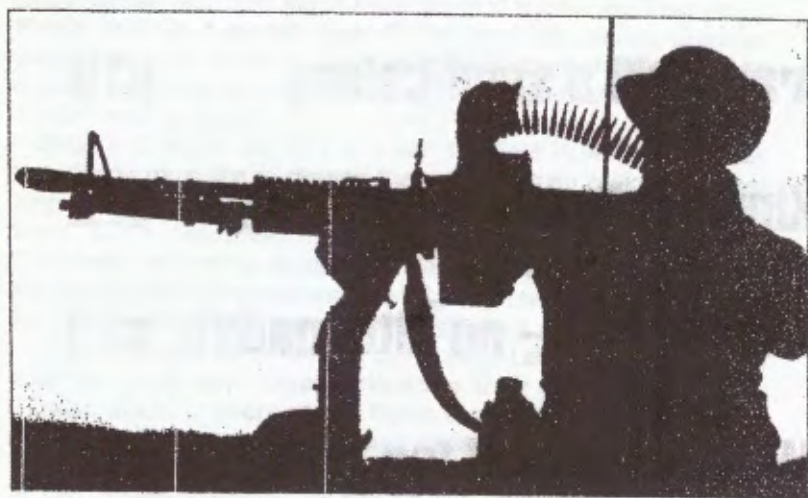


Stop the war against Iraq!

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Contents

- Why must thousands die? p1**
- Which side are you on? p4**
- Fighting to free Kuwait? p7**
- Israel: innocent bystander? p10**
- What is imperialism? p13**
- Iraq: still a semi-colony p16**
- Kinnock backs the carnage p22**
- Labour left – no alternative p24**
- What we stand for p28**

Why must thousands die?

George Bush and John Major have plunged the Middle East into a bloody war. In a single night British and US planes dropped explosives more powerful than the atom bomb at Hiroshima. Now a million soldiers will have to endure the biggest land battle since 1945—and for what?

Bush and Major say this is a war to "Free Kuwait". They say thousands must die to defend the right of small nations against aggression. But they did not lift a finger when Indonesia invaded East Timor, killing tens of thousands. They have done nothing about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank for over twenty years. And in Panama and Grenada it was the US Army itself which violated the rights of its weak and dependent neighbours.

They say it is a war to defend democracy. Let's hope no-one has told the Saudi and Kuwaiti princes or their Syrian, Iranian and Turkish allies! In every one of these countries fighting to defend democracy is a crime punishable by prison or death. In Israel this war to "defend democracy" has meant a 24-hour curfew for one and a half million Palestinians. Having denied the Palestinians gas masks, the Israeli state now denies them the right to leave their

2 Workers Power

homes to get food and water.

When the war is over the allies will make peace with Saddam or some other Iraqi dictator, trampling on the democratic rights of the Palestinians, the Kurds and the Iraqi workers.

Whenever the imperialists are asked to explain their double standards, their hypocrisy and their change of heart towards Saddam (the man they once praised for standing up to Iran's Khomeini) they reply that now, with the world "united", it is time to establish a new order. Whatever the "mistakes" of the past, they say, we have to draw the line against aggression now, in the Saudi desert. There is not a shred of honesty in this argument.

If it is a war to restore peace and stability to the Middle East why are Major and Bush laying their plans now for a network of military bases in the Middle East after the destruction of Iraq? They know that the war's legacy will be years of conflict and instability. To keep the peace once the present fragile coalition of Arab rulers collapses, Britain, France and the USA will have to maintain a permanent military presence. They will have to arm friendly dictators to the teeth.

The real war aim of the western powers is to ensure the continued exploitation of the workers of the Middle East, the continued subservience of every local ruler to the imperialist armies and oil companies. It is being fought to ensure that a region rich in the world's most precious commodity remains poor, underdeveloped and dependent on imperialist handouts.

This is a war against the democratic rights of the workers and peasants of the Middle East. It is a war against the right of self-determination for nations like the Palestinians and the Kurds.

That is why the workers of the entire world have to unite in action to stop it.

Already millions have taken to the streets in Europe, in North Africa, and the USA. There have been spontaneous strikes, school boycotts and mass demonstrations from Italy to Islamabad.

But the response of the British workers' movement has been pathetic. The Labour Party's support for the war, its opposition even to a pause in the bombing, shows it is a bosses' party. It is no more committed to peace and democracy than Major or Thatcher, but dutifully pushes their ideas in the ranks of the working class.

In the unions leaders, from far right to so-called "broad left", have applauded the munitions workers doing overtime for the war effort.

It will be left to the ordinary workers and youth to stop the attack on Iraq.

Now the war has started it is no use pleading with our rulers to see reason. We have to talk to our them in the language the whole

Stop the war against Iraq! 3

world is now speaking: the language of force.

In every town the anti-war committees should turn to the task of building strike action against the war with Iraq; to get the troops out, to stop the internment of Arabs and the racist harassment of Muslims.

We should boycott all war work and break the sanctions by sending unconditional aid to the Iraqis on the receiving end of the bombs and missiles.

The warmongers, from the right wing press to the Labour leaders, will scream and shout about treason. They will point the finger and ask: "which side are you on?"

For workers and youth there can be only one answer. To avoid being traitors to our class we will support Iraq, unconditionally, until it defeats imperialism. Of course Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. We said it long ago when the US and British rulers were arming him to the teeth. We want to see Saddam overthrown. But by the Iraqi workers and poor peasants, not by the armies of imperialism.

Today a victory for imperialism will set back the struggle against tyranny and oppression. It will create the conditions for decades of exploitation and oppression of Iraq by the victorious imperialists. That is why, in this war, the main enemy of the Iraqi people is not Saddam Hussein. It is imperialism.

Workers and youth in Britain must join with the millions of Arab workers and peasants who suffer torment at the hands of imperialism every day in support for: victory to Iraq against the imperialist alliance!■



Which side are you on?

Most workers and youth will react with horror to the Marxist position; that they should actively *support* Iraq in the war now raging.

How can you defend Iraq when Saddam is a brutal right wing dictator? What about Kuwait—don't small countries deserve protection from expansionist bullies? How can you support the enemy against "our boys"? And what about the terrorist attacks? These are the questions which are thrown again and again at revolutionary socialists during this war.

Though many people hate the death and destruction caused by the war in the Gulf they believe in the end there is no other option. Our class is not spontaneously pacifist like the middle class liberals who run CND. If there is injustice and oppression workers will sanction the use of force to put it right where all else fails.

Revolutionary Marxists are not pacifists either. We believe that most of the injustice and oppression in the world can only be put right through necessarily violent struggle. And that struggle includes the fight against Saddam's oppression of the Kurds, his brutal dictatorship over the Iraqi workers, his annexation of Kuwait.

But there is an even bigger force for oppression and injustice in the Middle East: the USA, Britain and France who today are busy strengthening their armies to reinforce the system of injustice called imperialism. Imperialism is the cause of Kurdish oppression, the cause of the lack of democracy in every Middle Eastern state.

Stop the war against Iraq! 5

A victory for the imperialist armies may cheapen the price of the petrol in your car. But it will put your boss and the bosses' politicians in an even better position to attack you: your wages, your services, your democratic rights.

Whilst the war is on they will call for workers to declare truce in the class struggle, and particularly in the war-related industries—the shipyards, the weapons' factories and the merchant navy. But the bosses will not stop the class offensive. They won't suspend the Poll Tax, the NHS cuts, the drive to keep wages below inflation. They will seize the chance to attack the working class with both hands.

A victory for the imperialist armies may kick the Iraqi army out of Kuwait and topple Saddam Hussein. But what will they replace him with? An unelected monarchy in Kuwait and another unelected colonel or dictator in Iraq, this time more trustworthy than their former friend and ally.

And it will leave the USA with a permanent base in the region—a pro-imperialist alliance and a string of military installations poised to crush any popular revolt the moment it starts.

But a victory for Iraq will utterly disorganise the imperialists, including the British bosses. It will signal to the workers and peasants, not just in the Gulf but throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, that the world's biggest bully, the USA, can be beaten. It will signal to the starving in every continent that the imperialist system which causes hunger, poverty and disease need not be tolerated in silence.

That is why genuine internationalist workers must side with Iraq, despite its reactionary government. There is no need to parade with posters of the smiling Iraqi dictator, or to give his government one iota of political support to be on the right side in the war. The British workers' movement is the only force in this country which has fought consistently for solidarity with the Kurds, for solidarity with the Iraqi workers against Saddam whilst his generals and torturers were feted in the consulates of Europe.

The Tories call the organised working class "the enemy within". After Thatcher smashed Gaiteri in the Malvinas War of 1982 she turned to smashing the miners, the printers and seafarers. If Major succeeds in crushing Iraq he will turn round and crush resistance to the Poll Tax, low pay and rising unemployment.

Does this mean we want to see British soldiers and civilians killed? No one wants that. But British soldiers, sailors and airmen are raining death onto Iraqi roads and cities. They are acting as the paid mercenaries of imperialism. The best way to save their lives is to get them out of the Gulf.

6 Workers Power

As for the terrorist attacks it is the height of hypocrisy for Bush and Major to condemn them. They have ordered the bombing of cities regardless of the lives of civilians. Their "special forces" are carrying out terror missions behind Iraqi lines. In modern warfare, one general said, a terrorist is somebody who owns a bomb but not an airforce. The truth is that if Britain is on the winning side in this war it will be the target for terrorist attacks and hostage taking for years to come: because the victors in the Gulf war will have to instigate a reign of terror against the peoples of the Middle East.

This war was started by governments, but it does not have to end as a war between governments. Our aim is to turn it into a war between classes; in the Middle East and in the imperialist countries themselves. Those who share this aim have to start by deciding which side they are on in this war. It has to be the side of those fighting against imperialism at present. That is why we are for Iraq's victory and Britain's defeat. ■



Fighting to free Kuwait?

Marin Fitzwater, Bush's spokesman, told the world that, with the attack on Baghdad, "the liberation of Kuwait has begun". This is the democratic gloss the imperialists are using to cover up their real war aims.

Major and Hurd tell us that when Saddam has been beaten, the "rightful rulers" of Kuwait will be restored to power. Every soldier being asked to die to "liberate" Kuwait and every worker being asked to support them has a right to know who these "rightful rulers" are. The Emir of Kuwait, a member of the al-Sabah family, is the answer.

The Emir and his family are feudal despots. Under their rule political parties were banned and their members imprisoned. Out of a population of two million, only 60,000 people were allowed to vote. At the last elections this amounted to 3% of the male population. Women had no vote at all.

The really die-hard imperialist supporter will doubtless cite the very fact that there were elections as evidence of why Kuwait is worth being killed or maimed for. Well, the reason elections amongst a handful of voters were allowed in the years since independence from Britain is that the al-Sabah family had a

8 Workers Power

guaranteed majority. These elections were no more democratic than the ones Saddam Hussein stages for his national assembly.

In 1985 opposition MPs were elected. They tried to question a government minister and to investigate a financial scandal. The parliament was dissolved by the Emir in 1986 in response to this. From then on the Emir ruled by decree.

For the mass of the Kuwaiti population there were never even sham democratic rights. Foreign workers had absolutely no rights at all, social or political. Since 80% of the working class were foreign, this was a system blatantly rigged in favour of the rich, or in the case of the 1000-strong al-Sabah family, the super-rich.

The USA, Britain and France are intervening to protect this ruling millionaire clique because it is through them that they have been able to exercise their own rule since Kuwait was carved out of the desert after World War One.

After that war Britain and France dominated the region to secure trade routes and the military defence of their eastern colonies. The discovery of oil and the dominance of the USA after 1945 only intensified imperialism's interest in the region. The "independence" of Kuwait, granted in 1961, was a farce. The al-Sabahs continued to rule as imperialism's puppets, and well paid puppets at that.

This explains why the imperialist powers never raised a murmur of protest against the undemocratic practices of the Emir or the complete lack of rights granted to the 300,000 Palestinian workers and 500,000 Asians in Kuwait.

The deep sympathy expressed by Bush and Major for the dispossessed former ruling elite contrasts with the utter lack of support that imperialism has shown for the thousands of foreign workers now languishing in camps on the Jordanian/Iraqi border. As always, the immigrant workers are the heaviest losers.

Despite all this, say the imperialists, Kuwait is the poor little victim of aggression. The Kuwaiti nation has been "raped", as Bush puts it, and its right to self-determination needs to be re-established. While the mass of people who live and work in Kuwait should have the right to determine their own future, Kuwait itself is not in any meaningful sense a nation.

The state itself was created by the British High Commissioner in Iraq in 1922 with a stroke of the pen. It did not exist as a separate territory before then. Kuwait has no special customs, culture or traditions of its own that are associated with nations, and of course there was no significant Kuwaiti working class. The majority of the Kuwaiti population were classified as aliens, foreign workers who were denied rights of citizenship.

Stop the war against Iraq! 9

The idea that imperialism is bombing hell out of Iraq in order to defend the Kuwaiti nation is a smokescreen thrown up, like all the other lies, to prevent us from seeing what the imperialists' real aims and interests are.

Workers Power opposed Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. We do not now call for Iraq to get out as this would lead to an immediate US and British occupation. It would strengthen imperialist control of the area even further. It would enable them to secure their total control of the oil supplies on behalf of Texaco, Exxon and Shell, and to put their reliable dictators back on the throne.

The battle that began on 16 January was not for "the liberation of Kuwait" but for the reconstruction of an imperialist enclave. ■



Israel: an innocent bystander?

The Scud missile attacks on Tel Aviv met with jubilation from Palestinians and were cheered throughout the Arab world. Why? Israel has earned the hatred and contempt of the Arab masses. Since its foundation in 1948 it has conducted systematic terror against the Palestinian inhabitants of the region.

When British rule ended in May 1948, Arabs constituted the majority of the population of Palestine. The Zionists (those Jews supporting the establishment of a specifically Jewish state in Palestine) conducted armed attacks on Arab areas such as Jaffa. Over 250 Arab civilians were slaughtered in cold blood at Deir Yassin. News of the atrocities was deliberately broadcast to Arab areas by the Zionists, creating widespread terror and a mass flight away from the conquering army.

By the end of what the Zionists call "The War of Independence" and the Palestinians call the *Nakba* (the catastrophe) 750,000 Palestinians had been driven from their land and were condemned to live in the squalor of refugee camps in neighbouring Arab states.

In 1948 alone, one million acres of land held by Arabs were confiscated. Peasant farmers whose families had tilled the soil for generations were obliged, under Israeli law, to prove that they had

Stop the war against Iraq 11

not left their farms during the period of the most fierce fighting! If they couldn't prove it, they lost their land.

Today Israel practices thoroughgoing discrimination against Arabs in employment. They are banned from certain work and are concentrated in the worst jobs in construction and services. Their standard of living is, on average, 40% lower than that of Jewish workers. In housing discrimination is no less intense. The towns of Karmel and Upper Nazareth in the Galilee are examples of this. They were built by Arabs on Arab land. No Arab may live there.

In 1967 and 1973 Israel occupied even more territory. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under the direct rule of the Israeli government, but are not part of Israel. The Arab majority has no democratic rights and is today living under a 24 hour curfew, just another of the vicious repressive measures that have been meted out against any sign of Palestinian resistance.

Few will forget the horrors of Israel's repeated acts of aggression against the Lebanese people. The hypocritical outrage expressed by the British and US governments at the "indiscriminate bombing" carried out by Iraq was totally absent when the Israeli airforce killed or maimed nearly 50,000 civilians in Beirut in 1982. Most appalling of all were the events at Sabra and Shatila. Right wing Christian extremists were sent into two Palestinian refugee camps, having been allowed to pass, fully armed, by the Israeli army. The Israeli army lit the area with flares allowing the slaughter of over 2,000 inhabitants in one night.

That is why Arabs despise the Zionist state. It is why the Palestinians now hope that Saddam will crush Israel.

Many will agree that the history of Israel is one of brutal repression and racism. But many are confused by the insistence of millions of Arab workers and peasants that the Israeli state has no right to exist at all. Is this just another form of racism, denying to Israeli Jews the very right to self-determination that the Palestinians are fighting for?

To all who believe that Israel should simply be reformed and who support its right to exist and to defend itself, we pose a simple question: could there ever be a specifically Jewish state in Palestine that did not discriminate against the Palestinians?

One answer often put forward is simply to grant more democratic rights to the Palestinians. But the discrimination that presently exists is fundamental to Israel's whole identity and survival as a state. One example of this is the "Law of Return".

This notorious racist law allows any Jew, wherever they come from, to become an Israeli citizen the minute they set foot on Israeli soil. This contrasts dramatically with Israel's refusal to grant rights

12 Workers Power

of return to the families of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians languishing in refugee camps. The oft repeated claim that "Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East" rings hollow when the absence of such rights for Arabs in the occupied territories is borne in mind.

The point is that, to be a specifically Jewish state, Israel must preserve a majority of Jews over Arabs as full voting citizens. That is why millions are physically and politically excluded from their rights.

That is why the Zionists are so keen to set up "settlements" in the West Bank to increase the level of the Jewish population. And that is why even mainstream Israeli politicians are openly considering the mass expulsion, or "transfer" of Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories.

The extension of full democratic rights to the Palestinians, including the right of return, would undermine the whole Zionist project. That is why their state will not allow this for as long as it is in existence.

One other proposal is the so-called "two-state" solution. But the creation of a weak, disarmed and economically dependent Arab state in the least fertile parts of Palestine would be no answer. Who would determine the borders? Would Arabs be forced to live there? What about the rights of Palestinians still trapped within Israel? The two-state solution is unable to answer these questions.

That is why we join with millions of Arabs and anti-imperialists around the globe in saying that Israel has no right to exist. Socialists take no pleasure in the deaths of civilians whether in Beirut, Gaza or Tel Aviv. Still less do we harbour illusions that Saddam Hussein has the interests of the Palestinians at heart.

But the fundamentally racist character of the Zionist state and its role as a watchdog for US imperialism mean that we oppose all defence of Israel. In times of war we stand with the exploited and backward semi-colonial Arab states against them.

Any fight for equal rights, regardless of religion, race or nationality, requires the destruction of the Zionist state. Palestinian workers and peasants must continue their heroic battle against that state, alongside Iraqi forces but completely independent of political control from Baghdad.

A socialist republic of Palestine cannot be brought about by missiles from afar. It can only come via workers' revolution, within and outside the Israeli state, and the fight for a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. ■

What is imperialism?

The Gulf war is just the latest of the imperialist wars that have killed 100 million people this century. For Marxists the word imperialism has a particular meaning. It doesn't just mean one country conquering another. It means the modern system of exploitation and oppression by which a few rich and developed nations keep the rest of the world in poverty and underdevelopment.

At the start of this century the world was divided between oppressed and oppressor states. On the one side lay a handful of big imperialist powers. On the other side lay the colonies, forcibly seized by the imperialists during the preceding centuries and subject to direct rule and shameless plunder.

States such as Britain and France had developed huge industrial and banking sectors. In their quest for profits and raw materials they were impelled to strike out abroad into relatively underdeveloped capitalist and semi-feudal parts of the globe. By force of arms, by a policy of divide and rule, the governments of these rich nations divided up most of the world between them, securing stable and protected markets for goods and capital investments and a source of cheap labour.

The imperialists introduced capitalist relations of production into the colonial world, but in an uneven and distorted way.

The club of great powers had developed a variety of enterprises embracing everything from light to heavy industry, from consumer goods to machine goods. But the oppressed countries had their

14 Workers Power

industrial development subordinated to the needs and rhythms of the imperialist countries within a growing world economy and international division of labour.

Any indigenous small capitalism was destroyed, as in India, by cheap imports. Often countries with a particularly valuable raw material (oil, coffee, rubber etc) would be deliberately confined to producing this and at best a few related industries.

Moreover the profits accrued from its extraction or production would mainly benefit the imperialist companies and only secondarily a small layer of the local ruling class.

There is a noticeable hierarchy of Imperialist and imperialised countries. But over the last one hundred years the league table of imperialist powers has changed markedly.

Founder members such as Britain have seen themselves drop from the top of the table to half-way down the first division, while others like Japan have shot up from a lowly position. Others like Germany have gone from top to bottom and back again.

But whether we are dealing with the USA, Denmark, Japan or South Africa, despite all their many differences they share the fundamental features of imperialist powers: they are world leaders in important sectors of industry or finance; the export of capital predominates over the export of commodities; on balance their bosses extract a considerable surplus from the Third World through the operation of their multinational companies and through loans—and these outweigh their liabilities.

Today, as in 1916 when Lenin wrote his study of "Imperialism", we can still speak of the imperialist powers as centres of monopoly finance capital; robber states vying with each other for advantage in the exploitation of the non-imperialist world.

The oppressed nations too have varied in their pace and level of development. But in addition to this, since the Second World War, they have undergone a fundamental change in their relationship with the imperialist powers.

Britain and France fought World War Two to defend their old colonial empires; Germany and Japan to carve out new ones. But the USA fought and won the war in order to abolish the old order of protected colonial empires. It established military and political supremacy and, on the basis of this, a world market for its goods. It forced its allies and enemies alike to divest themselves of most of their colonial possessions. From Africa and the Middle East to South East Asia an era of "independence" dawned for the former colonies.

Did this mean they had escaped subjugation to imperialism? No. The system of colonial exploitation was replaced by a system of

semi-colonies.

There had always been countries which escaped direct colonisation by imperialism, mainly due to the balance of forces between imperialist powers competing to dominate a region. China, Argentina and Iran were cited by Lenin as examples of "semi-colonies": "politically and formally independent but in fact . . . enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence".

Lenin viewed these as "transitional" forms, which would inevitably be colonised as inter-imperialist rivalry intensified. In fact several of the semi-colonial countries did come under more direct imperialist domination during the inter-war years.

But the post-war order erected by US imperialism required that the semi-colonial exception became the norm. Imperialist finance capital was able to control the independent Third World countries, assisted by what Lenin called "its friend diplomacy"; the constant implied threat of imperialist intervention and the covert operations of the Imperialist military and intelligence forces.

Few who claim to be Leninists would today deny that such backwaters of poverty and underdevelopment as Bangladesh or Bolivia constitute classic semi-colonies in the Leninist sense. But it is the emergence of developed and industrialised semi-colonies like Argentina or Iraq, and their resultant military ambitions and adventures, which has led many to call into question the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations.

For some groups the emergence of this new type of capitalist state calls into question the whole analysis of the structure of imperialist exploitation outlined by Lenin. It also conveniently eradicates the need for revolutionaries to support such countries in military conflicts with imperialism.

They argue that the ability of states like Argentina and Iraq to mount military adventures in their region against imperialism is paramount in defining them as something other than semi-colonies.

The truth is otherwise. The crisis of the Iraqi state does not stem from its "proto" or "sub" imperialist ambition flowing from some internal logic of its economic development.

Rather it stems directly from Iraq's failure—despite its immense oil wealth in the 1970s—to escape from the semi-colonial strictures imposed on its economy by the club of world imperialist governments, banks and multinationals. The next chapter explains in detail how and why imperialism oppresses Iraq. ■

Iraq: still a semi-colony

Iraq's early capitalist economy was dominated by the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). Established in 1928 it included five of the eight western companies that were to become the Seven Sisters of the post-war period and which between them dominated world oil production and distribution. BP and Shell controlled nearly 50% of the company between them. The concessions to explore Iraqi territory were prised out of the pliant Iraqi royal family as the price for political independence. By the end of the 1930s the whole territory of the country was divided up into oil concessions to the big US and British companies.

There was supposed to be provision for Iraqi nationals to buy into the IPC but this was effectively blocked. During the whole period of the rule of the IPC over Iraq the multi-nationals controlled the evolution and development of the country in their interests. They restricted the amount of revenue that was deducted from the oil profits of the IPC. Up to 1952 the government gained only \$1.75 per tonne sold before negotiating increases of first \$5.50 a tonne and then 50% of all profits.

Whilst this improved the hand of the Iraqi government the IPC still held most of the cards. The most obvious and lasting control over the exploitation of oil came in the form of the declaration of profits on which government revenue was based. The IPC had it in its power to sell the oil to its "customers" abroad (in reality another branch of the same network) at a superficially low price, often below the

prevailing world market price. This ensured the official profits which Iraq took a share of, were low. Profits would be added back on after the refining and retailing stages to reflect costs of production.

Up to this stage it is clear that despite its independence Iraq was a classic semi-colony. All the major decisions about its economy were under the control of the major benefactors of that economy; the imperialist oil companies.

Compared to the pre-war situation when oil output from Iraq was small, the booming 1950s demanded more and more. This put revenues at the state's disposal for some measure of industrial development, raising the possibility of a gradual diversification of the Iraqi economy and the promise of an eventual break with its semi-colonial condition.

When Colonel Quasim led a bourgeois nationalist revolution against the royal family in 1958 he declared:

"We are fighting for the industrialisation of our republic and the ending of our dependence on the sale of crude oil."

But the class structure of Iraqi society—one nurtured and protected by imperialism—stood in the way. The overwhelming bulk of the profits from oil that stayed in Iraq went directly to the tribal landlords and was invested in trade and land rather than industry. The small amount of manufacturing was confined to food, drink and textiles, purely for the home market. The most significant change to the economic structure of Iraq in the 1960s was felt in agrarian relations, with land reform going some way to creating better conditions for capital accumulation and breaking the hold of feudal classes.

In the 1960s, as global oil production increased in line with the long boom the IPC kept the production of oil from the Iraqi fields well below potential capacity, preferring to maximise output elsewhere. Iraq's income was dependent on increasing the volume of production but this was outside of its control. This is a perfect illustration of the way in which the semi-colonial system of exploitation works; Iraq's overall pace and direction of economic development was kept within the limits and at a tempo of imperialism's choosing.

Matters changed considerably after the bourgeois nationalist Ba'athist revolution finally triumphed in 1968. But how much? Between 1972 and 1975 the Iraqi government nationalised the holdings of the IPC entirely, after negotiating compensation. These years coincided with the first oil price rises of OPEC. Taken together this improved the financial situation of the Iraq government at a stroke. Oil revenue in 1972 was about \$1 billion. On the eve of war with Iran in 1980 it was to register \$26 billion a year and rising. But how were these revenues used?

18 Workers Power

Manufacturing certainly increased during the 1970s; it grew at about 1.1% per annum although the huge explosion in oil revenues meant that, as a proportion of national income, manufacturing stayed the same or declined. Investments in industry, controlled by the state banking sector, did allow for the development of a new layer of the Iraqi capitalist class—primarily one involved in contracting for services in trade and construction.

It was the state itself which undertook the largest volume of investments; in heavy industry and high technology. Between 1969 and 1979 there was an 80% increase in state owned industrial establishments. But the pattern of these investments only underscored Iraq's dependence upon oil and imperialism.

Many who reject the notion of Iraq as a semi-colony place great emphasis upon the creation of an Iraqi economy that is highly statified, highly monopolised—controlled and owned by an Iraqi ruling class.

There are two points to be made about this. First, the tendency towards state ownership and monopolisation of the economy is not itself evidence that Iraq is imperialist or even "proto-imperialist". Wherever capitalism lays down its roots the tendency for the centralisation and concentration of capital occurs. In semi-colonies many states inheriting a weak or non-existent bourgeoisie have to resort to the use of the state as a forcing house for the accumulation of capital. In itself it is evidence of the weakness so typical of semi-colonial countries.

Secondly, the existence of an economy relatively free of penetration by imperialist multinational capital does not prove that its economy has broken free of semi-colonial subordination. There are many ways in which imperialist capital can subordinate the development of a nominally independent economy to its own designs.

In the 1970s, far from breaking free of its dependence upon oil as a result of acquiring great financial wealth, we can see that Iraq increased its dependence on this one commodity with dramatic consequences.

Over half of the investments in this decade went into oil exploration or increasing productivity in the oil industry. Other investments went into the associated industries of chemicals and petrochemicals. Most of these depend upon exporting their products in order to be viable but their costs of production are reckoned to be at least 50% to 75% higher than those produced in the west. Consequently these industries, far from making an export surplus, are *subsidised* by the oil revenues.

Nor did Iraq make much progress with refining its own crude oil which would have considerably increased the value of its exports.

By 1988 of the 2.8 million barrels a day (b/d) of crude oil that Iraq extracts from the ground only 400,000 b/d are refined inside the country—a figure barely above what is consumed in Iraq itself.

It is also in the nature of oil industries that they do not lead to a related development in infrastructure: transport, communications etc. All one needs is developed ports and pipeline facilities. But these in themselves do not aid the rounded development of other industries. It was only in the plans drawn up for the 1980s that a modern motorway and railway system were envisaged; plans that were aborted by the Gulf war.

Overwhelming reliance upon one commodity, even one as profitable as oil has been to Iraq, always carries the danger of major problems if the price does not hold up. From a 1981 high of \$36.90 a barrel the price of oil plummeted in 1986 to around \$14 before recovering to around \$18. Iraq could not compensate for this halving of the price because it had failed to develop a broader economic base.

The industrial development that did take place, narrow as it was, was crippling dependent upon imperialist multinational companies. After 1973 Iraq imported \$2 billion worth of capital goods which amounted to more than twice the value of its entire manufacturing sector. Consultant and service fees paid to imperialist companies are more than twice the value of Iraq's non-oil exports and ten times more than is spent on local research and development.

Over half of investments went on "turnkey projects", that is, huge heavy industrial complexes which depend upon foreign companies for the initial investigation, design, procurement, installation and servicing. On 28 February 1990 the latest turnkey plant in Basra was opened after completion by Snamprogetti of Italy. Foreign specialist labour is used preventing Iraqi workers and managers from acquiring skills jealously guarded by the imperialists.

Of course it is true to point out that all economies today are interdependent upon one another. But here we are talking about a situation in which the majority of investments in the industrial spheres of the economy are dependent upon imperialist capital. This means a considerable amount of the surplus finds its way back to the multi-national companies and guarantees that the main levers of control lie out of the hands of the Iraqi ruling class itself.

The economic consequences of the Gulf war with Iran after 1980 were disastrous. Not only were industrial development plans abandoned and large swathes of existing manufacturing destroyed by Iran. Iraq was transformed from a country with considerable foreign currency reserves and negligible debt into one, at the end of the decade, with \$30 billion worth of debt and a mere \$1 billion

20 Workers Power

of reserves. The debt servicing and thereby entails more of the wealth generated within Iraq being siphoned off abroad, restricting the development of the economy within strict limits. In order to reconstruct its economy since the end of the war Iraq has had to reverse its post-1975 policy of not allowing non-Iraqi capital to explore and develop the oil fields. In February 1990 Iraq invited foreign capital to help explore a new field with a potential of 200,000 b/d.

On the eve of the invasion of Kuwait, then, Iraq was as far away as ever from breaking its chains of semi-colonial subservience to imperialism.

It has no significant capital investments abroad that could betoken its proto-imperialist nature. It has failed to diversify its industrial base and is possessed of a commodity which accounts for nine-tenths of all its foreign earnings, three-quarters of its GDP, yet whose real value today, barrel for barrel, is less than it was in 1970-71.

It is these economic facts and the social crisis they have generated that lie behind the present military adventurism of the Iraqi ruling elite. There is nothing proto-imperialist about Iraq's economy driving it to conquer the small countries of the Middle East. The traditional role of conquest for imperialist powers is to carve out protected markets for their capital and goods. Iraq's goal in annexing Kuwait is a million miles removed from this. It is first and foremost to prevent Kuwait depressing the price of oil.

Of course those who see military aggression as simple proof that a state is imperialist will not be satisfied by, or even bothered about, an analysis of Iraq's economy and its place in the world system of imperialism. But for anyone interested in understanding Iraq from the point of view of Marxism, understanding its economy is vital.

Even if Iraq is led by "an organisation of the bourgeoisie committed to making Iraq a great regional power by developing capitalism in the style of Bismarckian Germany" (*The Leninist*) an understanding of its semi-colonial economic position shows why this will remain a utopia for the Ba'athists.

Unlike nineteenth century Germany, Iraq exists in a world already divided between big imperialists. Whatever the grotesque parasitism, nepotism and economic blunderings of the Ba'athist regime that have aggravated the condition, the fact remains that Iraq began its path to independent development too late, long after the world had been carved up by the big powers, long after they had loaded the dice in their favour.

To launch a thoroughgoing and balanced industrialisation and development of Iraq would require not just a temporary military

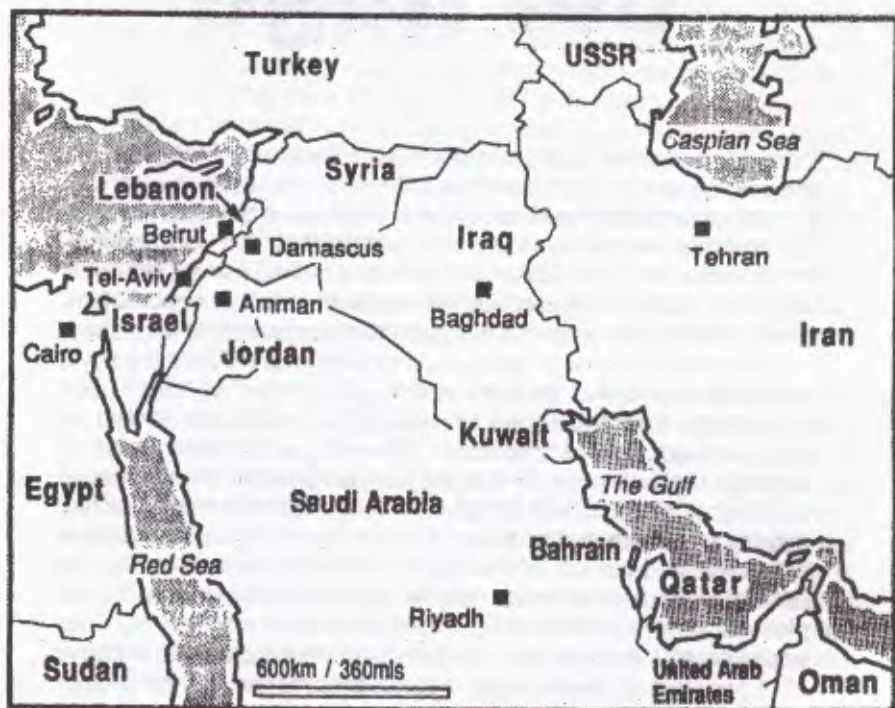
Stop the war against Iraq! 21

victory over Kuwait, Israel or the USA. It would require the chains of debt, of oil dependence and of imperialist diplomacy to be broken.

That is why no section of the Iraqi bourgeoisie can lead Iraq out of semi-colonial subservience. Fundamentally its class interests lie with the imperialist system, despite its anti-imperialist rhetoric. Iraq is incapable of achieving the stage of "medium capitalist development", sub-imperialism, or proto-imperialism some claim it has achieved under the Iraqi bourgeoisie.

The basic tenets of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution apply to Iraq today just as they applied to the "classic" colonial and semi-colonial revolutions of the 1920s and 30s.

Only the working class and poor peasants, whose interests are implacably opposed to imperialism, can lead Iraq out of semi-colonial servitude. To do that they will have to defeat not only the imperialists but Saddam himself. The anti-imperialist revolution in Iraq, as in the rest of the Third World, will triumph as a workers' revolution or not at all. ■



Kinnock backs the carnage

From day one of the Gulf crisis the Labour leadership pledged itself to serve US and British imperialism. When the shooting started Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufman fell over each other trying to get onto the nation's television screens to explain their full and unconditional support for the US, British and other allied forces, bombing Baghdad. As in every previous war waged by British imperialism, Labour is now acting as the loyal recruiting sergeant for the bosses.

On the eve of the war, concerned by divisions within the party's parliamentary ranks, Kinnock and Kaufman tried to distinguish themselves from the Tories by arguing that sanctions should be given a longer time to take effect. Many on the left welcomed this as a sign that Labour really was the party of "peace", the alternative to Britain's historic "war party", the Tories. Such a rosy view had nothing to do with reality. Kinnock, in his argument for "the patient and prolonged pursuit of sanctions", came across as one of the House of Commons' most warlike speakers. Sanctions, he explained, were a means of tightening the noose around Iraq. They would break Iraqi morale, run down Iraqi military supplies, starve Iraqi people and, by all these means, prepare the way for a quick

war with few allied casualties. He insisted:

"Part of the reason for arguing for the longest possible use of sanctions, and it is in no sense a concession to Saddam Hussein or appeasement, is to try to ensure the killing rate is as low as possible".

This demonstrates, with chilling clarity, that for the Labour leadership sanctions are not an alternative to war but merely a means of keeping the "killing rate" in the inevitable war low. Kinnock was expressing a minor tactical disagreement with the Tories on how best to wage imperialist war. He was in no sense opposed to the strategic goal of imperialism—getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait by force of arms. This is the plain truth that many on the left of the Labour Party failed to face up to. To put it bluntly, the left cannot face up to the fact that their party is, and always has been, a warmongering party where British imperialism's vital interests are at stake.

Sure enough, the very day the shooting started Kinnock made clear that the allied offensive had the unequivocal backing of the Labour leadership. There was no question of this support being "given from a corner", he said, because:

"There can be absolutely no doubt about the legitimacy of military action against the Iraqi dictator. [The British troops] are doing their duty bravely; it is our duty to see we give them our backing firmly."

Firm backing from Kinnock did not only mean rushing down to donate his blood and speaking to bodies like the Royal United Services Institute. It also means silencing dissent in the Labour Party. An attempt by Tony Benn to move an anti-war amendment to a government resolution backing the war was prevented from being taken in the "democratic" House of Commons by a conspiracy between the two main parties' leaderships and the Speaker. Labour front bench spokespeople who are opposed to the war have been sacked or forced to resign. Debate on the issue in the party is being clamped down on.

As far as the war is concerned Labour is working alongside the Tories in what the left MP, Jeremy Corbyn described as "a coalition parliament". Labour's only real difference with the Tories now is whether or not the peace settlement will go far enough in destroying Saddam Hussein's power. As Labour's foreign affairs spokesman, Kaufman, puts it, the world must deal "determinedly with the regional imbalance which brought about the Iraqi invasion". This is the undisguised language of an imperialist. Labour aims to foist a more suitable balance of power on a region that they want to see dominated by the imperialist powers. It is typical of Labour's entire record on war and peace.

24 Workers Power

In 1914, despite the pacifist protestations of some of its leaders, Labour pledged its support to Britain's rulers. In 1939 it provided the backbone of Churchill's war cabinet. Through Korea and Suez in the 1950s, through every war of liberation waged against the British empire, including Ireland today, through the Malvinas war of 1982, right up to today, Labour acted in collaboration with the Tories to ensure the smooth running of the imperialist slaughter machine. Even when Britain wasn't directly involved in an imperialist war, as with Vietnam, Labour pledged its support to the US oppressors.

It is a valuable asset for the bosses to have a party that hypocritically preaches the values of peace to the working class while hoodwinking workers into supporting war. Labour, as the party of "peace", is ideally placed to explain to the working class that every time there is a war imperialism is justified and has right on its side. The war might be to defend the sovereignty of the "fatherland", to defend "democracy", to "oppose dictatorship", to combat "terrorism" or to "defend the weak". In every case Labour supplies imperialism with the political camouflage it needs to maintain working class support for its pursuit of plunder through violence.

In today's war Labour has ensured, through its grovelling support for the Tories, that Britain's anti-war movement is one of the smallest in the world. It has duped thousands of workers—who at the beginning of the crisis were rightly suspicious that this war would be about oil and imperialist domination of the Gulf—into believing that the allied attack on Iraq is just. Labour will always follow this course, for it is a bosses' party, an imperialist party. ■

Labour left — no alternative

Surely the campaign by sections of Labour's left against the war disproves our charge that it is an imperialist party, many Labour supporters will ask. The argument runs that they represent a real alternative that Labour could be forced to adopt. The small number of those prepared to vote against the government once the shooting

started reveals the inability of the left to change things in the Labour Party. But more importantly, the alternative they offer—sanctions not war—is a "soft option" for imperialism that can be squared with their genuine pacifist distaste for war. It can be so easily shot down by Kinnock and the Tories because it is not a consistent alternative, not an independent working class alternative.

Tony Benn is the principal spokesman for the left on the war. At the core of Benn's strategy is reliance on the United Nations (UN) as an agency for world peace. He wrongly believes that an organisation fashioned by US imperialism and always subservient to its fundamental needs can act as a neutral arbiter. But the UN has never stopped a war. Its peacekeeping forces, on the rare occasions that they have had any effect on events, have kept the peace on behalf of imperialism. In 1982 in Lebanon, for example, the UN peacekeeping force went in after Israel had ravaged the country, forcibly expelled the PLO and unleashed terror gangs against the Palestinian refugee camps. Imperialism's agent had got its way before the UN forces were allowed in.

More importantly the Security Council of the UN, as the present crisis shows, is not any sort of arbitration body. It is a council of war made up of five member states, France, Britain, the USA, the USSR and China, each with a veto. In other words the three most important imperialist military powers and the two most important degenerate workers' states control this council.

At the outset of the Gulf crisis Benn was content to let the Security Council take the lead in restraining the USA's bellicosity. This reflected his long standing belief that the USSR and China were a force for world peace and could be counted upon to veto US plans. But Gorbachev has presented Bush with no major obstacles; all the Soviet leader has asked is that he get some aid and assistance for the USSR in return for his pro-imperialist stance. China, keen to re-establish its trading links with imperialism in the aftermath of Tiananmen Square is also behaving like an obliging guest at the big table.

Benn's reaction to this was to move the goal posts. Now it is the General Assembly, with its majority of third world states, that apparently represents the "essence" of the UN. But this body is absolutely without power and Benn also ignores that it too is stuffed with vile pro-imperialist, anti-working class repressive governments that can be bought off by imperialist bribes and bullying, especially when they take their place in turn as temporary members of the Security Council.

During the current crisis the UN has, unflinchingly, followed the orders of Washington. When Saddam invaded Kuwait the UN

26 Workers Power

imposed sanctions. This, as everybody including Benn knows, could only be successfully imposed if it was backed up by armed force. It is an initial act of war. Benn's response was, and remains, full support for this particular act of war. "The illegal occupation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein which the UN sanctions, which we all support, are designed to reverse" was his view of the crisis and its solution. He accepted that to make these sanctions work a naval task force should police the Gulf.

So long as the UN limited its displeasure with Iraq to the call for sanctions Benn's position was at least consistent. He was for an economic war, not an all-out military confrontation, under the auspices of the UN rather than the United States. He was able to castigate Hurd for suggesting that Britain could "wage such a war without going back to the Security Council". The flaw in his argument came when the Security Council was reconvened and voted for war.

The UN resolution said that "states co-operating with Kuwait" were empowered "to use all necessary means" to get Iraq out of Kuwait if Saddam had not pulled out by 15 January. In anyone's language this is an authorisation for war. The USA, as always, got its way in the UN. And now, despite the pathetic spectacle of UN Secretary-General, Perez de Cuellar, shaking his head in disbelief when the bombing started without anybody consulting him, Kaufman can plausibly state:

"British forces are fighting the Gulf war under the authority of UN Resolution 678, and in order to fulfil the conditions of 12 UN resolutions (660 to 678)."

And a victory for these forces will be due to the UN "asserting its authority, an authority which will have been enhanced as never before", Kaufman added. What he failed to observe was that this "authority" is courtesy of Bush and Schwarzkopf, not De Cuellar!

The middleheadedness and danger of Benn's reliance on the UN was revealed by his response to the UN's original vote for war. "The world peace movement has scored a notable victory", declared Tony Benn. It was wrong to believe that "the resolution carried by the Security Council provided a political authority for war." An agreed deadline for war was a "victory" for peace!

Underlying this barmy conclusion, disproved with a vengeance on 16 January, is Benn's belief that the UN stands for something different from the US. The UN merely wants Iraq out of Kuwait. The US wants military bases in the region, cheap oil and world domination. So, if Saddam withdraws from Kuwait he will help bolster the UN and block the USA.

The whole history of the UN proves that this perceived clash of

interests is non-existent. Korea saw the UN authorise US action. The systematic blocking of UN resolutions supporting the Palestinians against Israel is the work of the USA. And the UN stayed silent on US action in Vietnam, Grenada, Libya and Panama for the simple reason that the US wouldn't let it say anything, even if it had wanted to.

Benn, CND and the Stalinists of the *Morning Star*, pushed long term and extensive sanctions as the way forward as their alternative to war. As the UN deadline approached they claimed that sanctions, the economic war on Iraq, hadn't had time to work. Even now, as the bombs rain down on Iraq they carry banners calling for "Sanctions not war".

This line is as bankrupt as the left reformists' faith in the peaceful intentions of the UN. The use of sanctions is a form of coercion against Iraq. Their very use begs the question, what happens if they do not budge Saddam Hussein? As Tom King, the Tory Defence Minister put it, how long should Kuwait be asked to wait? If you accept that it is the job of imperialism, whether via the UN or not, to deal with Iraq, as the Labour left do, this is a pertinent question. And the answer ends up as exactly the same one given by Labour's Defence spokesman, Martin O'Neill:

"We have to persist with [sanctions]. They must be given a chance. But those of us who urge this course must recognise, at the end of the day, we may well have to use force."

This is the real logic of pursuing the sanctions option, the real logic of siding with imperialism's pre-war measures against Iraq. You end up supporting their actual war. Or at the very least you take up, as the Labour left have done, the call for a ceasefire, but on imperialism's terms and designed to achieve imperialism's war aims.

Workers have been led into imperialist carnage by Labour for too long. For too long we have had to suffer the effects of being misled by a party made up of the imperialist butchers' errand boys. In the current war neither the right nor the left offer an alternative to imperialism. Workers need a new party, one committed to the defence of international working class interests, one committed to the defeat of imperialism. In building the anti-war movement we need to forge that party. We need to recruit those disgusted by imperialist war to the revolutionary army of the class war—to a new revolutionary party. ■

workers power

Where we stand

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the documents of the first four congresses of the Third (Communist) International and on the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need.

Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party—bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but based on the working class via the trade unions and supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.

The misnamed Communist Parties are really Stalinist parties—reformist, like the Labour Party, but tied to the bureaucracy that rules in the USSR. Their strategy of alliances with the bourgeoisie (popular fronts) inflicts terrible defeats on the working class worldwide.

In the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states, Stalinist bureaucracies rule over the working class. Capitalism has ceased to exist but the workers do not hold political power. To open the road to socialism, a political revolution to smash bureaucratic tyranny is needed. Nevertheless we unconditionally defend these states

against the attacks of imperialism and against internal capitalist restoration in order to defend the post-capitalist property relations.

In the trade unions we fight for a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production.

We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class—factory committees, industrial unions and councils of action.

We fight against the oppression that capitalist society inflicts on people because of their race, age, sex, or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.

We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland. We politically oppose the nationalists (bourgeois and petit bourgeois) who lead the struggles of the oppressed nations. To their strategy we counterpose the strategy of permanent revolution, that is the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle by the working class with a programme of socialist revolution and internationalism.

In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of "our own" army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. The last revolutionary International (Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51.

The LRCI is pledged to fight the centrism of the degenerate fragments of the Fourth International and to refound a Leninist Trotskyist International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. We combine the struggle for a re-elaborated transitional programme with active involvement in the struggles of the working class—fighting for revolutionary leadership.

If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist—join us!

Become a supporter!

If you hate the war, if you hate the bosses and their system and you want to do something about it: become a Workers Power supporter.

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation fighting to build a revolutionary working class party.

We are communists because we want to see an end to poverty, unemployment, the misery and suffering caused by the profit system and the daily oppression of women, black people, youth, lesbians and gay men. We believe the working class can end all this by taking hold of the wealth and the technology of modern capitalism and using it to meet human need. The laser and computer technology being used in the Gulf today, together with the £100,000s wasted on each bomb, could be used to eradicate hunger, disease and homelessness.

We are internationalists. We do not regard the workers' of other countries as the "enemy". We believe they are our brothers and sisters. Our real enemy is the international capitalist system, which can be fought if we build international unity between workers of all countries. We are actively trying to do this by building an international organisation, the League for a Revolutionary Communist International.

We are revolutionaries because we don't think the big businessmen and the generals will simply sit back and let the workers peacefully take over society after a show of hands in Parliament. Struggles in every decade of this century show that the workers will have to smash the bosses' state and build a different kind of state, based on:

- workers' councils elected from every factory, office, housing estate
- a workers' militia instead of the hired thugs of the police and "professional" army

- workers' control and management of every workplace instead of subservience to the supervisor and slavery to the machine.

To bring about a workers' revolution we need to build a revolutionary working class party rooted in every workplace, estate, school and community. This will not come about automatically; it needs people prepared to commit themselves 100% to the fight for revolutionary politics.

If you want to join that fight, and you agree with the ideas and arguments in this paper, take the first step. Send off this coupon now:

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