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GULF WAR

Defend Iraq !

Oppose US imperialism !

Failure of the Geneva talks means that war between the United States and Iraq is imminent. Half a million US and allied troops, with massive air and naval power, are poised to attack Iraq. The United Nations has authorised the imperialist powers to wage war if Iraq does not withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January.

We condemn the intervention of the USA, Britain, France and other western powers in the Middle East. We demand the withdrawal of their forces. If war starts, we must support Iraq and the Arab masses against the imperialists, irrespective of which side may fire the first shot.

We opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August. We did so despite the reactionary semi-feudal rule of the Emir, and despite the fact that Kuwait served as an agent of US imperialism within OPEC. We opposed the invasion because the Iraqi state was advancing its own imperialist aims in annexing Kuwait.

The Middle East has 65 per cent of the world's oil reserves. The bulk of these lie near the head of the Persian Gulf, in Iranian Khuzestan, southern Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Saddam Hussein's objective is to secure for the ruling class in Iraq an effective monopoly within world oil supplies.

Saddam Hussein's 8-year war against Iran, which cost 600 000 lives, was aimed to seize the oil wells of Khuzestan. The USA aided and armed Iraq in that war, in order to weaken the Iranian revolution. The western imperialists continued to arm Iraq after the war, despite Saddam Hussein's slaughter of thousands of Kurdish villagers with poison gas.

We must expose the hypocrisy of the imperialist propaganda. The US and allied intervention is not to defend the rights of the Kuwaiti people, or to oppose dictatorship, but to preserve world imperialist domination over the Middle East and its oil.

"Democratic" imperialism maintains the

Israeli state, financing its continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the monstrous oppression of the Palestinians.

World capitalism, the multi-national monopolies, and the great imperialist powers are united in plundering the peoples of the under-developed countries through neo-colonial exploitation. The liberation of the masses of the world's people from misery, hunger and oppression is impossible without breaking the power of world imperialism.

The bureaucracy of the Soviet Union, by supporting the USA against Iraq, shows that it is not on the side of the colonial masses and wishes in its own interests to maintain the present world relations of power.

The military intervention of the imperialist allies in the Middle East completely overshadows in importance the original issue of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The war now looming is a war for and against world imperialist domination of the Middle East. This is why we must support Iraq, and do what we can to help defeat the US and allied forces.

We cannot support the UN resolutions with their demand for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the restoration of the Emir. Not only would that fail to liberate the Kuwaiti people, but it would mean victory for world imperialism. We disagree with the policy of the ANC leadership in supporting the UN resolutions.

While supporting Iraq in this war, we maintain to the full our support for every struggle of the Iraqi working people to rid themselves of Saddam Hussein's bloody rule. We reject his claim to be the benefactor of "the Arabs" and particularly of the Palestinian people. Saddam's regime is a vicious capitalist dictatorship. In Iraq trade unions are banned, Communist party members imprisoned and executed.

The liberation of the Arab people from

oppression and exploitation is possible only by means of a mass movement to overthrow capitalism and establish a democratic socialist federation of the Middle East.

Within this framework the right of the Palestinians to a state of their own could be secured, alongside a democratic and socialist Israel. So, too, the Kuwaiti people, if they so wished, could enjoy autonomy. At present, however, a "Kuwaiti state" would either be a puppet of Iraq or a puppet of the USA.

We are for peace; we are opposed to war and all its horrors. Tens of thousands will be killed and maimed, by bullets, missiles, bombs, chemical and perhaps biological weapons. Even the use of nuclear weapons has been considered.

It will be the working class that pays the price -- dying in the armies of the opposing states, and bearing the economic burdens.

War is the product of capitalism -- of private ownership of production for profit, the national state, and competition for the resources and markets of the world. An end to war is possible only if the international struggle of the working class succeeds in ending capitalism and establishing a democratic socialist commonwealth in its place.

Already the petrol and paraffin price in SA has been raised in response to higher oil prices. Once war breaks out this is likely to happen again. War will probably deepen the recession by keeping interest rates up.

De Klerk's government and the SA capitalists support the USA in this war. If they raise petrol, paraffin, fares and other prices, we must demand immediate compensation in higher wages and transport subsidies.

We call on the ANC and COSATU leadership, as a first step, to mount mass demonstrations indicating the opposition of the majority of South Africans to the imperialists' war, and our support for Iraq and the Arab people.

The issues behind the war

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'At all costs these oil fields must be kept in western hands' wrote Britain's foreign secretary in July 1958 when Britain and America made plans to invade Kuwait to prevent it coming under the influence of the 1958 Iraqi revolution. Three years later in 1961 British troops did invade to prop up the Emir of Kuwait. But the British did not bring 'democracy' to Kuwait and until the recent Iraqi invasion of Kuwait only 60,000 Kuwaitis out of nearly 2 million had voting rights.

By Ninesh Moorthy

The military intervention of Bush, Thatcher and their lackeys has nothing to do with Kuwait's democratic rights and everything to do with imperialist aims for — cheap oil, profits and domination of the Arab people. That's why the Panther is one hundred per cent opposed to Bush and Thatcher's armies.

Did the American rulers give a damn for democratic or national rights when they invaded Grenada and Panama, or when they bombed Libya? Today the imperialist powers use the mask of the United Nations for action against Iraq, but when it comes to forcing the Israeli army out of the occupied Palestinian territories the American government vetoes any United Nations action being taken.

Thatcher denounces Saddam Hussein as a 'Hitler' but why did she and the other western capitalist leaders bankroll and arm this 'Hitler' for the last decade. Between 1985 and 1990 the US Commerce department over-ruled Pentagon objections and allowed 14 export shipments of sophisticated technology, that helped Iraq develop its nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic missile systems. The last export shipment was planned for 3 days before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait!!!

In reality, until the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq was a close ally of Britain and America in the Gulf. But why? In 1979 millions of ordinary Iranians overthrew the pro-American dictator — the Shah of Iran. The Iranian revolution trumpeted a call to arms to the ordinary people of the middle east to overthrow the undemocratic feudal and capitalist states in the region. Without a leadership the Iranian workers and peasants Shuras (democratic committees) lost control of the revolution which fell into the hands of merchants and Islamic fundamentalists. But still the example of the Iranian revolution and Iran's uncompromising opposition to America threatened the interests of the imperialist powers and the undemocratic Arab regimes.

The Iraqi dictatorship of Saddam Hussein felt particularly threatened. So began the alliance of the West with Saddam. When Saddam declared war on Iran in 1980 where was the United Nations? All the imperialist powers and most of the Arab states (especially Kuwait) backed Iraq hoping in this way to smash to smithereens the example of the Iranian revolution. They fed, financed and armed Saddam even though he had massacred minority Kurds, trade unionists, communists and Islamic fundamentalists by the

thousand.

After 8 years of trench warfare Iraq emerged with the most powerful military machine in the Arab world. But with 350,000 dead, an \$80 billion foreign debt, low oil prices and nothing to show from 8 years of war, the Iraqi ruling class began to sniff the scent of revolutionary discontent among ordinary Iraqis. Saddam needed cash and a diversion to maintain his dictatorship — that's why he invaded Kuwait.

So what began as a concerted attempt by the western powers and reactionary Arab states to use Iraq to smash the Iranian revolution has boomeranged with war against Iraq threatening to drag the whole Arab world into revolution.

British imperialism's policy of divide and rule has had tragic consequences for the Arab world. In 1898 Lord Curzon (Viceroy of India) said the Persian Gulf should become a 'British lake'. After the defeat of the Turkish Ottoman empire in world war one the British artificially created the borders of Kuwait and Iraq. In 1932 when the Iraqi masses won independence Kuwaiti street demonstrations called for unification with Iraq.

The 1917 Bolshevik revolution (before it degenerated into Stalinist dictatorship) exposed the secret Sykes-Picot agreement (between Britain and France) to divide between them the living body of the Arab nation. This exposure helped spark Arab independence movements. Today the bankrupt Soviet Union under Gorbachev is prepared to abandon its former ally Iraq and sell its support to the United States for a few billion dollars.

If Saddam is a 'Hitler' then his mother is Margaret Thatcher and his father George Bush because it is they who helped create his military machine.

The root cause of instability in the Arab world is imperialist exploitation and the desire to abolish artificial borders and unify the Arab nation. But this cannot be done at the point of a bayonet or by Arab dictators. We cannot support the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqi army. The many capitalist attempts at unifying the Arab states (such as Syria and Egypt in 1958) have resulted in domination by one Arab state over another and have therefore failed.

But the American army has no business in Kuwait. Only a mass movement of the Arab workers and peasants can overthrow the hated dictatorships. Only they can establish a lasting Arab unity based on a democratically controlled socialist federation with full rights for national minorities.

The war preparations against Iraq are not to establish democratic rights for Kuwait. Bush and Thatcher are preparing a colonial 'oil' war to subjugate Iraq, and turn the Gulf into an 'American lake'. If they smash Iraq they will double the super-exploitation of the third world. Western soldiers will die and workers will pay in higher prices and unemployment for the sake of profits for oil



multinationals and the rich. That is why Kinnock and the Labour leaders should stop sitting on Thatcher's broomstick. They must support the Arab masses and oppose the sending of imperialist armies that are gathering like locusts in the Arabian desert.

The Panther campaigns for the British labour movement to support the Iraqi people against foreign invasion. The Labour movement must aid Iraqi trade unions, socialists, Kurdish minority and all others fighting against dictatorship and the American intervention. It is only the Iraqi workers and farmers that can overthrow the Saddam dictatorship and establish a democratic society.



Saddam Hussein.

At the time of writing war is not inevitable. Even before war the British and American economies face company bankruptcies, inflation and unemployment. A war in the Gulf could have catastrophic consequences, jacking up oil prices to \$65 per barrel. This would mean serious economic crisis across the western world and could shatter the hopes of capitalist restoration in eastern Europe and lead to bigger revolutionary explosions in the bankrupt ex-colonial countries.

Technologically America has superior weaponry — but this was not enough to defeat the Viet-

namese people during that war. The imperialist forces could win the battle for the air but the battle in the desert could take a lot longer. There is no guarantee of a quick military victory. Chemical and nuclear weapons would cause a nightmare of death and destruction.

Even if Iraq was defeated in war it would be difficult to establish a stable pro-American government in Iraq.

The Iraqi dictatorship dominated by Saddam's family from the Sunni sect of Islam (a minority in Iraq) could conduct a prolonged war but at enormous cost to the ordinary Iraqi masses.

Iraqi Marxists that the only way to defeat imperialist intervention is would be for the workers and peasants of Iraq must to take power from the Iraqi capitalists, and democratically run factories, agricultural production, the army and society as a whole. A revolutionary socialist Iraq by offering the right to self-determination would win massive support from the Kurds. It would arm the people and appeal to the Arab masses to nationalise foreign property and overthrow the Arab Sheiks and dictators. It would make a revolutionary appeal to the Arab and American armies. A revolutionary appeal would win a tremendous response from working people internationally, especially in America among the super-exploited Black and Hispanic workers — many of whom are soldiers in the US army.

War would throw the Arab world into turmoil. Saddam's appeal to

the Arab masses would stir up demonstrations against Saudi Arabia and America in every Arab country. Just imagine if war continued or American troops remained in Saudi Arabia till June 1991 when up to 2 million Muslims arrive in Holy Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. War could spark off revolution in Jordan which has already lost 30% of its GDP, and whose (mainly Palestinian) population has been radicalised by the Palestinian Intifada. Across the Arab world revolutionary and anti-imperialist movements would develop everywhere.

The more intelligent western leaders are looking for a peaceful way out of the Gulf crisis. They have worked with Saddam in the past and could patch an agreement with him again. But even if war was avoided things will never be the same again in the Arab world. Foreign troops would be a source of continuing anti-American feeling. If Saddam's army is undefeated this would continue to de-stabilise the area and provoke new conflicts or an Arab-Israeli war. Oil prices could fluctuate wildly.

The Gulf crisis exposes the hypocrisy of Tory politics. Their only aims are profit. They will sacrifice the blood of ordinary workers black, white, or Arab for this goal. The Panther calls on the Labour leaders to totally oppose the Tory military intervention and support the Iraqi people to defeat the foreign capitalist conquistadors.

