

LRCI resolutions on the Gulf Crisis

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On the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

The Iraqi attack on Kuwait was motivated by economic aggrandisement necessitated by the Iran/Iraq war and the expenses of maintaining the reactionary military Bonapartist regime of Saddam Hussein. Though this seizure of Kuwait has outraged the imperialist powers it is not a genuine blow against imperialism. Iraq seeks to become the dominant regional Arab power, a power that imperialism must work through and deal with. Its claim to be a liberator of the Kuwaiti people from their reactionary rulers is a fraud. As such we condemn the Iraqi invasion and call for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops.

However, the Kuwaiti regime, and indeed the Kuwaiti state and its borders, are not and never were an expression of their people's right to self-determination. Kuwait was a Balkanised oil rich enclave, carved out of the larger Arab states to subordinate it to imperialist control and the oil multinationals. As such a defencist position in Kuwait would make no sense. The Arab masses have no interest in the victory of either side and should pursue the strictest revolutionary defeatism on both sides.

Imperialism is now threatening measures of economic blockade of Iraq. It is moving its fleets into the region. In response to these threats we say:

- ? Down with an imperialist or United Nations blockade against Iraq
- ? Down with the Baker/Shevardnadze statement
- ? Imperialist forces out of the Gulf

Should the imperialist powers or their Israeli stooges attack Iraq then revolutionaries should take a defencist position vis-à-vis Iraq.

Against imperialist aggression!

The huge US war machine has been put into operation against Iraq. The United Nations (UN) has been mobilised to give its sanction to a total blockade. An equally vast propaganda campaign has been launched by the mass media, bemoaning the tragedy of the Kuwaiti people and the horrors facing the ?western hostages?. Saddam Hussein's lurid record as a dictator, as the perpetrator of poison gas attacks against the Kurds, as a latter day Hitler, are now suddenly given full media coverage.

The stinking hypocrisy of these sudden discoveries is obvious after a moment's thought. Britain, the USA and Japan have been arming and trading with this supposed monster for decades. The USA and Britain never sought serious UN sanctions against the South African or Israeli persecutors of the black majority or the Palestinians. UN resolutions on these peoples' brutal oppression gathered dust without a single gunboat being dispatched to enforce them.

The imperialist powers' concern for democracy, their opposition to dictators, is entirely determined by whether these 'ideals' coincide with their vital economic and political interests. The interests involved here are naked control of the Gulf oilfields and the need to keep the Arab states weak and divided economically, politically and militarily. The USA, supported closely by Thatcher, is willing to launch an all-out war to protect these interests. Workers and all anti-imperialist forces world-wide have a direct interest in seeing that they do not succeed.

The Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait was provoked by the mounting economic crisis wracking Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war. The Kuwaiti regime, along with the other Gulf Emirates and the Saudi monarchy, has consistently weakened the OPEC cartel through over-production to keep oil prices as low as possible, and therefore performed an important service for imperialism. In addition annexation of Kuwait liquidates at a stroke over a quarter of Iraq's foreign debt.

Iraq was also motivated by military-strategic and political reasons to believe that the seizure of Kuwait would enormously strengthen the Ba'athist regime. In strategic terms annexation would give Iraq secure access to the Gulf which the war with Iran had failed to gain it. Saddam hoped the humiliation of the Gulf emirs and the Saudi dynasty would invest him with the heroic mantle of a Nasser and revive a pan-Arab nationalism centred on Iraq.

However, these aims do not constitute a genuine anti-imperialist struggle. The Iraqi regime is a brutal dictatorship which cruelly oppresses the Kurdish nation in the north, has bloodily suppressed the once powerful Iraqi workers' movement and the Iraqi Communist Party. Despite a long term alliance in the 1960s and 70s with the Soviet bureaucracy, and despite its bellicose verbiage against Zionism, Iraq has never been in the front line of Arab resistance to Israeli expansionism, and by its attack on Iran aimed to prove itself worthy of imperialist support as a replacement gendarme for the Shah. Throughout the eight year war imperialism distinctly favoured Iraq and economically bolstered it at key points to prevent an Iranian victory.

Iraq, even with the invasion of Kuwait, was not seeking a major conflict with imperialism. Rather through its annexation it wished to present the imperialists with a fait accompli. It wanted to prove itself to be the dominant regional power which imperialism would have to come to terms with, and work through, to achieve stability in the Gulf and ensure its continued exploitation of the area's vast oil reserves.

Like Galtieri over the Malvinas (Falklands), Saddam has underestimated the imperialist powers' resistance to being despoiled of any of 'their' possessions lest it encourage others to try similar actions. US imperialism must recover Kuwait. To fail to do so will be a tremendous demonstration of weakness that would fatally undermine its world policeman role.

For the USA this is nowhere more true than the Gulf. The USA alone is dependent for 50% of its oil imports on this region at a time when Iraq now commands more oil reserves than any other country in OPEC. If unchecked, by the end of the century Iraq will be more economically powerful and have an enhanced military capability. For imperialism and Israel now is the time to check Hussein's regional ambitions by war if necessary.

What should the attitude of workers, revolutionary socialists and all genuine anti-imperialists be to Iraq's original invasion and annexation of Kuwait and to the imperialist forces gathering for an assault on Iraq?

Firstly, revolutionaries should be opposed to the invasion and annexation of Kuwait. Forcible annexations, against the will of the population cannot be a basis for uniting the Arab and non-Arab peoples of the Middle East against imperialism. Rather such actions give imperialism a pretext to intervene and to gather support

from other oppressed semi-colonial regimes for this intervention. Therefore, in Iraq revolutionaries should have opposed the invasion.

The main enemy of the Iraqi workers and the oppressed Kurdish minority remained, throughout this period, the Saddam dictatorship. Revolutionary struggle against his regime should not have been retarded or halted out of any concern about a defeat of the Iraqi army in its 'war' with the troops of the Emir of Kuwait, unlikely as this was.

If the Iraqi invasion was unjustified was it therefore justified for revolutionaries in Kuwait to 'defend the fatherland' alongside the Emir's troops? No. Kuwait is not a nation but a Balkanised enclave cut out of the disintegrating Ottoman empire by British imperialism in 1921, when it was the League of Nations' mandatory power. It has never had the least shred of democracy. Its ruling class are rich and pampered rentiers, spending most of the year away from home in Western Europe. The workers of Kuwait are predominantly Arab, Palestinian and other (South East Asian) 'immigrants' with no rights whatsoever. Their inherent and objective interest was to overthrow the Emir not to defend him. Therefore, on both sides in this conflict the strictest revolutionary defeatism should have been maintained.

However, once the US troops were sent to Saudi the nature of the conflict changed its character. The adoption of an economic blockade accompanied by military skirmishes is a direct prelude to war. The build up of forces in Saudi Arabia has created the certainty that any Iraqi withdrawal would be followed immediately by a US/British occupation of Kuwait. The result for the Kuwaiti people at the level of democratic rights would be just as bad as the Iraqi dictatorship—witness the 'democratic rights' that exist in Panama under US occupation.

But this occupation would have an even more reactionary consequence for the masses of the whole region. It would create a vast new military base for imperialism to police the whole region from, enforcing 'its interests' in the Iranian and Iraqi oilfields as well as those of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates. Therefore, revolutionaries must now subordinate the call for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops to the fight for the withdrawal of all imperialist troops from the Gulf area, and until all imperialist troops are withdrawn we no longer raise this demand.

Whilst it remains the duty of revolutionaries in Iraq to continue to struggle to overthrow Saddam Hussein they must combine this strategic objective with a readiness to defend Iraq against imperialist attack. This applies to revolutionaries in Kuwait. Any fighting here will have the character of being simply a part of a general conflict between a semi-colonial regime exploited and oppressed by imperialism and the mightiest imperialist army on earth.

Revolutionaries world-wide must not only oppose the blockade and the war preparations, but on the outbreak of hostilities must call clearly and unequivocally for the defeat of US and British imperialism and for the victory of the Iraqi forces. We must fight for working class and democratic forces world-wide to take class struggle actions against imperialism which aid the Iraqi resistance.

In Iraq 'defencism' has to have a revolutionary character. Revolutionaries must mobilise the masses around genuine anti-imperialist, democratic and class slogans. If war with imperialism breaks out then for Iraqi revolutionaries insurrection against Saddam Hussein's regime must be subordinated to the tasks of defeating the imperialist onslaught. However, a struggle to overthrow him may prove necessary to prevent surrender and defeat. In the event of a defeat for Saddam and his regime revolutionaries must seek to grasp the opportunity to overthrow the Ba'athist dictatorship and replace it with a genuine anti-imperialist workers' and peasants' government.

As long as Saddam Hussein poses as the anti-imperialist war leader revolutionaries should demand the expropriation of all imperialist property in Iraq and Kuwait, the universal arming of the people, the granting of full democratic rights to the Iraqi and Kuwaiti masses including the withdrawal of all Iraqi troops from Kurdistan. We call on all workers everywhere to refuse to implement sanctions against Iraq.

? Break the blockade

? Down with the imperialist war preparations

? All US, British and other imperialist troops out of the Gulf

? For the defeat of imperialist forces in any war and for the victory of Iraq

? Soldiers of the Arab League turn your guns on imperialism?for a revolutionary war against imperialism

? Down with the emirs and kings of the Arabian Peninsula?stooges and tools of imperialism

? Down with Saddam Hussein and the other Bonapartist regimes of the region

? For self-determination for all who live and work in Kuwait

? For a Socialist United States of the Middle East

Key slogans for international solidarity work around the Gulf Crisis

A vast coalition of imperialist powers stands poised to plunge the Middle East into a mighty war. Under the banner of the United Nations (UN)?that so-called agency for world peace?a war is being prepared by the USA, Britain and France. Japan and Germany act as quartermasters and the servile client Arab regimes act to cut off Iraq from any base of support in the masses of the Middle East.

The ground, air and naval forces are in place. All that restrains them are the political calculations of the White House. Can Iraq be effectively strangled through military blockade and sanctions alone or will war be necessary? Will the social consensus at home hold in the face of mounting combat casualties? Is the propaganda machine sufficiently slavish to ensure this? Is the risk of global economic dislocation that might flow from all out war a price worth paying for the ousting of Hussein?

The coming weeks and months will see answers these questions. Hanging on the outcome is the shape of the whole oil producing region of the Middle East well into the next century. If successful imperialism will have secured its arrogant right to cheap and reliable supplies of oil and ensured the super-profits the oil companies derive from it for a whole period. If successful imperialism will station its troops and listening posts in conservative Arab client states to threaten all future anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist actions of the impoverished Arab masses with ruthless suppression.

It is desperately urgent that all labour movements and progressive forces around the world rally in active opposition to this prospect. Revolutionaries and working class militants throughout the world have no reason to identify with Saddam?s seizure of Kuwait. Iraq?s rulers?brutal suppressors of the Kurds, the communists and of democratic rights?by annexing Kuwait have enlarged the sphere of operation of Hussein?s secret police and military dictatorship. The road followed by Saddam?s tanks is not the road of revolutionary or progressive unification of the Arab people against imperialism. But the liberators of Iraq and Kuwait are not to be found in the armed camps across the border in Saudi Arabia. Far from it!

Despite Hussein?s butchery against his own people and the Kurds, despite his ill-starred adventure into Kuwait, the main enemies of the Iraqi people now are the forces gathered on its borders. If successful they will not bring democracy to Kuwait, where it has never existed before, they will not end the semi-colonial condition of the Iraqi workers, nor bring national justice for the Kurds. In dealing a fatal blow to the Ba?athist dynasty in Baghdad they will simply install a more slavishly pro-imperialist enemy of the Iraqi people, as they did in Grenada and Panama. To ensure this puppet?s rule Iraq will then be surrounded by the military bases of the USA.

Imperialism's economic and military onslaught on Iraq converts the latter's resistance into a justified struggle against a new imperialist settlement of the Middle East. For this reason revolutionaries across the world must be opposed to, and seek to break the hold of, the UN sanctions. They must, in the event of war, stand clearly and unequivocally for the victory of the Iraqi armed forces and for the defeat of the joint imperialist and Arab forces ranged against them. To aid Iraq now and in the event of war revolutionaries should seek to mobilise the world's labour movements around the slogans:

- ? No war for the big oil companies!
- ? Hands off Iraq?imperialist troops out of the Gulf!
- ? No to UN sanctions against Iraq
- ? Iraqi workers, not Bush and Thatcher, must oust Saddam!

The minimum principled basis for anti-imperialist solidarity work against the threat of, or actual, war in the Gulf is summed up in the slogan: imperialist troops out of the Gulf. Revolutionary forces, however, should seek to win backing for a fight against the military blockade and economic sanctions.

The vacuous social pacifist appeal of 'No war!' is not an anti-imperialist position. However, where it is not yet possible to form a united front around the position of imperialist troops out then it is principled to enter a 'No war!' bloc and fight within it for anti-imperialist positions, propaganda and contingents on events. But if the 'No war!' position is combined with support for UN sanctions it is actually a pro-imperialist position deceitfully cloaked in pacifist rhetoric. No united front is possible on such a basis. It is the duty of revolutionaries to mercilessly expose this social pacifism since it prepares the way for support for military action if and when it comes.

Whilst centrist forces can and should be won to the minimum anti-imperialist position, they will constantly seek to retreat into a bloc with the social pacifists around the latter's vacuous slogans and, moreover, create a platform for their pro-imperialist sanctions propaganda. Their practice in the united front is to aid the social pacifists by smothering the expression of their own stated position and junking a full and open position of revolutionary support for Iraq against sanctions, let alone urging victory in the case of military combat.

Nevertheless, revolutionaries must seek to create or maintain a united front with centrists and reformists on an anti-imperialist basis which gives them the freedom to put forward their full position, to criticise the social pacifists and all capitulations to them in practice.

In the degenerate workers' states the working class must mobilise against the treacherous pro-imperialist policies of the leadership of Gorbachev, Deng et al.

- ? Down with the Bush-Gorbachev Helsinki agreement against Iraq. Down with Soviet support for diplomatic, economic and military sanctions. Resume arms shipments and economic aid to Iraq
- ? In the countries of the Middle East revolutionaries must seek to mobilise against the imperialist war machine and its local agents
- ? Down with the Saudi monarchy and the sultanate puppets of imperialism
- ? Down with Mubarak, Assad and Rafsanjani?craven collaborators with the imperialist robbers
- ? Down with the Zionist state. Victory to the Palestinian intifada
- ? Break the blockade of Iraq?open the ports, frontiers and pipelines to trade to and from Iraq
- ? Seize all the imperialist assets, nationalising them under workers' control
- ? In the event of war?money, arms, soldiers for Iraq! Sabotage of all anti-Iraqi military operations
- ? Masses of the Middle East?rise up against imperialism's occupation and plundering of your region!

Tasks and slogans in Iraq

The Iraqi people are used to war. Hundreds of thousands have been needlessly slain in a reactionary attack upon Iran. Not a family is left untouched. The privations and shortages that accompany war—all these are entrenched in the culture of Iraq's workers and poor peasants. But for what were they hurled against the frontiers of Iran and for what did they go hungry at home? Not for a just anti-imperialist war but rather only to satisfy the petty ambitions of a bourgeois military dictator.

Now the Iraqi people find themselves once more being prepared for a state of war by the adventures of its dictator. Yet this time the masses must rally to the revolutionary defence of their country, must ring their borders with impenetrable hostility to the forces of imperialism poised to strike. Yet this is not their only task. For years ground under the iron heel of the Ba'athist dictatorship, the Iraqi workers' movement must utilise the struggle against imperialism to reconstruct itself. It can and must do this on the basis of the defence of Iraq against imperialist attack whilst not abandoning the political struggle to break up Saddam's dictatorship. Indeed, the disintegration of the dictatorship is necessary as part and parcel of the mobilisation of the masses against imperialism. This demands a fight to force the Iraqi regime to:

- ? Seize all imperialist property and holdings in Iraq
- ? Arm the workers and poor peasants in militias with the right to elect their own officers
- ? Give arms to the Palestinians in Jordan and the occupied territories to fight Zionism and imperialism
- ? Recognize the right of freely elected committees of workers and peasants—men and women—to ration and distribute foodstuffs and medical supplies
- ? Restore full democratic rights—assembly, free speech, press, trade unions and political parties
- ? Withdraw all Iraqi troops from the Kurdish areas; self-determination for the Kurdish people
- ? Grant full democratic rights, including self-determination, to the entire population of Kuwait

These anti-imperialist and democratic measures would, at a stroke, rally millions throughout the Middle East to the side of Iraq and undermine the pro-imperialist regimes. Of course, we do not expect Saddam to willingly carry out any of these measures since they would fatally undermine his brutal dictatorship but they put to the test his anti-imperialist rhetoric, exposing its falsity to the millions who have illusions in him, whilst at the same time pointing the road to a real mobilisation against imperialism.

In the event of war it is in the direct interest of the Iraqi and the Kurdish people to defend Iraq against imperialism without for a minute abandoning their just struggles for national freedom, democracy and class emancipation. In war they should propose a military united front against the attacking imperialist forces. To form this in practice would require, on the regime's part, the complete cessation of all repression against the progressive forces.

But whatever the the regime's actions against the progressive forces imperialism remains the main enemy whilst the armed conflict continues and it is from within the war effort that forces must be rallied to overthrow the Ba'athist regime and create a workers' and peasants' government. Proceeding towards an armed insurrection to achieve that goal during the course of the war with imperialism will have to be considered in the light of the need to secure a military victory against the main enemy—imperialist forces in the Gulf.

US imperialism has the project of a 'new world order' to secure its exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonies and disintegrating workers' states. It will pursue this goal through a United Nations sponsored 'police force' consisting of US forces and a periphery of allies from the semi-colonies and junior imperialist powers. All workers and peasants have an interest in disrupting and breaking up a new Yalta-Potsdam style re-division of the world that imperialism and its lackeys are attempting.

- ? Down with imperialism?s intervention in the Gulf
 - ? Victory to the anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Middle East
 - ? For the United Socialist States of the Middle East
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