

Oppose nationalist chauvinism following England-Argentina FIFA World Cup game!

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On Sunday, Argentina and Spain will contest the final of the 2026 FIFA World Cup at MetLife Stadium in northern New Jersey—if the air lets them play. A toxic cloud of smoke from climate-change-fueled Canadian forest fires has blanketed the stadium and the surrounding region for days, with public health experts warning against outdoor activity.

FIFA and the Trump administration, who together have transformed this tournament into a vehicle for oligarchic plunder and nationalist spectacle, are not about to let a public health emergency stand between them and the closing ceremony, where Trump himself has demanded to officiate.

The average ticket price for the final stands at \$11,327, with individual seats purchased as high as \$56,958 and listings reaching \$2 million. These are not prices set for football supporters. They are prices set for the financial aristocracy.

Yet although the match is between the teams that have clearly shown the greatest tactics, talent and sheer willpower, much of the discussion is still focused around the semifinal: Argentina's extraordinary 2–1 victory over England. It was a match that deserved to be remembered for the football alone. Instead, it has been severely tainted by the political establishments and mass media of Argentina and Britain, who have seized on a sports event to whip up a frenzy of nationalist chauvinism that workers everywhere must oppose without equivocation.

Argentina's players celebrated by unfurling a banner reading "*Las Malvinas son argentinas*" [The Malvinas are Argentina's] on the pitch. The Argentine political establishment—across its entire spectrum, from the far-right Milei government to the Peronists and the pseudo-left—had been stoking this moment for days. Argentina's foreign minister published a lengthy opinion piece in the conservative daily *La Nación* five days before the match, declaring the islands Argentine "by history, by right, and by conviction" and denouncing Britain's "illegal occupation." On the eve of the game, the fascist Vice President Victoria Villarruel posted on X, calling England "invaders" and "usurping pirates."

After the final whistle, President Javier Milei declared the banner display "valid and lawful," adding: "*Las Malvinas son argentinas*, we are going to recover them, and we are going to do so by diplomatic means."

The British establishment responded in kind. A spokesperson for outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer issued a statement: "The World Cup might not be ours, but the Falkland Islands definitely are. Our position is unchanged." Business secretary Peter Kyle called the banner an "egregious" breach of FIFA regulations against political messaging and demanded disciplinary action. The British tabloid headlines, which had not picked up the issue, were suddenly dominated Friday with the message of "disgrace" and calls to "punish them."

It must be emphasized that this has unfolded as the backdrop to a tournament already stained from its opening day by the xenophobic chauvinism of the Trump administration and FIFA. The Iranian team was forced to train and sleep in Tijuana and shuttle across the border on match days, barred from spending a single night on US soil. Players returning home were met by renewed US bombing and Trump's threats of

annihilation. The Somali referee Omar Artan was expelled, his historic appointment erased before he could blow a whistle. Fans from Iran, Haiti, Senegal, and Morocco have been banned. These are the conditions under which the Malvinas issue is being exploited by both governments.

The *World Socialist Web Site* opposes this chauvinist exploitation with the same sharpness with which it has opposed every other form of nationalist poison dispensed through this tournament. There is a legitimate distinction between popular enthusiasm for a national team—even enthusiasm felt deeply, shaped by historical memory, carrying the weight of Diego Maradona's extraordinary goals against England in 1986 and the tense, dramatic encounters of 1998 and 2002—and the deliberate political mobilization of that enthusiasm to promote territorial claims, manufacture national unity and dissolve class antagonisms into flag-waving.

The added factor of a historically oppressed nation defeating an imperialist power and colonial aggressor can be understood through the lens of history and class consciousness without being transformed into a chauvinist rallying cry. The first is a comprehensible, deeply rooted social feeling. The second is a weapon in the hands of ruling classes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Rebecca Bill Chavez, deputy assistant secretary of defense under Barack Obama, articulated the function of the Malvinas issue with inadvertent candor: "This is an issue that unites everyone. It doesn't matter in Argentina: left, right, center—you're all for the Malvinas."

That unity is precisely what Milei's government requires. It is four general strikes deep into a political crisis, with poverty growing and social anger mounting. The Malvinas theater performs the same function now that the 1982 invasion performed under the Leopoldo Galtieri military junta: substituting a territorial claim for a class confrontation, channeling the fury of an enraged population away from the Argentine ruling class.

Milei's posturing is pure hypocrisy. He has openly praised Margaret Thatcher—the prime minister who sent the fleet in 1982—and previously appeared to accept the 2013 referendum in which 99.8 percent of the islands' Kelpers voted to remain British. His government has worked with Trump and the US Southern Command to convert the South Atlantic into an area under Washington's imperial control.

The jingoism, moreover, came hours after Reuters reported that an internal Pentagon memo had floated reviewing US diplomatic support for the British position on the Falklands—in retaliation for perceived lack of British support on Iran.

There is a deeper process that runs across the exploitation of sport internationally. As the WSWs wrote following the New York Knicks' championship celebrations earlier this year, sporting fervor of this intensity reflects deeper social contradictions:

[T]he fervor reflects the absence of any mass progressive outlet for the social anger and desire for solidarity that exist within the working class. In an earlier period, broad layers of workers and

youth were connected to mass working-class organizations and socialist political movements.

Argentina's pseudo-left and the legacy of Morenoism

It is in this context that the statements of the Argentine pseudo-left must be evaluated. Nicolás del Caño of the Argentine Socialist Workers Part (PTS) posted a video of the players holding the banner with the caption: “*Las Malvinas son argentinas*. English out.” *La Izquierda Diario* of the PTS declared the Malvinas cause “the banner of an anti-imperialist struggle that remains alive,” insisting its expression had been suppressed in a manner “coincident with the policy of surrender of the Milei government.”

Prensa Obrera of the Partido Obrero wrote that the national team “expressed a feeling that ran through the stands and the streets” and called on readers to defend “the national cause of the Malvinas.” The PTS and PO are using the same language—“a national cause,” “English out”—as Milei and Villarruel.

At no point in their statements do these forces evaluate their own political lineage, above all the role of the Argentine Pabloite revisionist Nahuel Moreno in 1982, which is precisely the role they are reprising today.

When the Argentine junta launched its invasion in April 1982, Moreno and his PST declared themselves in the “same military camp” as Galtieri, refusing to raise a single independent class demand. Their May Day 1982 declaration called on workers to organize the collection of clothes, food and letters to send to the front—a Salvation Army auxiliary to the General Staff, not a revolutionary party. When the junta collapsed under the weight of its own military catastrophe, rather than call for organs of proletarian power amid a genuine revolutionary crisis—shaped by mass strikes, including a million-and-a-half-strong general strike in 1981 and street battles in Buenos Aires on March 30, 1982—Moreno channeled the crisis back into safe bourgeois-parliamentary channels

Moreno claimed that national unity around the Malvinas had set the stage for a “democratic revolution” when another junta general, Reynaldo Bignone, replaced Galtieri. Then he made the following appeal: “Under the dictatorship ... our slogan was negative: Down with the dictatorship!... But from the triumph of the democratic revolution, from the fall of that regime, anti-capitalist slogans become central. ... We call on them to make a new revolution to change the character of the State ... a social or socialist revolution.”

Morenoism performed a double service: lending a left cover to the junta's chauvinist mobilization, then helping execute exactly the controlled handover to civilian bourgeois rule that Washington required to prevent the Argentine working class from moving toward power.

The official position of the PTS today is that Moreno “intervened generally in a correct fashion during the Malvinas War.” The PTS and its coalition partners are his political heirs, and they are repeating his role today—providing a lifeline to bourgeois rule in a deepening social crisis by telling workers that the moment calls for national unity rather than class struggle against their own ruling class.

The Trotskyist position is the opposite. Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution states that, in countries of belated capitalist development oppressed by imperialism, the democratic tasks—the expulsion of foreign domination among them—cannot be entrusted to the national bourgeoisie. Only the working class, fighting for its own class power, can carry through these tasks as part of the world socialist revolution.

The colonial crimes of the British seizure of the islands in 1833 and the

military invasion by the Royal Navy in 1982 are real, and the working class has a legitimate interest in the question of the Malvinas.

But that struggle can only be waged by a working class that maintains irreconcilable political independence from its own bourgeoisie. Wherever a tendency calling itself Trotskyist proposes instead to stand in the “same military camp” as that bourgeoisie, whether the camp is a fascist junta in 1982 or the patriotic clamor of the fascistic Milei, it is assisting imperialist oppression. It delivers the working class, bound hand and foot, to its class enemies at home and abroad alike.

Their message of “national unity” exploded when celebrations following earlier victories over Egypt on July 7 and Switzerland on July 12 were met by riot police in Buenos Aires, Córdoba and other cities with rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannons and beatings, leaving dozens injured and several arrested. The government that waves the banner of national solidarity attacks the workers and youth who gather in the streets to celebrate.

Workers in Argentina, Britain, the United States, Iran and every other country are connected by globalized production in ways that make the resolution of every major social question—mass unemployment, poverty, war, the drive toward fascism—a matter of international class struggle, not national competition.

Today, workers globally are joined by a million threads through the production process and the great social questions of our time, which can only be resolved by making workers conscious of this objective connection around a revolutionary socialist program.

The antidote to the nationalist poison being dispensed through this World Cup is not contempt for the genuine popular enthusiasm behind football. It is political class consciousness: the recognition that workers everywhere hold the levers of a globalized economy and are exploited by the same international financial oligarchy that has turned this tournament into an instrument to divide them. That oligarchy must be expropriated, its control over sport, culture, media and every social institution broken, and replaced by the democratic control of working people internationally.



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