining the future of the Malvinas. The noxious Nick Kinnock is, for once, right when he argues: "If people believe that the aggression is important which the left all say they do—eds) then they can escape the recognition that force is necessary to give meaning to economic and diplomatic pressure against a fascist state." (Tribune 28th May 1982).

The left reformists hope—as they do in all situations of conflict at home and internationally, that negotiations and bargaining will achieve their desired ends. Their main emphasis has been on settling via the United Nations which the left invokes as if it were a benevolent fairy godmother, guaranteeing peace, dealing, harmony and justice. But even if the United Nations did correspond to the fantasies of the left would still have to insist on one principle against 1

negotiations that we have had till now." Healey's stress on negotiations reflects his concern for maintaining imperialist stability in the aftermath of the war. In particular Healey and the Labour leadership play an important role as mouthpieces of American policy and concerns in the British ruling class. America, obviously rattled by the impact that the war is having on its reactionary plans for Central and South America recognises the need for a negotiated, hopefully amicable solution. It recognises that this will have to be achieved after its imperialist ally has trounced Argentina. Then and only then, can equilibrium be restored via imperialism's equivalent of ACAS, the United Nations. Healey is a reliable agent for and persecutor of this line. He is a well known Atlanticist in the Labour Party. He supports the pro-Pentagon Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding—recently given a £32,000 hand-out by NATO. This strategy for peace by a UN settlement, is nothing more than a subtle way of re-asserting the imperialist order of things throughout the world.

The fact is that the UN has no role within the present conflict for one simple reason—the Malvinas are Argentina's. They are Latin American islands, stolen from Argentina and held since, by British imperialism. All calls for UN trusteeship, or administration obscure this basic truth. This is what Healey and Foot are at pains to deny. They cannot accept Argentina's claim as it is a challenge to imperialism. They are worried, however, about the potentially disastrous effects that the war could have to overall imperialist stability. Hence their emphasis on the UN—the 'fairest' means by which they can deny the justified national claims of Argentina. Foot's particular obsession with the UN—he mentioned it twelve times in one short interview on Weekend World—is a desperate and sickening attempt by a peace monger to disguise the fact that he has become one of the dogs of war!

The leadership of the Labour Party are willing and eager to wave the Second International's bloodstained banner of social chauvinism in support of Thatcher's war. They have declared themselves in favour of every military action that her task force has undertaken. They have refused to press to a vote their own feeble demand for a UN settlement, fearing that this would undermine national unity. They have denounced the 33 MPs who were prepared to vote against Thatcher. Foot, with the smiling approval of Thatcher and Healey, sacked three front bench spokesmen who voted against the invasion.

In short Foot and Healey, by legitimising the war as well, legitimised the Thatcher Government. The enormous boost in popularity for the Tories clearly reveals this. A MORI/Economist poll has revealed

increased support for the Tories amongst skilled manual workers and young voters—both sections of society that have been hit in many respects by the Tories policies. Such polls are not entirely black propaganda. They do reflect the fact that Labour's support for the Tories over the key issue of war, has strengthened the overall position of the Tories. Well done Foot and Healey! Not only have you been unable to mount an opposition to the Thatcher Government, you have also helped build new and electorally crucial props of support for that Government.

Of course Healey and Foot will claim that they had no choice in the matter. The war raised the question of the national interest and, as always, Labour puts the nation before the concerns of the working class. As Healey put it: "We wanted the task force to be sent because the British government—and nation—had to negotiate with a vicious and violent regime." (Labour Weekly 28th May 82).

The 'nation' and government are really equated. But this 'nation' includes health workers currently being fought by this 'government'. It includes over 3 million people whose unemployment benefits are about to be subject to a vicious tax by this government. It includes over 10 million trade unionists whose rights to defend themselves are about to be removed by this government. No, Mr CIA agent Healey, this government is not our government. This nation is not our nation. In peace as in war this nation is owned lock stock and barrel by the bosses and bankers.

The crisis has seen the most nakedly aggressive faction of the British ruling class rise to dominance. They have tied the Tory wets to their chariot wheels. But none of this would have been possible without the craven support that the Labour leaders have given to Thatcher and Pym. The bedraggled peace-monger Foot, a figure both ludicrous and repulsive, has endorsed every action of the Tory hawks and 'the right honourable lady' in the Parliamentary debates. He has clucked ineffectually about the United Nations, pleaded for more information and, whenever Thatcher has said no, acquiesced in and supported the Tories actions.

The behaviour of the Labour leaders shows that the Right wingers who lead the labour movement—Healey, Foot, Callaghan, McCluskey—will betray the working class movement into the hands of the class enemy at all crucial junctures. In fact these men are not the right wing of 'our movement', they are the 'left wing' of the class enemy. They are agents of the bosses, financiers and generals—blood of the blood and bone of the Tory-Liberal-SDP servants of capital. ■



M, AGAINST ITS WAR

only the people of Argentina, not the UN and not the British government—have the right to decide on the future of the Malvinas.

Benn and the rest of the anti-war Labourites propose economic sanctions as a means of achieving Thatcher's ends of bringing down Galtieri and forcing the British re-occupation of the Falkland islands. It is pathetic wishful thinking for Socialist Organiser to claim in one of their increasingly frequent whitewashes of Benn that "he has not taken up the call for economic sanctions" (Socialist Organiser no 85). Benn has woken up to the fact that Argentina is a dependent country in hock to the imperialist banks to the tune of £18 billion, much of which it owes to Britain. Benn and the left realise that debt repayments of £5 billion a year—amounting to 40% of Argentina's export earnings—mean that the banks could cripple Argentina by calling in these debts. Thus Benn argued on May 20th in Parliament: "We should step up the sanctions on Argentina. Financial and economic sanctions combined with the transfer of the islands to a UN responsibility will almost certainly bring Galtieri down."

Benn the great civiliser rationalises his version of imperialist pressure by suggesting that it will bring down 'fascism'. Does Benn seriously think that if imperialism topples Galtieri it will do so in order to usher in a workers paradise. The banks, as Turkey showed, will protect their interests against the workers by whatever means they can. They are no ally of the Argentinian working class. Only that class, not a grand alliance of Benn and the banks, can bring down Galtieri and replace him with workers' rule.

This is not the position of Benn and Abse alone. It is advocated by the new 'infantile leftist' Tribune as well. It declared sagely:

"The Argentinian regime is peculiarly vulnerable to economic pressure." (7th May 82—our emphasis). Peculiarly imperialist! And for the left, according to Tribune the task is to reassert imperialist domination but not by bloodshed!! Little wonder then that the lefts have, so far, mobilised pitifully small and strangely motley forces behind them on their Sunday demonstrations. The lefts' ideological incoherence has meant that they have, of necessity, been indecisive and confused.

The right have certainly dithered but they have been united in their support for the adventure as it developed. The left have dithered and been divided. Trotsky described this feature of the left in 1926 in terms that could be accurately applied to Benn, Tribune and their followers today:

"The party continues to be led by extreme right wingers. This is explained by the fact that the party cannot be restricted to various left ventures, but is bound to have a generalised system of politics. The left wingers have no system, their very nature prevents this. The right wingers have a system: they have behind them tradition, experience, routine, and most important of all, bourgeois society as a whole is thinking for them and thrusts ready made decisions under their noses. MacDonald has only to translate Baldwin's or Lloyd

George's suggestions into the Fabian language, The right wingers are victorious despite the fact that the left are more numerous. The weakness of the left wingers comes from their lack of cohesion and this arises from their ideological shapelessness."

Whether you are for it or against it by its very nature war demands clear and precise answers. The left were debarred, in advance, from giving such answers. On all the key issues, therefore, there has been confusion—and that confusion has obstructed the building of an anti-war movement.

The initial response of many on the left was to blame the incompetence of the Tories—Labour, they crowed, handled colonial affairs better than the Tories. Veteran peace campaigner Frank Allaun was obviously distressed that warships had not been sent early enough when he said in Parliament:

"The Tory government got us in this mess. If they had acted weeks ago this situation would not have arisen." By 'acted' he presumably means do what Labour did. In 1977—send down some frigates and 'hunter-killer' submarines to 'show the flag'. This sense of shocked colonial pride is shared by Reg Race. In the face of a potential war he was bitter about not being prepared for it:

"First, we must hammer the government for procrastination and their failure to deter the Galtieri regime." The reasoning behind the Allaun/Race line of thought is fairly predictable and was most clearly voiced by Tribune (16th April 82):

"For Labour the task is now to go in for the kill. . . Labour should grasp the chance to show that we will defend British interests in a way which does not threaten the peace of the world, but does not compromise with dictators." The practical proposals of this operation are left vague—the intention is not.

The left vainly hoped the 'incompetence' argument would prove an electoral gift in an atmosphere of chauvinism. The labour left were hoping to gain popularity at the polls by playing on Labour's reputation as the competent colonialist party. The problem for the left is that this line was only credible if they, like Foot, were willing to go the whole way and support a colonial war, as better late than never. But this would be to cede credit for the whole operation to a potentially victorious Thatcher. Thus, once the fleet was well on the way and fighting loomed, the left looked to other issues to pin their banner to.

Opposition to the fleet was an issue on which Labour's anti-war forces could distance themselves from Thatcher. Tony Benn was the first to raise this call, not on April 3rd when even an interruption (assuming he was not called to speak) and question in Parliament would have shattered the image of the chauvinist unanimity that the House of Commons presented to the nation that day. He waited until April 6th before making his position known:

"My advice, for what it is worth, is that the task force should be withdrawn."

However Benn was not prepared to press his opposition to a vote. This allowed position on the left to shift as the fleet moved south. His early position of fleet

back to port was modified, first by Judith Hart: "at this stage we should not retreat but halt the task force and allow time for negotiations."

This 'no retreat' position meant effectively maintaining the threat of the fleet and allowing for its future use. After the recapture of South Georgia the demand changed again with Benn calling for the fleet's return to . . . South Georgia! The final twist came when battle was joined. The demand for a fleet withdrawal has been dropped and substituted by the call for an immediate ceasefire—a demand that leaves the fleet in position.

On the most basic anti-war demand—withdraw the fleet—the left have not been able to achieve consistency. The result has been that pressure for withdrawal in the labour movement is slackening. The demand that could have united anti-war forces in action was abandoned by the lefts at the decisive moment—when the fighting started. To add to the confusion the ever-confused Reg Race could not agree with his mentor Benn on the question of the fleet:

"There is nothing we can do about the fleet now. It is therefore the wrong issue to centre on. The main thing is to fight the war danger." (Socialist Challenge 15th April 82).

Fight the war danger—but leave the war machine steaming south? Surely an absurdity. It is—but it is one that

can be easily explained. This professional politician and parliamentary careerist—has no conception of working class direct action to force the fleet back to port. He is blind, probably wilfully, to the action that could be taken by the Rolls Royce workers, the British Aerospace workers, the engineers, who supply the fleet with everything its got from cans of beer to SeaWolf missiles. Action by such workers would bring the fleet back, but to launch such action these workers would have to be won to a consistent anti-war position. And it is precisely that that Benn, Race and the others are incapable of doing. Tied in a tangle of patriotic, democratic and pacifist impulses, the lefts have proved no match for Foot, Healey and Callaghan, for whom all the phrasemongering is merely a camouflage and means for fooling the mass of workers into supporting the aims of our 'own' imperialist ruling class. While the lefts hold back from a split with these agents of the ruling class, their opponents in the labour movement have no such scruples. They will use all the instruments of their bureaucracy, of parliamentary privilege and the media to persecute and discipline the 'lefts'.

The left can only be a force that can mobilise workers to break the grip of Foot and Healey and end Labour's craven support for Thatcher's war if it breaks with the crippling illusions that have made its record so inconsistent, so hesitant and ultimately, so ineffective. ■



Benn (bottom right) and Hart (bottom centre) in front of Falklands Peace Committee banner in London in May. Benn's calls for "bring back the fleet" gradually changed as the Task Force proceeded and chauvinism grew. Now he simply calls for a "cease-fire", leaving the Task Force and the murderous British troops in place.

Defend the USSR!

Reagan and Thatcher make no bones about where their guns are aimed and their rockets are trained. The murderous arsenal of NATO is aimed at the Soviet Union. It is imperialism's drive to destroy the USSR, not the armaments themselves, that threatens mankind with untold barbarity.

At the time of Reagan's visit to Europe, and the mass mobilisations against imperialism's chief henchman, we print below an abridged extract on Defence of the USSR from a book shortly to be published by WORKERS POWER entitled "The Degenerated Revolution - the origins and nature of the Stalinist States".

THE SOVIET UNION and the degenerate workers' states rest on property forms that are qualitatively different from, historically superior to, and globally irreconcilable with capitalism.

Capitalism's own remorseless inner logic drives it to attempt to subordinate the whole world to its laws and needs. Its survival ultimately depends on this. But the very existence of the degenerate workers' states means that huge markets and vast natural resources are closed to direct imperialist exploitation. Capitalism's crises drive it to attempt to recover these areas of the world and subject them again to its exploitation.

Only war and counter-revolution can return these states to the imperialist orbit. In and of itself imperialist war in the last quarter of the twentieth century threatens the whole of humanity with unimaginable barbarism, if not with complete annihilation. Even if this were not the case the destruction of the degenerate workers' states by imperialism, the re-establishment of capitalist property relations, would represent an epochal defeat for the working class and oppressed peoples of the world. It would immeasurably strengthen the class enemy on a world scale. For that reason the gains of the proletariat of the whole world - the destruction of capitalism in the Soviet Union and the degenerate workers' states - must be defended. Capitalism's drive to break up the workers' states must be resisted despite the political tyranny of the bureaucracy of those states, despite its monstrous privileges, and despite its betrayal of the historic interests of the proletariat of the workers' states and of the capitalist world.

The political counter-revolution of the Stalinists has stifled the voice, the initiative and enthusiasm of the working class in the degenerate workers' states. The bureaucracies, motivated only by the defence of their privileges, represent a mortal threat to the preservation of post-capitalist property relations. These property relations can only be preserved and qualitatively expanded on the road to socialist construction by being extended internationally. But the bureaucracy's historic abandonment of the goal of communism was enshrined in the nationalist doctrine of "socialism in one country."

The Stalinist bureaucracies attempt to strike strategic deals with imperialism. They sacrificed the German, Spanish and French workers to their alliances with German and Italian imperialism before the Second World War. After that war they sacrificed the European revolution - in Greece Italy and France - handing back power to an enfeebled bourgeoisie and its transatlantic backers.

In return Stalin attempted to regulate a new division of the world between himself and Anglo-American imperialism. But for imperialism the agreements and undertakings reached at Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam were to be kept only as long as the USSR and anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist forces, world-wide, obliged them to. For the imperialists these agreements are tactical and not strategic. However the highest goal of the Stalinist bureaucracies is to render them permanent. This utopian and reactionary programme has been variously christened "peaceful competition of social systems", "peaceful co-existence", and "detente."

Imperialism itself has been forced by upheaval and crisis in its own world system to restrict its direct military onslaughts on the degenerate workers' states to the smaller powers - Korea, Vietnam, Cuba - and to utilise "cold war" economic blockades and boycotts against China and the USSR. Its murderous wars in Korea and Vietnam do indicate that as long as imperialism exists it will never historically reconcile itself to the "loss" of these states.

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie, the concentration of the means of production in the hands of the state, the state monopoly of foreign trade and the mechanisms of planification, represent historic conquests of the working class. They are the property forms objectively necessary for socialist construction. The absence of workers' democracy, the monstrous bureaucratic tyranny does not alter this nor can it remove from communists the obligation to defend those gains and therefore the state that defends those gains. In any war with imperialism we unconditionally defend the Soviet Union and the degenerate workers' states. In the imperialist states we are for the defeat of our "own" exploiters and for the victory of the workers' states. Whilst we give no political support to the bureaucracy, our support for the workers' states' self-defence is unconditional. This means that we do not impose pre-conditions for that support such as the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies, the cessation of repression against revolutionary communists or the pursuit of an internationalist policy. But our support for the workers' states ruled by the Stalinist bureaucracy is not unconditional support for that bureaucracy. Our support for the defence of the workers' state solely means that we subordinate the overthrow of the bureaucracy to the defeat of imperialism or its agents.

This does not mean that we shelve the task of overthrowing the bureaucracy or that we will sacrifice the interests of the workers to the rapacious defence of the bureaucracy's privileges. We

agitate for the defence of the workers' conditions, for proletarian democracy in the conduct of the war and for soviets of workers and soldiers, as the means of mobilising the enthusiasm of the masses and defeating the imperialist enemy. Whenever the bureaucracy's defence of its privileges or its attempts to surrender to imperialism threaten the workers' state with collapse, then an armed insurrection is necessary and justified. In a degenerate workers' state the decision to organise for insurrection is conditional on the defence of the proletariat's gains against imperialist attack.

As supporters of the internationalist tradition and programme of Lenin and Trotsky we subordinate the defence of the workers' states themselves to the interests of the world proletarian revolution just as a tactic is subordinate to a strategy. For example, if successful political or social revolution provoked a counter-revolutionary intervention by a degenerate workers' state and the successful defence of a workers' political or social revolution threatened a bureaucratically degenerate workers' state with destruction at the hands of imperialist powers then we would always say that a living revolution must not be subjected to the defence of post-capitalist property forms if that means subordinating it to the counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy.

Trotsky made this clear at the onset of the Second World War: "If the USSR is involved in the war on the side of Germany, the German revolution could certainly menace the immediate interests of the defence of the USSR. Would we advise the German workers not to act? The Comintern would surely give them such advice, but not we. We will say 'we must subordinate the interests of the defence of the Soviet Union to the interests of the world revolution.'"

(L. Trotsky: In Defence of Marxism, p.40). In capitalist countries allied with the USSR or other degenerate workers' states - Germany 1939-41, Britain 1941-45 - we remain strictly defeatist with regard to the bourgeoisie.

In the context of accelerating rounds of nuclear armament by the imperialist powers since the Second World War, we recognise that the workers' states cannot guarantee their own defence without the ability to match the imperialists' weapon for weapon, technology for technology. For that reason we recognise that as long as imperialism has nuclear weapons, the workers' states cannot repudiate their manufacture or deployment without seriously weakening the defence of post-capitalist property. While we oppose the imperialists' nuclear arsenal just as we oppose every measure that strengthens the armed might of our class enemy - "not a penny, not a man for this system"



Trotsky

we defend the right of the workers' states to maintain nuclear weapons in defence against imperialism's drive to restore capitalism on a world scale. We oppose all pacifist and neutralist campaigns against them that weaken the self-defence of the workers' states.

For Trotskyists the highest good is always the independent mobilisation of the working class for its historic revolutionary goals. Within this context we defend the post-capitalist economies against attack by imperialism or its agents. Trotsky summed up the perspective clearly: "We must formulate our slogans in such a way that the workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy) and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate to us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

(In Defence of Marxism, p.21). ■

SOCIALIST ORGANISER...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

world, who can be caught between the hammer of their own working class and the anvil of their imperialist paymasters. Followed through to its logical end, this would lead to suggesting alternative "non-imperialist" policies to British imperialist governments. A poor substitute for dismantling imperialism, but one that keeps Socialist Organiser in favour with its left-reformist friends who similarly hanker after an imperialism without warts.

Indeed, so fashionable is the call for a "diplomatic solution" amongst their left reformist idols like Benn and Reg Race, that Socialist Organiser have added their voice to this lobby. Like Benn and Race they oppose the bloodshed with the call for negotiations between Thatcher and Galtieri: "and better that Thatcher and Galtieri deal with their disputes by negotiation than by war" (6/5/82). They advocate a negotiated deal with imperialism to the people of Argentina. Who should be trusted to carry out such negotiations? Is Thatcher, reeking of freshly spilled blood and chortling with imperialist glee to be trusted with achieving a "democratic" peace? Or perhaps Galtieri is the man for this sensitive diplomatic task? Socialist Organiser are not precise on this question.

They throw in calls for negotiations because they do not want to offend Benn. They have no revolutionary solution to this war. They are left mimicking empty phrases about peace and negotiations. Phrases that disguise the fact that diplomacy by "our" government (Tory or Labour) is imperialist diplomacy. Negotiations by imperialism could only be aimed at gaining it advantages. Comrades, this is the magnitude of your differences with Marxism. You are drifting into the mire of social pacifism.

Socialist Organiser mask their social pacifism with declarations of support for the Falkland islanders' rights. That is what they claim are paramount in the present situation. Repeatedly the claims of the

Falklanders are asserted as "valid" - just as they are by Reg Race, Tony Benn, Michael Foot and Margaret Thatcher. The difference between Socialist Organiser and Thatcher is that they think she is only using the Falklanders' claims as a pretext. It is Socialist Organiser that is the consistent friend of the kelpers.

The Falklanders see themselves as British. They wish to stay that way. There is no means for them to stay that way except as part of a British armed camp, as a result of a British occupation of the Malvinas. As Tony Gard pointed out in a letter to Socialist Organiser that nominally criticised Reg Race, but objectively hit at Socialist Organiser itself (27/5/82), defence of their rights means defending their "right" to be part of the British Empire.

This logic escapes Socialist Organiser. They don't trust the British navy to defend the Falklanders: "We cannot rely on Thatcher's fleet to act in the South Atlantic as defenders of the Falklanders' rights... We regard the rights of the Falklanders as a matter for the international working class, and we base our attitude to the British Navy on an overall class assessment" (13/5/82).

So it is down to the working class to defend the Falklanders against Argentina, and against the British fleet that they look to as their protector! The practical implications of this are not spelt out. They cannot be. There is no way that the international working class can take practical action to defend the "rights" of the Falklanders. Even if it could, for it to do so would be to defend a settler community who wish to remain British!

We ask you, Socialist Organiser, do 1,800 Britons 8,000 miles from their parent country, occupying a Latin American island stolen by Britain in 1833 have the right to remain British and determine the future of the Malvinas? To answer "Yes" is to defend the integrity of the British Empire and to completely betray socialism.

When the forces of Socialist Organiser eventually saw fit to muster on an anti-war demonstration in London - the third one to be held during the crisis - they marched under the slogans "The enemy is at home" and "Down with Thatcher, Down with Galtieri". The slogan "The enemy is at home" - also touted by the Spartacists (who are well seasoned in defending the rights of imperialist settlers in the Middle East, in Northern Ireland and now in the South Atlantic) - is vacuous in the present war.

In a war between imperialism and a dependent semi-colony it ducks the key question of support for the struggle against "our enemy". This is made explicit in the attempt to equate Britain and Argentina in the slogan "Down with Thatcher Down with Galtieri". The tasks of British and Argentine workers are not the same in this war. The Argentine workers must organise to extend the struggle to defeat imperialism by taking the plants and stocks of imperialism into their own hands. That could be done alongside a mobilisation to defeat imperialism in the Malvinas and in the process destroy the pro-imperialist junta that has played with anti-imperialist fire. This means Argentine workers have a direct interest in securing imperialism's defeat. Galtieri's overthrow must be fought for as a part of the struggle to secure that defeat.

British workers do have a common interest with their Argentine brothers and sisters. But that is an interest in securing the defeat of British imperialism, of the system that exploits the workers of Britain and Argentina. That means fighting in Britain to stop Thatcher's war, and to block supplies as part of a campaign to aid the struggle of the people of Argentina and all of Latin America against imperialism.

The Socialist Organiser has kept a tight grip on the coat-tails of Benn and Race. While insisting that

they are not pacifists in the abstract, they have proved pure social pacifists in this concrete test. By late May, they were still describing Benn's stance as one of increasing boldness: "Tony Benn, though silent in Parliament on April 3rd, came out for withdrawal of the fleet much earlier than Tribune. At first he was half-hearted - 'my advice, for what it is worth, is that the fleet should be withdrawn' - then bolder and bolder". (20/5/82). It is a mark of the degeneration of the forces that support Socialist Organiser that their retreat from revolutionary Marxism, their own timidity in the face of left reformism, can be measured by the increased symmetry between their arguments and those of Race and Benn. Even the left reformist, pro-Ken Livingstone "Labour Herald" can see Thatcher's war for what it is - an imperialist war.

Not so Socialist Organiser. Labour Herald's reformist credentials are not in doubt. Socialist Organiser, however, is living a contradiction. Its raison d'être is as a "marxist pole" in the Labour Party. Its hope for survival and growth is to maintain a non-aggression pact with left reformism. The price of the pact constantly undermines the "marxism" of the pole. Failure to recognise this, failure to stand firm on a question as vital as the war, will take a further toll on Socialist Organiser's diminishing reserves of marxism.

Once again, therefore, we make a call to the rank and file militants within the Socialist Organiser Alliance:

Change your positions!
Challenge your bankrupt leaders!
Stop playing the role of servile fellow-travellers of the left reformists!
Join with the revolutionary internationalists to fight the war! ■

IMPERIALISM'S PLANS FOR GULF IN DISARRAY

WHEN THE ARMIES of Saddam Hussein swept into Iran in September 1980, WORKERS POWER argued that revolutionaries in Iran and throughout the world had a duty to give support to the military defence of Iran against Iraq.

We took this position despite the existence of the murderous clerical despotism of Khomeini and the Islamic Republican Party, and stressing (as we have done since before its formation), that no political support whatsoever could be given to it. What we did support was the defence of the Iranian anti-imperialist revolution against its external foes - just as we defend it against its internal foes, principally Khomeini and his terror regime.

We recognised that Saddam and the Iraqi Ba'athists' war aims were completely reactionary - the externally imposed division of Iran and the seizure of its southern oilfields; the imposition of a military dictatorship or the restoration of the Pahlavis; the establishment of a new "policeman of the Gulf" for US imperialism, and the crystallisation therefore of an anti-Soviet, anti-national revolutionary alliance in the region.

Whilst Khomeini's regime was, and is, engaged in a murderous civil war against the Kurds and against the Left, Iraq's attack forced the mullahs to defend the mangled and distorted gains of the anti-Shah revolution, national independence and the social gains of the workers, peasants and urban poor.

This defence was carried out in a thoroughly counter-revolutionary fashion. Revolutionary communists would have fought for completely different political and military methods and goals. They would have fought for the removal and overthrow of the mullahs, for a mobilisation of the masses not only to defend existing gains against restoration, but to advance the class interests of the exploited and oppressed, in short for working class leadership and power.

However, whilst such policies had not yet triumphed amongst the masses, support for national defence in itself remained both necessary and progressive. Such defence was not and is not defence of Khomeini but of the workers, peasants and oppressed peoples against pro-imperialist restoration. It is thus the defence of the only forces who can and must bring Khomeini and the "Islamic" murderers to the bar of justice.

The Iraqi Ba'athists, despite their "secular", "socialist", Arab nationalist rhetoric and their own past in anti-imperialist revolutionary upheavals, were engaged in a pro-imperialist military and political project within the Gulf region, an area vital to imperialism, supplying, as it does, vast quantities of oil to the "non-communist" world. The problem for imperialism is that none of the key Gulf states are, on their own, strong enough to defend themselves, let alone act as regional gendarme, checking the development of anti-imperialist movements amongst the masses. All of the Gulf states - Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, etc - are susceptible to such movements.

Post-revolutionary Iran, even though its attraction has been reduced by the repressions of the Islamic republic, remains proof of the possibility of the overthrow of the strongest dictatorships, and of the fact that US imperialism itself can be defied. As such, Iran remains what the US calls "a force for instability". That is why the US imperialists are doing all they can to forge an alliance of the Gulf states with a militarily strong Iraq.

Such an alliance could deter the spread of revolutionary upheaval and could, potentially, restore Iran to the pro-imperialist fold. The Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) has been given US support in the shape of the AWAC reconnaissance planes and military personnel. In turn the forces within the council gave enormous financial backing to Saddam's war effort. Kuwait gave 6 billion dollars, while Saudi Arabia supplied the bulk of the 40 billion dollars total aid package given to Iraq by the Council.

For its part, America has definitely warmed to the once vocally anti-US, pro-Soviet Baghdad regime. A deal to send up to 12 Hercules transport planes has been made possible by Reagan lifting an export ban on "militarily significant items" from the US to Iraq. The swift US condemnation of the Israeli raid on Iraq's nuclear power plant was a further indication of Reagan's growing warmth for Iraq. Indeed Israel's attack on Iraq and its supplying of spares to Iran was part of the Zionist state's attempt to block the turn of US policy towards Iraq and the Gulf monarchies - a turn they fear will be at Israel's expense.

A defeat for Iran would not only restore stability, it would make the reactionary alliance of Jordan, Iraq and the Gulf states a viable proposition. The Iranian victory has scuppered these plans, and imperialist commentators have not tried to hide their dismay. The US magazine "Newsweek" in an article called "The Threat from Iran", commented: "If Iran's army fights its way into Iraq and topples President Saddam Hussein, a pro-Khomeini wedge could push westwards across the Middle East from Iran, through Iraq to Syria, which is already sympathetic to Khomeini's cause. With the northern tier of the Arab world vulnerable and a second danger zone possible along the Persian Gulf, the stability of the entire oil region is at stake" (31/5/82).

This is why US diplomats are scurrying around the non-Arab Islamic world desperately trying to find mediators to achieve a deal that will save Saddam's neck.

Iran's victory, therefore, marks the thwarting of the latest imperialist plans to "stabilise the Gulf", and that is to be welcomed. However, now that Khorramshahr has fallen, and once the clearing out of Iraqi troops from the last chunks of the

700 square miles of Iran they occupied has been completed, the time will have come for revolutionaries to end the military bloc with Khomeini's forces. The immediate threat has gone. Further military action by Iran would be designed to serve the Khomeini regime's self-aggrandisement. A continuation of the war involving any lasting incursion into Iraqi territory should be condemned.

The defence of the gains of the Iranian revolution of 1979/80 in no way entails support for an Iranian "Holy War" to topple Saddam. These gains themselves are under constant attack in Iran. Iranian forces would export only the counter-revolutionary clericalist trappings of the anti-Shah revolution, not its potential for workers' power and genuine national liberation which they are trying to expunge in Iran. Certainly a revolutionary crisis - feared by the US and the Gulf monarchies - is likely after the collapse of Saddam's bloody adventure, but this will not be hastened by an Iranian offensive into Iraq. Quite the contrary, it will tend to solidify Arab nationalist and anti-clericalist sentiment around the Ba'athists. The Iraqi workers and peasants, the Iraqi Kurds, must settle accounts with Saddam. The only assistance they can benefit from is that of a class conscious Iranian proletariat struggling for, or holding, power.

The "national unity" that existed during the war is skin deep. Those on the left like "Socialist Organiser" and "Socialist Worker" who insisted that victory would decisively strengthen the Iranian regime, testify to their ignorance of the Iranian revolution. The regime may enjoy a temporary resurgence of popularity, but without the excuse of fighting Iraq, they will find it increasingly difficult to sustain this. Iran is going through economic difficulties that are moving towards proportions similar to the crisis that preceded the Shah's fall.

Government spending for 1982-83 is budgeted at 3,100 billion rials (39.2 billion dollars), involving a projected deficit of 565 billion rials. Having slashed their oil prices, the government is likely to be very hard pressed to meet this deficit. Huge debts are likely to become the order of the day. All food, except fruit and fresh vegetables, is rationed and food prices on both the official and black markets have trebled since 1980. Unemployment is rife and industry, ravaged by the war, is working at an enormously reduced capacity.

In the face of this crisis, the "national unity" at the highest levels has begun to crack. The ruling Islamic Republican Party is splitting into clearly defined and counterposed factions. Khomeini's death will intensify this conflict. The victory against Iraq, therefore, has not fundamentally resolved the contradictions that have wracked the Iranian ruling class since the revolution. The fragmentation of that class foretells the likelihood of new revolutionary situations.

The ruling party has split into a "state capitalist", nationalist faction known as "the Imam's line". Led by "radicals" like the Ayatollah Montazeri, this group is pressing for nationalisation, centralisation and the use of Iranian oil to build an economy "independent" of imperialism. Montazeri summed this line up in a recent interview: "Our oil resources belong to all the Muslims of the world. It's their property. We have countries like India, and Palestine and Pakistan to help, but the superpowers will not allow us to play a constructive role" ("Middle East" June 1982).

Against "the Imam's line" is ranged the powerful Hojatieh faction who, fully in accord with Islam, favour the development and extension of private capitalism in Iran. Little wonder that one of the leaders of this group, the Labour Minister Ahmad Tavakoli, has been in the front line of the assault on the revolution's social gains - the shortening of the working week, the profit-sharing laws and the (feeble) elements of workers' control that were instituted. Against even the Islamic councils



Tehran demonstration

that exist, the Hojatieh declared: "the councils contradict private ownership which is respected in Islam. Management must be in the hands of the managers. Capital is followed by management, but the interference of councils in management means violation of the rights of the owners; therefore councils are non-religious". Even the Islamic shadow of the workers' shoras are too much for the unabashed capitalists of the Hojatieh.

There is, inevitably, a political tug-of-war taking place. The discovery of the planned coup by Khomeini's former foreign minister, and the implication of Ayatollah Shariat Madari in it, has been used by the "radicals" of the Imam's line as a stick to beat the "liberals" with. On the other hand, the Komiteh's have been placed under ministerial control, while the powers of the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) have been limited and those of the regular army increased. These measures hit directly at the base of the Imam's line faction's armed power.

This developing conflict - intensified in the aftermath of "victory" - is threatening to explode in another internecine conflict. The working class has no sides in this conflict. It can and must use the dispute within the ruling class to prepare a proletarian revolution in Iran. The sycophants of the Tudeh (CP) and the Fedayeen Majority are dressing up the Imam's line faction - butchers of the Kurdish people - as anti-imperialists. This is dangerous nonsense that will tie the working class to a wing of the class enemy. The united front needed in Iran now is not with one wing of the bourgeoisie but between the left and workers' organisations against the attacks of the bourgeoisie.

Democratic rights, savaged by the regime, must be restored. Independent workers' organisations - crucially new, genuine shoras and trade unions - must be built in every plant. Workers' militia must defend such organisations against the club-wielding semi-fascists amongst the Pasdaran and Hezbollahi. Women must be freed from the degrading restrictions on movement and dress that Islam foists upon them. The peasants must take up the fight to realise their demand of the revolution - thwarted by the IRP regime - "land to the tillers".

Struggles around these issues must be directed to one goal - the goal of workers' revolution. The illusion of a possible "democratic" phase, courtesy of the Iranian bourgeoisie, should be cast aside by Iranian communists. Together with fellow-communists in Iraq, they must march into the impending battles against their rulers under the slogans:

- Down with the Islamic Republic!
- Workers and peasants must rule in Iran and Iraq!
- Imperialist hands off Iran!
- Saddam must fall to the Iraqi workers and peasants!
- For Revolutionary Communist (Trotskyist) Parties in Iran and Iraq. ■



Iraqi prisoners of war in Iran

THATCHER'S VICTORY...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more sophisticated patriotic palate of the Labour MP or Liberal journalist, it is none the less effective or virulent for all that.

To the unemployed working class youth, after months or years on the dole and with a Labour movement that has done nothing for him or her, the ersatz excitement, the prospect of "joining up", the vision of jobs in shipyards, steelmills and factories humming with war-orders, makes them very vulnerable to pro-imperialist ideology. It is no accident that a recent opinion poll shows that amongst skilled workers and youth, the Tories have leapt ahead in popularity.

That a government that has inflicted savage attacks on the working class can have, with comparative ease, tied the working class movement to a bloody

war over an objective so patently remote from the lives and interests of working people is a measure of Thatcher's success. It underlies the sheer impotence of the Labour Party that has absolutely failed to mobilise the working class against the most detested Prime Minister since Baldwin.

Electoral arithmetic is not sufficient to calculate the changing balances of the class struggle, but the pathetic third place for Labour at Mitcham and Morden is a measure of Labour's irrelevance and bankruptcy in the fight against war and the fight against the most vicious anti-working class government for forty years.

The peace movement, in general, and CND in particular, have likewise been cruelly exposed by events. The quarter of a million who demonstrated

against the abstract "danger of nuclear holocaust" last October were sweated down in the heat of media chauvinism to between 1500 and 7000 in the demonstrations against this particular war. CND leaders and their Labour, CP and "Trotskyist" allies have fought hard to keep the nuclear issue and the anti-Reagan demonstrations strictly separate from the Falklands war.

The reason is simple. Many, if not most of the middle class supporters of CND are patriotic little Englanders. They are willing to protest against war in the abstract, but any and every actual war involves "our boys", "Britain's interests" and a whole list of "democratic" pretexts. These "arguments" hit their pacifism with the force of an Exocet missile.

Thatcher's victory will not be her last one unless, in the coming months and years, the working class movement finds a new revolutionary, internationalist leadership that can lead the working class under its own banner - not Thatcher's Union Jack - but the red banner of the world's workers and oppressed.

This new leadership can only be forged from those who dare tear aside the pitiful camouflage of "democracy versus dictatorship", of defending the "democratic rights of the Falkland Islanders" and of so-called self-determination for a population the size of a large village inhabiting a pair of South American islands. All these forces must be rallied to the unspotted

and unfalsified banner of internationalism - of unbending defeatism for British imperialism, and fearless defence of the oppressed and exploited of all countries.

Let those who cannot see behind the camouflage sink back unnerved and discredited amongst the motley ranks of Christian socialists, pacifists and "Marxists" who would make Marx turn in his grave. They can take Benn as their ideologue and figurehead. Workers Power commits itself to rallying the best forces of the working class under the banner of revolutionary communism - the internationalist banner of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

workers power

HEALTH WORKERS: ALL OUT NOW!

WITH MOST SECTIONS of workers having settled for low wage increases this year, the Tories clearly thought that smashing the health service workers would be a push-over. The overwhelming support given by health workers to the one-day strikes called by the TUC Health Service Committee has dented Norman Fowler's arrogant optimism.

His strategy of divide and rule has not met with the hoped-for success. In particular the attempt to set the nurses against the rest of the workforce has backfired. Nurses in NUPE and COHSE have been willing to strike for the full claim of 12%. Even the do-nothing scab outfit, the RCN, has rejected Fowler's 6.4% bribe to nurses. His calculated insult to the rest of the workforce - an offer of 4% and less for some workers - has united workers in the hospitals.

The reasons for this unity are not hard to find. They lie in the similarity of wage packets between nurses, porters and ancillaries - all abominably low. Last year 59% of the female full-time workforce in the NHS were on less than £75 per week gross earnings. Given that women comprise the majority of the workforce, this places the NHS as one of the lowest paid sectors in Britain. Those who look after the sick are worth 4% to 6.4% in the Tories scheme of things.

However the already wealthy dispensers of justice - men whose judgements raise fares and imprison trade unionists - are worth an 18.6% rise. The recently retired chief of Thatcher's Policy Unit explained this with impeccable bosses' logic: "Paying more - or even 'too much' - to judges and senior civil servants is not going to prejudice the country's future. It is excessive pay increases for huge numbers of government employees that produce all the familiar problems."

There is only one way to defeat this attitude - bring the government to its knees by all-out indefinite strike action and by supportive strike action from workers outside the health service. The one day strikes have lifted the veil on the determination to fight that exists amongst the health workers. But if workers do not go beyond such limited actions, then the determination, militancy and ability to win the full

claim will be squandered. The Tories will ride out limited actions. Workers will lose pay, while winning nothing. The opportunity to develop and extend the strikes will be wasted. Individual sections will stop taking action and the militants will become isolated and demoralised.

It would appear that the top officials of the 13 unions in the TUC Health Service Committee are preparing the way for such a disastrous development. After the success of the May 19th strike when 89% of the hospitals struck, the Committee *did not* support workers in Edinburgh and Rotherham who went on all-out strike and instead called for further one day stoppages on June 4th and 8th.

Enraged by this decision militants from Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle mounted a lobby of the NUPE national conference at Scarborough to force the call for all-out indefinite strike action.

Scarborough was an education for every hospital worker. The executive, as always, played a very clever game. Nonetheless, they were pushed to the limits by the militant lobby. Despite using all the bureaucratic moves in the NUPE rulebook, the pressure - from the lobby and the fact that some areas were already out - was great enough to force a resolution calling for all-out indefinite action, with emergency cover, from June 4th onto the floor of the conference.

Though this was passed, Alan Fisher was quick to spot and use a get-out clause. The resolution called on all health unions to strike. Invoking unity as a means of avoiding NUPE giving a lead to the other unions Fisher declared: "If we are to escalate the action, which in many areas has already been effective, we have got to take the other unions with us."

By the end of the debate, delegates at least felt they had won the commitment to all-out action - Fisher convinced them by stating categorically that "there will be no ducking out."

Immediately after this Fisher told the press "The unity of the TUC campaign is paramount and the plan would be reviewed if other unions didn't support it."

The executive and union officials have, throughout the campaign, played on the fears of the membership that divisions between unions are a recipe



John Sturrock (Network)

for defeat. They have pushed unity in and of itself as the key to winning, but unity around the lowest common denominator.

So at the TUC General Council NUPE refused to raise the call for its conference decision to be discussed, let alone implemented. The NUPE bureaucrats showed that they agreed with the disgraceful sentiments expressed by Charlie Donnet of the GMWU. He denounced the NUPE conference, ie. the rank and file, for "dragging this movement into the gutter." Determined action is something to be ashamed of in the world of these salaried sell-out merchants.

Fisher and co have been quick to act - against moves to all-out action. All full-timers have been sent letters telling them to do nothing outside the TUC committee's guidelines. One official in Sheffield who, reluctantly, voiced his members support for all-out action, has been threatened with being moved from the area. In Rotherham the all-out strike has been knifed by the withdrawal of strike pay. The workers at Edinburgh are under the intense pressure of being out on a limb.

Fisher's claim that "We are looking for victory" can hardly be taken seriously.

Despite these disgraceful antics by the leaders the campaigns for all-out indefinite strike action for the full claim must be built in every hospital and ambulance station. The nurses of the RCN must be broken from that organisation and recruited by the trades unions. Real unity in action must replace spurious unity of sentiment. When the Tories and bureaucrats use the argument that "patients will suffer", the unequivocal answer must be, if they do it is the Tories' fault for not paying us a living wage. Their cuts are leading to deaths all the time. Under-paid and overworked health workers struggle day in and day out to minimise the effect of these cuts. They demand, deserve and are determined to win a decent wage.

Alan Fisher argues that the management should be the ones who decide what emergency cover should be provided if an all-out strike is called. He is undermining the potential effectiveness of strike action *in advance*. In Liverpool during the present round of strikes the management used bogus emergencies to force strikers to work. Fisher's position gives the management the right to organise scabbing.

When we say all-out strike that is what we mean - all-out strike! Then and only then will the feasibility of providing emergency cover, which should not be automatic in a strike, be discussed and decided on by strikers themselves. It will be decided upon on the basis of the health workers' assessments, not the bosses'. Such all-out strike action, controlled at every level by rank and file, democratic strike committees, must be linked to supportive action from other workers. The supportive strikes on May 19th by the South Yorkshire miners, by the Newcastle water-workers on June 4th and promised by the BSC (River Don) Steelworkers and Miners throughout the country for the 8th, must be built upon. Scargill must be called upon to turn his words into action and use his power as leader of the NUM to bring that union out alongside healthworkers. A combination of the healthworkers and the miners could not merely win the 12%, it would rouse the whole working class into a massive offensive against a Tory government that has spent too long gloating at the low pay and joblessness that it has inflicted on the working class. ■

RAIL WORKERS MUST UNITE AGAINST PARKER'S PLANS

A MAJOR SHOWDOWN between the British Rail Board, egged on by Thatcher, and all rail workers, is on the cards.

Even before McArthy's enquiry into "flexible rostering" was published, Parker was planning to introduce it regardless. The BRB has tied this year's wage negotiations (offering a paltry 5% to be paid in September) to acceptance of "flexible rostering." As if this wasn't enough the BRB have announced that they plan to cut 5,000 jobs from their twelve workshops including the closure of Shildon and Horwich and the part closure of Swindon works.

In the face of this attack ASLEF at their annual conference rejected the McArthy report and voted to fight its recommendations. The militancy of the train drivers over the last year pointed to such an outcome. The recent outbursts of militant rhetoric from Sid Weighell

of the NUR were somewhat less expected. Weighell has already accepted flexible rostering for his own members, without in any way consulting them, and he took management's side during the seven week ASLEF dispute. Now Weighell has threatened industrial action from 7th June if the plans to close the workshops are not scrapped and a "reasonable pay offer" is not made.

How do we explain this sudden about face? Weighell recognises the significance of the workshop closures for future investment in the railways. With the rapid rundown of rolling stock the decision to close the workshops can only mean that BRB intends to hack the railway down to its bare bones.

Weighell's stance is also a response to mounting opposition to his open collaboration with Parker. Rank and file members of the NUR have been disgusted at his acceptance of "flexible rostering". A delegate conference of NUR guards recently

voted to fight at the full NUR conference to rescind the union's acceptance of the scheme. Weighell hopes to outmanoeuvre this growing militancy by "taking a stand" on the workshop issue and ensuring that, if there is to be a fight, it will take place under his control.

If the NUR strikes from June 7th - and despite the Executive's decision there is no guarantee that it will - militants must not put any trust in Weighell and the other leaders. For one thing he is already backtracking on an "all-out strike.. suggesting a campaign of selective strikes by different sections at different times. Against this militants must campaign for an all-out strike - of all the rail unions - until the threat to close the workshops is withdrawn, the "flexible rostering" scheme is scrapped, and the union's wage claim, as determined by rank and file rail workers, is met in full.

The potential for unity between the three unions does exist. The

TSSA conference recently voted unanimously to support action on the workshops issue, while ASLEF will act against rostering. That unity must be forced upon the leaderships of the three unions but it must be forged in struggle at a rank and file level. Through unity in action the basis can be laid for bridging the divisions that have plagued railworkers for so long. Local joint action committees need to be built embracing all railworkers with delegates from the different depots.

That the union bureaucrats will seek compromises and attempt to sell out our interests is as sure as night follows day. We have to prepare for this by putting the control of the strike, the decision as to what its demands shall be and when to return to work into the hands of the rank and file through regular mass meetings and, in between these, through democratically elected local action committees, banded together into a national strike committee. ■

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