

# *Imperialist Troops Out—By Any Means Necessary!* **Defend Iraq!**

10 September—The illusion that the “end of the Cold War” would usher in an era of global peace and harmony has been abruptly shattered by the recent imperialist provocations against Iraq. The U.S.-led intervention in the Middle East, ostensibly in response to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, is designed to protect the interests of the big oil companies by establishing American military control of the Persian Gulf. A huge American army is encamped in Saudi Arabia and U.S. air and naval forces are deployed throughout the region. Britain, France, Canada, Australia, Germany and a host of smaller capitalist states are also participating in blockading Iraq. For public relations purposes the imperialist expeditionary force also includes a few thousand Arab auxiliaries from Egypt, Syria and Morocco.

At this point it appears that the U.S. is bent on precipitating a bloody confrontation with Iraq. In any such military conflict it is the duty of all class conscious workers to defend Iraq against the imperialists. It is urgently necessary for the international labor movement to oppose the criminal aggression against Iraq and to initiate concrete actions, up to and including political strikes, to block the imperialist war preparations.

The initial clash between the Iraqi and Kuwaiti rulers over oil production and pricing was a falling out among thieves in which working people had no side. Oil-rich Kuwait, which was fostered by the British to help maintain their control in the region, was a country run by a reactionary monarchy. The foreign workers who comprised the majority of the population were denied any political or economic rights. The Ba’thist government of Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, is a repressive dictatorship that has routinely tortured and executed thousands of leftists and other political dissidents. Hussein also has a record of brutally suppressing Iraq’s sizeable Kurdish minority. Marxists are equally hostile to Kuwait’s emir, Saudi Arabia’s king and Iraq’s Ba’thist dictator. But what began as a regional squabble in which Marxists could take no side has now been transformed into an interimperialist attack on a “Third World” country. The U.S.-organized blockade of Iraq, under the flag of the United Nations, is an act of aggression that workers around the world must oppose.

The Kremlin bureaucrats, Iraq’s former allies, have cravenly joined the imperialist campaign against Iraq. At the hastily arranged September 9 summit between Bush and Gorbachev, the Soviet chief signaled his willingness to go along with U.S. plans for a military assault. Gorbachev’s acquiescence, which flows from the Kremlin’s policy of wholesale capitulation to imperialism internationally and capitalist restorationist forces internally, is not only treacherous but also stupid, for it means acceptance of a new, permanent imperialist military encampment 600 miles from the southern border of the USSR.

A vital part of American war preparations has been a campaign in the mass media to whip up chauvinist, racist anti-Arab hysteria and to portray Saddam Hussein as a deranged maniac. But the imperialists’ denunciations of the Iraqi regime and its leader are sheer hypocrisy. They were perfectly happy to see Iraq invade Iran in 1979, and had little to say when Hussein used poison gas against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. As for the “principle” of defending the sovereignty of small countries which Bush and his allies are loudly proclaiming, Saddam Hussein aptly observed that they have never been particularly concerned about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And everyone recalls how only last December Bush launched the bloody invasion of Panama, six years after the American rape of Grenada.

But Iraq is not a soft target like Panama or Grenada. Even though it is widely expected that a U.S. attack will mean massive civilian casualties, the Iraqi population appears determined to defend their country. Although the military outcome of an American-led attack on Iraq is impossible to predict, it is unlikely that the Pentagon can deliver a lightning victory. The battle-tested Iraqi army is not expected to roll over and play dead, and the U.S. rulers know that popular support for their projected war is superficial and will quickly evaporate if many U.S. soldiers start coming home in body bags. A lot of people will soon begin to wonder why thousands of young Americans (and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians) have to die just so the “Seven Sisters” can continue to corner the world oil market.

There is a lot at stake in this struggle. A victory for U.S. imperialism and its allies would mean even greater exploitation, poverty and misery for the oppressed masses of the region. It would also encourage the imperialists to launch new interventions in the neo-colonial world to secure cheap raw materials, cheap labor and monopolize markets. At home, imperialist aggression will translate into further attacks on the living standards of poor and working people to raise the \$1 billion a day that a war against Iraq is expected to cost. A defeat for the U.S.-led imperialist coalition against Iraq would be a victory for American workers and for all the oppressed and working people of the earth.

While the U.S. has thus far been successful in rounding up votes in the UN, the facade of imperialist “unity” is already showing cracks. The U.S. has been demanding that Japan help pay for the military buildup, but so far Japanese Prime Minister Kaifu has only offered token contributions to countries in the region suffering from the disruption of trade. The German bourgeoisie, which cannot afford to antagonize the U.S. as it prepares to swallow up the German Democratic Republic in October, has sent a few minesweepers to the Gulf. But like Japan, America’s other main economic rival, Germany

has little enthusiasm for Bush's military adventure. The European Economic Community, under German leadership, has so far refused to finance the American intervention. The Japanese and Germans are acutely aware that a U.S. stranglehold on the Persian Gulf and its immense oil reserves will not work to their advantage in the long run.

The recent history of the Middle East is one of domination by imperialism and its Zionist allies. The Arab masses rightly resent this domination. They also resent the obscene wealth accumulated by the emir of Kuwait and a handful of other oil sheiks. Thus Saddam Hussein's confrontation with Bush and his call for a *jihad* against the Western invaders has struck a chord among millions in the Middle East. The willingness of many Arab leaders, particularly Egypt's Mubarak and Syria's Assad, to aid and abet U.S. aggression can only discredit them domestically, particularly if the Israelis eventually enter the picture. Whatever the ultimate outcome of the current confrontation, the fragile political balance in this volatile region has been upset for some time to come.

In calling for the military defense of Iraq, Marxists give no political support to Hussein. While many Arab youths have mistaken him as some kind of anti-imperialist fighter standing up to Bush, his attempt to grab

control of the Kuwaiti oil fields was no blow against imperialism, but simply an attempt to improve the position of Iraq within the international capitalist order.

Only a socialist federation of the Middle East forged in revolutionary struggle against the Arab sheiks and dictators, as well as the Zionists and imperialists, can guarantee equality for all the national and ethnic groupings in the region and open the road to a decent life for the exploited and oppressed masses. But the struggle to overthrow Hussein is a struggle for the workers and oppressed masses of Iraq—the intervention of the U.S. and its allies in the Middle East can only be reactionary. Class-conscious workers in the imperialist countries have a duty to take a hard stand against the warmongering of their "own" imperialist pirates. Only through taking up the weapons of class struggle will it be possible to derail the war preparations of our rulers and advance the struggle to uproot the whole predatory system of capitalist exploitation.

- ***Down with Imperialist Aggression against Iraq!***
- ***Not One Soldier, Not One Penny for the Imperialist Pirates!***
- ***Israel Out of the Occupied Territories! Imperialists Out of the Middle East!***