

**WORKERS REVOLUTION
BARRICADE**

***WAR in the
GULF!***

by Paul White

- ***The Iran-Iraq War***
- ***Where the Left went wrong***
- ***The Iraq/Kuwait Crisis***

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GULF!***

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PARTISAN PRESS

First edition in this format, October 1990

A Workers Revolution/Barricade Pamphlet.

Published by

Partisan Press
GPO Box 1729P
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia

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Introduction

As the West rushes to war in the Gulf, it is pertinent to again review what happened the last time there was a war in that region. How did that war start? What was imperialism's role? Was there any side worth supporting, from a working class socialist viewpoint? And how did the Left react last time?

The circumstances are different this time, but there are still plenty of lessons from what happened last time, which communists can use in the current war. Forewarned is forearmed.

There are three articles in this pamphlet. The first reviews the circumstances of the outbreak of the last war in the Gulf, and traces the war's evolution and why it ended.

The second article examines how an important tendency on the Left - the International Socialist Organisation - reacted to these events. The wrong positions of the ISO then are continued today, in the current conflict.

Last time, the ISO argued that the left and labour movement should back Iran, in the dying stages of the war, claiming that a "Western conspiracy" was afoot against Iran. At the time, *Workers Revolution* explained that this was an illusion; the West was only very momentarily tilting towards Iraq in the war - just as it had earlier tilted towards Iran. Our stand was vindicated. Within days of the West achieving its aim (ending the war), it was already describing Saddam Hussein as the "Butcher of Baghdad".

Similarly, in the present Gulf war, the ISO adapts to middle class illusions in the United Nations. ISO members are quite prepared, in their forums and publications, to put forward good arguments about why the prevailing attitude of calling for a United Nations solution is actually helping the imperialist war drive. But, where it really counts - in demonstrations and at anti-war meetings to plan action against the war - the ISO has distinguished itself by its staunch opposition to

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putting its supposed position into practice. ISO leaders have even tried to gag debate on this question at meetings of the Gulf Action Committee (GAC) in Melbourne.

There's a very good reason for such apparent inconsistency. The ISO wants to recruit at any cost. Aware that many potential recruits are opposed to the imperialists' Gulf intervention, but retain illusions in the UN, the ISO has decided that these must not be "scared away" by communist politics. So, on the pretext of building the biggest possible anti-war actions, the ISO opposes the GAC taking a position on the United Nations. For the same reason, (at the 18 September 1990 GAC meeting in Melbourne) it also opposed the GAC even taking a position opposing the economic blockade against Iraq!

The cost of such opportunism is high. In the present anti-war movement, it reinforces all those (especially bourgeois forces like the Democrats and the Rainbow Alliance) who are really pro-war, provided the UN can do the dirty work. Within its own ranks, this approach inculcates a deadly cynicism into the rank and file of the group: if building the group comes before the needs of the workers and oppressed in struggle, surely anything goes?

There's a Marxist technical term, for such behaviour - "sectarianism". For the ISO and most of the 'Left', this word has been debased into an infantile term of abuse, to be hurled at genuine communists who try to apply their politics consistently. Marxists know that the term actually means putting the interests of your own organisation (or sect) before those of the workers and the oppressed. That's exactly what the ISO (and other 'Marxists' who agree with them) are doing at present. So who's the sectarian?

The lesson is clear: Marxists need to base their strategies not on momentary whims or pragmatic adaptations to middle class opinion, but on the rock solid foundation of the interests of the international proletariat and the oppressed. We believe this pamphlet is an illustration of how communists should react.

The final article analyses the current crisis in the Gulf. Written at the start of the Gulf crisis, and based on the foundation of a Marxist analysis of preceding events, it accurately predicts the trends this conflict has taken.

How the War Started and Ended



How the War Started and Ended

In explaining the causes of the war between Iran and Iraq, it will be necessary to dwell at some length on earlier relations between the two countries.

The nationalist military coup of 14 July 1958 in Iraq installed General 'Abdul Karim Kassem, in place of the discredited pro-Western monarch, King Faisal II.

From being just another one of America's local clients, the Shah's Iran was now steadily transformed into a "regional partner of the United States". By 1977, Iran was America's largest single purchaser of military equipment:

The Iranian regime took up its new function as the West's 'regional cop' with great zeal and efficiency. Its military adventures included repeated border skirmishes with Iraq, between 1969 and 1974, and substantial backing to Iraqi Kurdish guerrillas.

The Iraqi nationalist junta led by General Kassem was overthrown by Ba'athist officers in 1963. The Ba'athists only lasted six months, before themselves being overthrown. Over the next four years, coup followed coup in Iraq. The Ba'athists restored themselves in power in July 1968, and have been in office ever since. In 1979 Saddam Hussein became Iraq's President.

In 1972, the Iraqi government nationalised the Iraq Petroleum Company, after generously compensating the owners. This centralisation of oil resources plus the sharp rise in oil prices in the wake of the 1973 Arab/Israeli War enabled Iraq to soon double its oil revenues. As in Iran's case, enhanced oil reserves meant more room to manoeuvre militarily and politically.

The Ba'athists held the West - especially the United States - in contempt. The deposed Iraqi monarch had been avidly pro-Western. So it only logical, to the Ba'athists, to blame the West for most of Iraq's problems. Yet, the picture of Iraq's relations with the rest of the

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world is a complex one. Like Iran, the Iraqis were able to use their oil resources as a lever to obtain substantial autonomy in their external relations. Close relations developed with the USSR, but this did not alter the fact that it was mostly Western companies - including US ones - which were mostly asked to develop Iraq.

If the Shah was alarmed at the close Soviet/Iraq relationship, the Ba'athists were at least equally distraught about Iran's bristling armament of highly advanced weaponry, and its continual military adventures. Considering their own extensive oil resources (making up 40 % of GNP in 1953 and 53.4% by 1976), compared with the well known fact that Iran's oil was due to dry up by the year 2000, they very soon concluded that Iran posed the main threat to their sovereignty.

Ironically, it appears that the more Iran and the United States punished Iraq for its anti-Western stance, the more the latter was forced into the Soviets' embrace. The Iraqis obtained weapons from the USSR in 1970, then signed a fifteen year friendship treaty with the Russians in April 1972.

Iraq resented this curbing of her ambitions. Iraq's resentment, combined with Iran's continued determination to undermine the Ba'athist regime, meant that it wasn't long before both countries started bickering.

Relations between the two countries have been bedevilled by a multitude of historical animosities - some of them quite ancient in their origin. Yet these pressure points - religion, ethnic conflict and boundaries - were not the cause of conflicts between Iran and Iraq, in recent times up till 1979. Rather, these were secondary, aggravating, factors or sometimes just excuses for sharp disputes. The central cause for bad relations was the desire of each country - financed by its own oil revenues and (in Iran's case) actively encouraged by the United States - for political hegemony in the Gulf.

In Iraq as well as in Iran, ideology is used to legitimise a despotic or authoritarian regime founded on a revolution or a coup d'etat. Iran's regime came to power by hijacking a workers' revolution. The clerical regime achieved this by basing their appeal on Iran's tradition of rebellious Shi'ite Islam, which the mullahs translated into a spurious 'anti-imperialism'. In Iraq, the Ba'athist regime manipulates socialist, modernist and secular concepts like a religion, with its institutions, its

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pan-Arabist utopia and its "theology". Behind the modernist facade, the pan-Arabist nationalism evoked in Baghdad is heavily influenced by structures like those of any state religion.

When full-scale war erupted between both countries in September 1980, Iran complained loudly that it was an "imposed" war - that is, that it was started by the other side's army invading Iranian territory. This is less than the full truth. Iraq's Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr. Saadoun Hamadi, told the U.N. Security Council on 15 October 1980 that a meeting was held in the Iranian Shi'ite holy city of Qum of leaders of Iran's ruling Islamic Republican Party and the Khomeneite Iraqi al-Da'wa Party:

The decision was reached to overthrow our government through subversion, sabotage and terrorism by the so-called *Joundi-al-Islam* - that is, the "Imam's Soldiers", meaning the militants of the al-Da'wa Party. The idea was that if enough terror had reigned in Iraq to destabilise its government, then a popular uprising would bring it down. Here Khomeini was obviously thinking that what he had achieved in Iran could be secured in Iraq as well.

Hamadi then cited a shocking catalogue of terrorist actions allegedly committed by the *Joundi-al-Islam*, utilising both Iranian and Iraqi nationals, inside Iraq, for which "daily instructions were issued to al-Da'wa agents through Khomeini's broadcasting stations". He stressed that:

The most cruel terrorist act was the throwing of bombs at a huge student gathering at the Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad on 1 April, 1980, where an attempt was made to assassinate Mr. Tareq `Aziz, a member of the Revolutionary Command Council and the Deputy Prime Minister. ... In addition, an attempt was made on 12 April 1980 on the life of the Minister of Culture and Information, in front of his ministry.

These amazing claims would have to be treated with the utmost scepticism, were it not for their corroboration by a number of sources friendly to neither side. It was apparently at the time of these incidents (April 1980) that Saddam Hussein made the final decision to go to war.

A further contributing factor to the outbreak of war was the perception by each side that the other was fomenting rebellion by the national minorities in the other's country. It is certainly true that Iraq lent some

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amount of support to the Iranian Arabic minority in Khuzistan, hoping to utilise them against Khomeini. But it is also true that the response to this prompting was pitifully weak; when Iraq invaded, therefore, the Iranian Arabs backed Tehran.

The Iraqi regime also reckoned on securing the overwhelming support of Iran's Khuzistani Arabs, if it made a military thrust into Iran. It also considered that Iran's decrepit military forces were in no shape to meet such a push. War with Iran seemed the perfect way to eliminate certain problems at home, while realising ancient dreams of territorial re-expansion - at least into "Arabistan" (Khuzistan). For its part, Iran's regime counted on utilising religious propaganda to expand into predominately Shi'ite Iraq, thus realising the traditional re-expansionist dreams of Iranian rulers during the last twelve centuries.

In both cases, the respective leaders evoked the stock-in-trade myths and prejudices which had been the populist battle standards of their predecessors over the centuries. Nothing was forgotten: religious issues, ethnic conflicts, the boundary disputes all were drummed into action, to do their gruesome work. To these were added the more contemporary allegations of subversion and worse, outlined earlier.

Both sides miscalculated terribly: the Khuzistani Arabs did not rise up against the Iranian regime, when Saddam's soldiers invaded and Iraq's Shia did not pass over into the camp of Imam Khomeini. Iran's army did find it difficult to push back the onslaught, for the first four years of the war. But the regime eventually succeeded in rebuilding a military force strong enough to take the battle right up to the door of Basra, in Iraq.

Once again, however, it must be stressed that it was the pressure of immediate, present-day events - not ancient disputes - which were the prime movers of the drive towards war on both sides. As mentioned above, the 'historical' issues were certainly useful in fuelling the masses' war fever on both sides. But the present war, like every other conflict between the two countries before the fall the Shah, was caused by immediate factors.

The "immediate factor" of concern to the governments of both countries in late 1980 was undoubtedly the continuing revolutionary situation inside Iran. In February 1979, a massive popular uprising broke the power of the Shah of Iran. This uprising was the

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culmination of a sustained campaign of mass demonstrations and months-long general strikes, over the previous year.

Throughout the country, workers had formed revolutionary workers' (not "Islamic") councils on the model of the 1917 Russian soviets. These *shoras* controlled the most important production centres. The movement had spread to the countryside, also, where peasants had formed revolutionary peasant councils, which had seized large tracts of land from rich landlords. Some of these workers' and peasants' councils were led by far left organisations. The Kurds and other national minorities such as the Baluchis were insurgent also, and demanding the fruits of their contributions to the fight against the Shah.

Both countries' governments viewed this situation with alarm. Saddam considered the ongoing armed mobilisation of Iran's oppressed as another Iranian threat to his besieged regime. Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, had only become president recently, and had reason to feel personally insecure also, given Iraq's record of bloody military coups.

But the Khomeinite clerical fascists feared it even more, as an alternative to their own regime. There was no functioning regular army in Iran in late 1980, and what regular forces were still intact were suspected of pro-Shah sympathies. The Islamic regime was faced with the urgent task of "stabilising" the country, so that the economy and state apparatus could return to its normal working order. This was impossible, given the continuing civil unrest.

In the face of this deepening revolutionary crisis, an external focus was necessary, to achieve "national unity" and thus enable the demolition of internal bases of opposition. To consolidate its rule, the regime therefore embarked on the road to war. In Iran as in Iraq, the war proved to be an excellent means of diverting mass internal discontent outwards and cementing national unity.

In Iraq, an immediate result was the stabilisation of Saddam Hussein's government. In Iran, the independent workers' and peasants' movements were dismantled, in the name of not undermining the war effort. The country's armed forces were reconstructed and all national minorities were subdued. (The Kurds suffered severe setbacks, while other minorities were more or less crushed).

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In the final analysis, the drive to war proved that neither regime has forsaken the imperatives of their immediate predecessors. To the extent that present day realities make it possible, each government is determined to impose their political hegemony over the Gulf, by showing itself to be the regional strongman. In each case the rhetoric is apparently quite different, but in each case it actually amounts to the same barely-disguised grab bag of national chauvinism, territorial expansionism, reactionary social programs and dictatorship.

"War" as Baron von Clausewitz once commented, "is the continuation of politics by other means". The Iran/Iraq war showed how the apparently different policies of the governments of nationalist-secularist Iraq and Islamic conservative Iran have more in common than either would care to admit.

Eight years after it began, both Iran and Iraq announced their acceptance of a ceasefire in the Gulf war. Both sides agreed to sign a ceasefire pact. One million died - combatants and civilians alike. More than one million had been disabled and almost three million become refugees through this war. Both sides bombed civilian areas indiscriminately. Both sides resorted to chemical weapons, according to some sources. Iran threw "human waves"- boys as young as 10 years old - into combat against advancing Iraqi tanks.

For their part, the major powers all "condemned" the war, while selling arms to both sides. They are aware that the war has provided the Iranian dictatorship with a desperately needed means of crushing internal opposition and rebuilding a reliable capitalist army, in the name of "national unity" and "fighting imperialism".

Eight years afterwards, however, it was quite a different story. The war was militarily at a stalemate since at least 1984, when Iraq's troops were pushed back over its own border, by Iran. The carnage was equally horrific on both sides. The economic cost has reached stratospheric limits - especially for Iraq, which was probably bankrupt.

Both countries also had to face up to the new attitude of the imperialists to the conflict. By 1988, all the major powers now wanted the war to end as soon as possible. Thus, behind a smokescreen of mutual rivalry, ships from the navies of the major powers co-operated in "patrolling" the Gulf. These countries greatly appreciated the anti-revolutionary benefits of the war thus far, but worried that it had

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become a threat to imperialist shipping. They also feared that the war was now causing serious political destabilisation in both warring countries. Since the governments of Iran and Iraq were excellent guardians for capitalist interests, this is the last thing the major powers wanted! So everyone - even the butchers in Tehran - began talking about "peace".

Iran had been particularly affected by the war. Iranian society had been ripped apart by the war, and anti-war feeling - in the form of workers' strikes and demonstrations - was quickly developing into popular resistance to the regime.

A further factor prompting the ceasefire, of course, was the open US military assistance to the Iraqi regime over the preceding 12 months. This has been internationally attributed as the reason for the wave of Iraqi successes, such as the recapture of the Majnoun islands and of the town of Halabja.

It would be a mistake to over-rate the significance of this, however. Both bourgeois media commentators and most of the Western Left are equally wrong to attribute the current ceasefire to US military pressure.

Iraq's enhanced military capacity during the closing stages of the war inflicted serious economic and psychological damage upon Iran. Yet there is every indication that Iran voluntarily relinquished many military positions. The mullahs wanted to continue the war but they reluctantly conceded eventually that this was not now in their best interests. So they paved the way to a settlement with Baghdad.

And it should never be forgotten that the US has, either indirectly (via Israel) or directly been Iran's major arms supplier throughout all stages of the war. It has also supplied arms to Iraq - especially over the past 12 months. But the Americans were very careful never to give Iraq enough military assistance to allow it to actually win the war. Just before the ceasefire, the United States "tilted" towards Iraq in the war, after happily arming both sides for nearly 8 years, when it looked like Iran was getting the upper hand. The US was not being inconsistent. It has stated more or less openly all along that its aim was to keep either side from winning decisively. But it wanted the war to continue for as long as practicable. The imperialists had no argument with either Iran or Iraq that the central purpose of this conflict had been to subdue the Iranian workers' revolution.

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Almost eight years of war largely achieved that end. The workers' and poor peasants' councils which existed in 1979-80 do not exist any more. Massive setbacks have been inflicted on the revolution by the combined barbarisms of the Iraqi and Iranian regimes.

No sooner had the war ended than each regime intensified its murderous - often genocidal - repression on its own subject peoples. The Kurdish people were the first to taste the bloody reality of this reactionary "peace".

In the Kurdish region of north-eastern Iraq, Iraqi forces began a new offensive against the liberated zones of Khakrok, Siedakan and Mergasor in Arbil province, only 12 days after Iran declared itself in favour of the UN ceasefire.

The Iraqi forces used chemical weapons to inflict heavy casualties upon the Kurds. The battles involved 12 Iraqi brigades and 30 battalions, with about 30,000 men, backed by aircraft, tanks and heavy artillery.

When the war between Iran and Iraq ended, the political tendency around *Workers Revolution* magazine predicted that it would be being replaced by reintensified war against the workers, poor and oppressed of each country, by their "own" ruling classes. This war will never end until the vicious system of class exploitation which spawned both it and the "new" war is rooted out.

The long-suffering workers and toilers in each country need to unite to bring down the capitalist system which is responsible for their misery. Only the destruction of the profit system in each country can eliminate the vested interest of a tiny minority of exploiters (on behalf of the imperialists), in waging wars for profit and political benefits. When the workers of Iran and Iraq run their own countries, they can co-operate economically, to begin to build a new social system - socialism - in which exploitation and all forms of oppression and national chauvinism are eliminated forever. Only workers' power can put the warmongers out of business for good.

As this pamphlet goes to press, the Western military machine is preparing for war against Iraq. A terrifying imperialist force is being assembled in the Gulf. Irrespective of Saddam Hussein's crimes, revolutionary socialists are determined to defend the people of Iraq and Kuwait against the Western hordes. In the event of any military

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battles between imperialism and Iraq, we stand for the defeat of the West and the victory of the Arab masses.

But we must learn the lesson written in blood by the last Gulf war: this is that genuine socialists have no reason to politically support any capitalist government. The working class has nothing in common with the likes of Saddam Hussein right now - just like it had nothing in common with either the regimes of Iran or Iraq last time around.

Should Communists Have Taken Sides?

When Workers Revolution first published the following polemic, we asked:

'A Western conspiracy, in cahoots with Iraq, against Iran? The Western media now "tilts" towards Iran, since the Ayatollahs' acceptance of the UN ceasefire proposal. Will the IS now support Iraq?'

Now, two years later, the ISO vacillates between political support for Saddam Hussein (to entice leftist radicals), and a 'peace now' line (so as not to repel potential members with pacifist illusions).

Saddam Hussein, the ruthlessly pragmatic...

Butcher of Baghdad

The death of Iran's revolution of the month has seen Iraq's President Saddam Hussein hailed as a hero throughout the Arab world - the man who defended the revolution of the Islamic Revolution. NOZAL DAVIS in Baghdad reports on the leader whose actions have led to a century of barbaric driving nations to a brutal conflict for survival.

BY THE Saddam Hussein regime since the pro-Chinese policy of Iraq in July 1978 and in 1979, after the American's meeting of 10 years ago.



... The incident was not the product of a crazed blood lust or the whim of a psychotic killer. It was a calculated, premeditated act designed to remove any possible future challengers and to dispel any doubts that he was the absolute master.

Left: Saddam Hussein. Right: Image of Saddam Hussein from a poster distributed in the Iraqi press in the aftermath of the invasion. The President also made himself a general.

... The incident was not the product of a crazed blood lust or the whim of a psychotic killer. It was a calculated, premeditated act designed to remove any possible future challengers and to dispel any doubts that he was the absolute master.

No dissent is tolerated

Weekend Australian, 23-24 July, 1988

Should Communists Have Taken Sides?

When this article was first published, it was entitled "Imperialism and the Gulf War: Should Communists Take Sides?" It is reprinted here from *Workers Revolution*, number 5.

Workers Revolution has always opposed the imperialist role in the Gulf war. In fact, *WR* also demands that all imperialist military forces withdraw immediately.

It should also be said that this opposition to an imperialist presence in the Gulf is not even distantly related to similar sounding statements from most of the rest of the "Left".

For most leftists, "defence" of bourgeois Iran against imperialist attack is a shield for wholesale capitulation to the capitalist regime in Iran. Arguing that, since Iran is a developing country and that imperialist ships threaten it, most of the Left tries to find excuses for supporting the mullahs' regime.

The most blatant example of this in Australia has always been the Socialist Workers Party [now the Democratic Socialist Party] which has even gone to the extent of hailing attacks by the Iranian Islamic regime upon the Left and labour movement, as necessary to defend the "anti-imperialist" regime.

The presence of large numbers of US ships in the Gulf has also provided a convenient excuse to change position on the war for Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party, in Britain. (This party is no relation to the Australian SWP - its politics are reflected in Australia by the International Socialists.)

Cliff's SWP has previously correctly opposed both sides in this inter-capitalist conflict, refusing to join either of the rival camps.

For the British SWP all that is now changed. Introducing an article by Phil Marshall in the December 1987 edition of their *Socialist Worker Review*, the magazine's editors write:

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The Gulf war has changed - and socialists' attitude to the conflict must change too. The US has marshalled the forces of Western imperialism and the combined weight of the Arab states against Iran: Socialists can't be neutral in such a situation.

In the article itself, Marshall declares: "We are with the Iranians - for defeat of the whole coalition of forces, including Iraq, that is ranged against them."

He adds, further:

The US and its allies are in the Gulf precisely in order to impose a "peace" on UN terms - that is, on Washington's terms.

Such a deal would be seen in Iran, in the Gulf region and worldwide as a victory for the West - a confirmation of the reactionary thesis that the Iranian revolution was a wholly negative experience and that imperialist domination of the Gulf is part of the natural order. Iranian socialists must therefore take a new approach, calling for support for Khomeini against the current imperialist offensive, while retaining their independence of the regime.

An article in the SWP's newspaper *Socialist Worker* of 28 November 1987 is most enthusiastic about the new position, claiming that the war against Iraq is now a war of "national liberation."

The new position is fleshed-out in an article in the 4 March 1988 *Internal Bulletin* of the British SWP's US co-thinkers, the International Socialist Organisation.

This argues that in the second half of 1987 "a marked shift in US priorities" in the Gulf War occurred, such that American imperialism now favoured Iraq:

This shift has endowed the Gulf War with a new character. Until this point, the Gulf War took the form of a struggle between two subimperialisms, Iran and Iraq, which the major imperialist powers fuelled. Alliances between the imperialist powers and one or other belligerent formed, broke and were reformed depending primarily on narrow grounds of 'national interest', favouritism towards one or other of the regimes. The Western and Eastern blocs sold arms to both sides.

Today, all the major imperialist powers have lined up against Iran. The same article adds that three factors explain this new situation:

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- The Contragate revelations severely embarrassed the US administration in the eyes of Arab Gulf states - providing an opening within the administration for those favouring a "tilt" towards Iraq.
- Iraq's military impotence in the war caused the US administration to step in to prevent Iraq's defeat, since this "would lead to instability from Marrakesh to Bangladesh"
- The USSR, has attempted to move into the war as a major broker.

The result has been a combined political and military offensive against Iran, according to the ISO. An "anti-Iran consensus" has been created by US imperialism, bringing Western military ships in to police the Gulf and luring Syria, "Iran's biggest Arab backer, closer to the pro-Iraq Arab League coalition". US ships are not in the Gulf to protect tankers (this is "a cover"). "There is no question that the military intervention in the Gulf is meant to aid Iraq. More importantly, one cannot now separate the US presence in the Gulf from the prosecution of the Gulf War". The US is attempting to impose its will on the region's "renegade" regime, Iran, and rebuild its influence throughout the region in the process.

These developments mark a fundamental shift in the character of the war, the ISO stress, arguing that US intervention has been "decisive": "The balance of forces has shifted in Iraq's favour".

Anticipating objections from critics who would deny that a "decisive shift in the character of the war" has in fact taken place, the ISO article makes three points in reply. **Firstly**, the ISO claim that "It is clear that the US and its allies have intervened to a greater degree than before".

Secondly, it asserts that this intervention "cannot be brushed off as a mere public relations exercise". **Thirdly**, the ISO adds that, since the costs of a US invasion of Iran "are so enormous that it is unlikely ever to be considered ... the US and its allies are constrained to rely on military pressure, and support for Iraq, to place conditions on Iran which will force Iran to change its policies"

The article concludes that "socialists in the US must call for an Iranian victory in the war. In the current circumstances, socialists in

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Iran who call for the military defeat of the Iranian government would be, in essence, calling for a victory to imperialism".

We should be clear that a victory for US imperialism in Iran would be a setback for workers in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East, in Central America, etc. Our criticism of the Khomeini regime's reactionary character, its oppression of women, national minorities, etc. does not alter our support for Iranian self-determination in the face of US attacks. ... As socialists in the belly of the beast, we are duty-bound to call for the victory of those oppressed countries fighting "our" ruling class - whether in Nicaragua or in Iran.

A November 1987 British SWP National Conference resolution entitled *Marxism and the National Question* vigorously reiterates this conclusion, adding that although this does not mean "that we abandon our opposition to the mullahs and their reactionary ideology", nevertheless: "if it comes to fighting between the US and Iran, revolutionary socialists will have to support the Khomeini regime against Reagan and his allies, including Iraq, and welcome the defeat of the American forces at Iranian hands".

Thus:

Revolutionaries would seek to encourage working class discontent with the Khomeini regime and its method of waging the war ... But revolutionaries would not support actions which could lead to an immediate collapse of the front and a victory for imperialism (e.g. strikes which would stop munitions getting to the front).

Two assumptions lie behind this stark policy flip-flop by the Cliff tendency. The first is the assertion that there has indeed been a fundamental change in the Gulf War, so that communists must radically revise their attitude to it. The Cliff tendency are right to state that a factor prompting a rethink would be if it could be shown that "the whole of Western imperialism" had ganged up against Iran.

In such a situation, genuine Marxists would have to stand for the military defence of dependent capitalist Iran, against the imperialists. (Even so, our attitude would not be the same as the Cliffite centrists, as we will see shortly.)

But that's just the rub; the IS/SWP/ISO case is a house built on shonky foundations. It is true that the Western (mostly US) naval

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presence in the Gulf has increased over the recent period. It is also true that there have always been imperialist ships in the Gulf, ever since the dawn of imperialism.

The Cliff tendency will doubtless reply that the reason for the recent buildup is that imperialism has decided to side with Iraq in the war, adding that this also explains the Western arms embargo against Iraq.

But this is nonsense. Revolutionary politics is not as easy as merely reading the *Economist* and *Newsweek* (and then inverting them to discern the 'correct' policy). As the ISO article admits, the simple truth is that there has been a supposed "Western arms embargo" against Iran for several years now. What has occurred recently is little more than a slight decrease in the availability of Western arms to Iran. Behind all the hype by imperialist governments about "denying arms to terrorist regimes", the West continues as before with its deadly trade.

The Conragate scandal has exposed merely the tip of the iceberg. And, while it is undeniably true - as the Cliff tendency now keeps telling us - that Western imperialism has recently become more hostile to Iran - this does not mean that the flow of Western arms to Iran has been noticeably affected.

In Italy, for instance, it was revealed late last year that Valsella Meccanotecnica - which is 50% owned by FIAT (which is itself government-owned) - has sold Iran the very mines now being hunted by Western navies in the Gulf! Plenty of other examples can be given, involving Sweden, Britain, Israel, France and other imperialist and pro-imperialist countries ... including the biggest culprit of all, the United States of America!

The ISO document cites the US government's hypocritical 1984 "Operation Staunch", accurately stating that this public tilt to Iraq masked the secret attempt to help Iran. Between 1981 and 1984, US officials ... "looked the other way" as Israel provided arms to Iran.

It's the same today, despite America's new "tilt" towards Iraq. The title of an article by British journalist Richard Johns in the British *Financial Times* of 13 November 1987 says it all: "Arms Embargo Which Cannot Withstand the Profit Motive"

Professor Anthony Cordesman, in a book published late last year by the defence and foreign policy analysts Jane's, agrees with the Cliff

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tendency's assessment that it is in the interests of Western imperialism to publicly "tilt" towards Iraq, given that the West must at all costs avoid the risk of an Iranian victory.

Now, according to the Cliff tendency's Simple Simon methodology, this should mean that this pro-imperialist academic ought to favour an Iraqi victory. But our house-trained professor is not so naive.

Cordesman appreciates the value of the war to imperialism in the past of paralysing the struggles of the masses. But he warns strongly that recent developments - the spilling over into neighbouring states, the dangers to Western shipping, the undermining of the economic and political foundations of stable capitalist rule in either of the belligerents - make the war more dangerous to the West with time. He urges a speedy end to the war, with "the best outcome" being preservation of the status quo in both Iran and Iraq, without one side dominating the other.

Interestingly, he suggests that the West "can limit its tilt towards Iraq", while "maintaining the offer of better relations and economic ties with Iran"

This is, in fact, exactly the policy pursued by the imperialists. (And not just Western imperialism, either; unlike the Cliffites' analysis, this explains why the Soviet imperialists are also behaving in a similar manner.) The Cliff tendency's central assertion, that "the whole of Western imperialism" has ganged up against Iran is a non-starter.

The second assumption underlying the new position is just as important to their case, but it's not openly stated - for very good reasons, as we'll see. Behind their claim that "the Gulf War has changed" lies more than a hint of the unmarxist notion that the world is divided into what certain other tendencies call "two camps". These are the "imperialist camp" and the so-called "anti-imperialist" camp. According to this outlook, you're either fully "with" the "anti-imperialist" camp or you are "in" the "imperialist" camp.

Unfair to the Cliff tendency? No, not at all. What other analysis can justify the repeated assertion in the new position, that the whole war is now reduced to the simple equation of Iran versus the West? On the one hand, the new position talks of the need for "Iranian socialists ... retaining their independence of the regime".

But, on the same breath, the Cliffites state they are "calling for support for Khomeini". What is this supposed to mean? It can hardly

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be seriously meant to indicate a commitment to defend dependent Iran militarily against imperialist America, without for a moment identifying with the regime politically? On the other hand, it would be unfair (for the moment, anyway), to charge the Cliffites with defending the Islamic republic's politics. If what they are now defending is simply the Iranian people against imperialist invasion, then why don't they say so clearly, instead of talking of supporting "Khomeini"?

Yet, even as sharp an upturn in US support for Iraq in the war as the IS/SWP/ISO assert exists would not justify this. For Marxists it is class politics which is decisive. In the war between the "camps", communists are in the workers' camp.

The war between Iran and Iraq originated in the mutual desire of the ruling classes of both these countries to smash the revolution headed by Iranian workers. It will be ended in one of two ways. The local capitalists and the imperialists might succeed in imposing a pro-imperialist "peace" which enables the two bourgeois regimes to concentrate again on directly oppressing their own workers, toilers and subject peoples.

This is precisely what is on the cards with the current "ceasefire" manoeuvring.

Alternatively, the oppressed masses headed by the workers will take advantage of the tremendous drop in prestige suffered by both dictatorships in achieving a military victory, and succeed in smashing the capitalist war by tearing down capitalism in both countries. After one million dead, there are plenty of reasons for this to occur.

For all its rhetoric about "revolutionary methods" to end the war, such as "seizing the armaments factories", it is clear that the working class is actually written out of the new position. For the IS/SWP/ISO stand means that the war must continue, since the distorted Cliffite explanation of recent trends means that it is now transformed into a war of "national liberation" against America.

The Cliff tendency's demand for a "revolutionary war" - that this anti-working class massacre continue under working class leadership - is the most wretched treachery. If Iranian workers listened to it, the practical result would be catastrophic. The resolution by the

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November 1987 SWP National Conference spells out the real logic of the new position quite shamelessly:

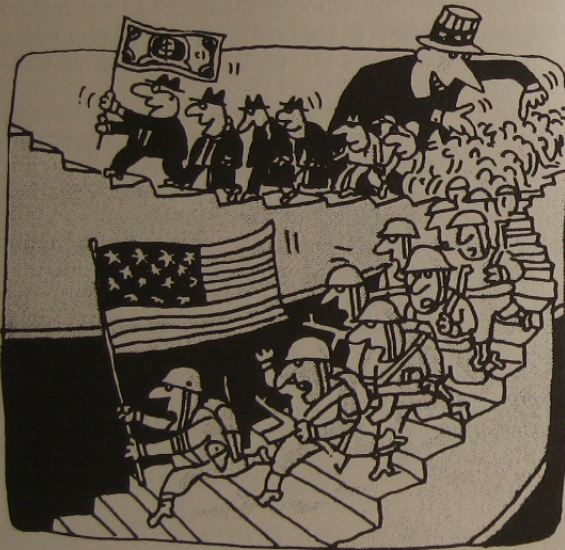
But revolutionaries would not support actions which could lead to an immediate collapse of the front and a victory for imperialism (e.g. strikes which would stop munitions getting to the front).

In other words, like those who divide the world into "two camps", the IS/SWP/ISO write the working class out of the picture. These centrists also counsel revolutionary workers against taking the only concrete action capable of bringing a satisfactory conclusion to the war from a proletarian viewpoint.

The Cliff tendency would itself be well advised to take a long hard look at itself - and where its rightward-moving centrism is leading it. The capitulation of this tendency before creeping "two campism" has many sordid precedents in the workers' movements. Karl Kautsky and the traitors of the Second International were centrists using an infinitely more theoretically profound version of the same argument when they caved in before imperialism and backed World War 1.

Similarly, the Stalin faction inside the communist movement started with a similar outlook in the 1920s. Since then, Stalinists of all hues have taken variations of the same treacherous methodology to its logical conclusion: in the name of combating imperialism, to squash real proletarian struggle; at all costs be "realistic" and "practical" and put the "anti-imperialist" fight before proletarian revolution.

The Iraq/Kuwait Crisis



On 23 August 1990, Paul White addressed the first meeting of Barricade, a new revolutionary socialist youth group, at the University of Melbourne. An edited transcript is printed below. The meeting attracted a crowd of over 250, mostly students, but also including some members of the Arab community.

Iraq is an underdeveloped country - that is, one whose economic development has been held back by the imperialist plunder and domination of its economy. When such a country is under attack from the imperialists, revolutionary socialists cannot remain indifferent. We must support the military defence of the imperialised country against the imperialist onslaught. This does not - **and should not** - imply political support for the petty military adventures of tyrants such as Saddam Hussein. As will be shown below, in fact, it means something quite different indeed.

Barricade condemns the superpower intervention in the Gulf. We have no love for the Saddam Hussein dictatorship, and do not support the invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq. But these events are not simply "equally bad" and cannot be smugly condemned as such.

Every time a spokesperson for the superpowers opens his or her mouth a different reason is given for the imperialist intervention. At first, the reason given was the need to defend the integrity of Kuwait. Then it was the defence of Saudi Arabia. But these reasons are already receding from public view. Increasingly, the reason cited is "vital American interests" - namely oil wells in which the West (mostly the USA) has a financial stake.

There is another reason, which - while not stated - is just as important. History teaches us that whenever people are oppressed remorselessly, they rebel sooner or later, in order to eliminate the sources of this oppression. This is certainly the history of the whole

middle east this century. This region continues to be notoriously "unstable" because it is a snake pit of festering oppressions: nations and nationalities are oppressed; women as a whole are oppressed; peasants are robbed blind and made to work like slaves; workers are super-exploited and every country in the region is ripped-off to the tune of billions of dollars annually by imperialism - which threatens them with war if they rebel against this robbery.

The superpowers are aware that the middle east is simmering with discontent right now. The Palestinian *intifada* has inspired repeated rebellions throughout the region, for instance. Irrespective of its reactionary motivation, Saddam's adventure has caught the imagination of the overwhelming majority of the Arab masses throughout the middle east. Most Arabs see things quite differently from their corrupt and dictatorial rulers. The masses who see Saddam's adventure as a campaign against the parasitical emirs and sheikhs who help keep them all in numbing poverty and tied to America's coat-tails, as well as a drive to push the imperialists out of the middle east for good. That's a central reason why, under the pretext of defending Kuwait, the major powers are actually waging war against the masses of the middle east.

America is sending a loud and clear message to the wretched of the earth: "don't mess with imperialism". It hopes to show all peoples contemplating rebellion that they will face terrible, crushing retaliation. To the bourgeois of Europe who vacillate in the face of the threat to imperialism posed by the middle east masses, America is showing not only what must be done, but that it is itself still the boss of the imperialist gang.

The major powers are also preparing for the all-out war which is always the final ploy of imperialism in an economic and political impasse. A world war is the logical - and inevitable - continuation of an unrestrained international trade war and recession. We are some way from such an outcome - which can only ultimately be prevented by a socialist revolution - but the signs are already appearing - two crashes on the New York stock exchange in recent years; a deepening international recession, leading to increasing inflation and unemployment and company closures in every country; a worsening international trade war and an unrelenting level of revolts, revolutions and counter-revolutions around the globe.

America and its allies hope to achieve their aims without recourse to war in the present instance, out of fear of further rousing the anger of the Arab masses. But the way events are moving at present, it's hard to see war being averted.

For the US, its intervention is only the latest in a series of escalating military adventures since its defeat in Vietnam in the mid-Seventies. Each military adventure has been a step away from the 'Vietnam Syndrome' - that is, from the inability of US rulers to commit troops without widespread public outcry at home. The invasions of Grenada and Panama, the bombing of Libya, all undermined this popular sentiment.

Former US Secretary of Defence under Reagan, Casper Weinberger, commented recently that direct US intervention in the Gulf crisis takes place at a time when "optimum political conditions" exist for such an adventure. (See *The Australian* 13 August.) He argues that the American war machine should seize this opportunity with both hands. A US military victory in the Gulf will probably mean the complete shattering of what's left of the Vietnam Syndrome. This will result, in turn, in a serious heightening of pro-imperialist jingoism throughout the imperialist countries. The results of this will be felt everywhere. Third world workers and peasants struggling against pro-imperialist juntas will find the US on their doorstep far quicker and easier, intervening in their struggles, on behalf of "US vital interests". Workers in the metropolitan countries will have their own struggles split more easily on the basis of jingoistic nationalism. (It could be said, for instance, that "we shouldn't go on strike when our country is involved in a military conflict for 'democracy' abroad.") For the sake of the workers and oppressed everywhere, it is vital that America not succeed. The major powers are also preparing for the all-out world war which is always the final ploy of imperialism in an economic and political impasse. A world war is the logical - and inevitable - continuation of an unrestrained international trade war and recession. We are some way away from such an outcome - which can only be ultimately prevented by a socialist revolution - but the signs are already appearing - two crashes on the New York stock exchange in recent years; a deepening international recession, leading to increasing inflation and unemployment and company closures in every country; a worsening international trade war and an

unrelenting level of revolts, revolutions and counter-revolutions around the globe.

America's military intervention at the request of the Kuwaiti royal family has as much legitimacy as does Saddam Hussein's claim that Iraq invaded Kuwait to assist "young revolutionaries". Both the US and the Iraqi regimes have the blood of innocents on their hands; neither is the friend of the oppressed.

But the masses of the middle east will not benefit from a superpower victory in the Gulf or anywhere else. Such an outcome would only result in the most intense imperialist domination of the region in half a century or more. - probably enforced by a protracted, large scale occupation of the region by US or pro-US troops. Kuwait's 'independence' would be utterly smashed.

This brings the struggle against imperialism by third world countries full circle. Over the past hundred years, we've seen several attempts to by-pass socialism by third world countries fighting for their independence. Instead, these nations took the road of one variety of bourgeois 'independent nationalism' or other. The imperialists countered this by creating neo-colonies (like Iraq, Iran, Israel) to keep the more rebellious newly independent states in line, by acting as regional policemen. It is indicative of the depth of their crisis that imperialism must now return openly to more or less direct imperial rule. Neo-colonial rulers like the Saudi royal family are being pushed to the wall by imperialism to allow the stationing of tens of thousands of imperialist troops on their soil. This is an absolutely astounding development; the Saudi royals know they will earn the undying hatred of the overwhelming majority of the Arab and Muslim masses everywhere for this treachery.

They must be very nervously looking over their shoulders right now; they know what happens to such traitors in the middle east. They know, for instance, that President Sadat was assassinated when he made a pro-imperialist peace deal with Israel. So it is a real measure of the amount of pressure which America has exerted that the Saudis have agreed to the superpower military presence on their soil. The Saudi rulers know that they have no choice if they are to survive; if the anti-imperialist aspirations of the Arab masses are not smashed by the superpowers, then their servants, the despised Saudi monarchy, will be next anyway.

***The Western
media pictures
Saddam and all
Arabs
as sub-human
cannibals.
When have the
West's European
opponents been
portrayed like this
in the media?
The West deals
out the same
treatment to
'uppity' third
world peoples
everywhere.***



The Australian, 7 August 1990

The Iraq/Kuwait Crisis

An imperialist victory would be a tremendous set-back for oppressed masses everywhere - but especially in the middle east. For this reason, Barricade stands for the military defeat of the superpowers in any military confrontation with Iraq.

This will annoy some people, who believe that all Australians should always be on the same side as the West - especially when Australian military forces have been committed to a military conflict. But we are not patriots or idiotic nationalists; our loyalty is at all times with the masses. Right now that means standing shoulder to shoulder with the Arab masses. We believe that working people in this country have more in common with the oppressed everywhere than with our own capitalists or the capitalists anywhere. We are not tied to defending the interests of capitalism in any country; we are not nationalists, we are internationalists.

We should have no doubt that the superpowers are ready for a full scale war against Iraq, either. All the familiar racist and chauvinist stereotypes of 'Arab terrorists' are being trotted out. Most ominous are the images portraying the Iraqi ruler as "insane": (See *Sunday Herald*, 12 August.)

Media and government spokespersons are stooping to this level in a situation of heightening tensions for very good reason: they are preparing Western public opinion for the bloody military strike against Iraq which could come anytime during the current crisis in the Gulf. If the Arabs in question are just crazy terrorists, you see, they cannot be 100% human like us decent white-skinned folks, who just want 'peace'. To some this appears humorous. We should take to heart the example of Reagan's bombing raid against Libya as a warning. The media was full of images of such as the ones I have described in the run up to the American bombing of Gadaffi's house and the assassination of his children.

The same thing is now happening all over again, with relation to Iraq. When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980 to put down the Iranian revolution, he was praised by both the West and the Soviet Union, which provided him with ample armaments for this purpose. Now that his government menaces superpower interests, however, he is lined up for maximum retaliation. As a "senior Pentagon official" quoted in *Newsweek* puts it: "We're going to flatten Iraq". Detailed scenarios for

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nuclear strikes against Iraq by Israeli and/or US forces are openly discussed in the media.

Much of the justification for such a course of action centres around the perceived need of the superpowers to neutralise Iraq's poison gas installations. It goes without saying, of course, that the superpowers or their stooges like the Israelis would only be acting for the highest, most humane reasons if they rained nuclear death upon Iraq, in order to eliminate the horror of chemical warfare!

Does this mean that Barricade is indifferent to Iraq's possession of such weapons? No! We do not trust any capitalist leader - including the leaders of oppressed, underdeveloped capitalist states like Iraq - with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. The use by Iraq of chemical weapons against the country's Kurdish minority in 1988 was nothing short of genocide. But the superpowers are utterly hypocritical in remembering this now. When the gas attacks on the Kurds took place, it was hardly mentioned in the mass media, compared to the coverage it's being given now. The reason is that Iraq is directly threatening superpower interests now, not just murdering a national minority.

We should not forget, either, that it was Western technical know-how which constructed Iraq's chemical warfare capability.

Nor can we accept the excuse of rescuing Western hostages, as a pretext for superpower military action in the Gulf. Nobody relishes the fate of these individuals. But is important not to get caught up in the wave of militarism now sweeping the West, out of sympathy for the hostages' plight.

It's also useful to try to understand why Iraq has taken these hostages. Iraq - like every third world country faced with a US invasion - knows what it might reasonably expect if the Americans actually invade. Like the Vietnamese before them, they face a protracted program of so-called "carpet bombing" - bombing so intense that the bombs resemble a descending carpet; they face the napalming of their people and the massacre of entire towns and villages. They face the destruction of their already fragile economy and their people face the real possibility of starvation.

In this situation, the Iraqis look around them for some disincentive. They have many men under arms, but little means of deflecting attacks from Stealth bombers, napalm or tactical nuclear weapons. In

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desperation, they have hit upon the idea of staving off the horrors of high tech warfare by using citizens from the Western powers currently threatening precisely such mega-destruction as guarantees against such attacks.

Bob Hawke has self-righteously denounced this action as "despicable". He demands that the hostages be released without any conditions immediately. But he will be among the very first in the world to applaud a murderous military strike against Iraq, if this became possible, through the hostages being released without the military threat from the superpowers being neutralised first.

The current crisis in the Gulf has proven to be a real test for left wing tendencies and so-called 'socialist' countries everywhere. Those who hailed Gorbachev's policies as the way forward for humanity have been brought undone by the events in the Gulf. Gorbachev promised 'disarmament' and even 'peace' to the world. But the Soviet rulers' enthusiasm for the imperialist mobilisation against Iraq - Russia is sending naval vessels to the Gulf also - shows the real meaning of Gorbachev's 'peace' posturing. After cutting its losses in places where it clearly cannot win militarily, like Afghanistan, the USSR is still available for war elsewhere.

As a weak imperialist power, the USSR can only hope to support the offensive of the Western imperialists. Russia is far too weak these days to initiate new imperial adventures itself. But - as a statified capitalist country degenerating rapidly towards Western-style private capitalism - it co-operates with the Western war effort as much as it can, with only the barest of fig leaves (its call for the UN to oversee operations) for its war mongering.

The United Nations is just an organising bureau for the imperialists, which has shown repeatedly through its actions that it always opposes the freedom of the masses. You only have to look at Korea and, more recently, Namibia, to see that.

UN intervention in the Gulf conflict would achieve nothing useful for the masses. In fact, it would be positively harmful, for two reasons. Firstly, it would allow the US, Australia and the others to do their dirty work under the more respectable flag of a UN 'peace-keeping' force. Nothing would change for the masses, just the colour of the flag! And, secondly, those countries like the USSR which have committed

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military forces to the Gulf with a limited role would then feel free to cast away any restraint, and come out with guns blazing.

This should be obvious, yet *Barricade* and the tendency around *Workers Revolution* have been the only ones so far to come out consistently opposing UN intervention in the Gulf crisis. UN military intervention is actively being pushed by openly pro-capitalist groups like the Rainbow Alliance and the Australian Democrats. The 'anti-war' stance of these groups is a complete fraud; both are actually pro-war. Their only serious qualm is about the colour of the flag above the imperialist troops.

Some groups like the International Socialist Organisation, it is true, oppose the United Nations in words, at ISO forums. But when it really counts, in practice at demonstrations and general Left meetings called to oppose the war drive in the Gulf, they have poured scorn on attempts by the tendency around *Workers Revolution* magazine to oppose UN intervention and make this a point of departure for genuine left wing anti-war activity. Their central motivation, it seems, is not to appear too 'sectarian', and they have denounced us as "sectarian" and as "ultra-left lunatics", for putting our principles into practice. These accusations are false, but nevertheless revealing. Leon Trotsky answered such opportunism like this:

Reformists and centrists readily seize upon every occasion to point a finger at our 'sectarianism'; and most of the time, they have in mind not our weak but our strong side: our effort to plumb every political situation to the bottom, and to advance clear-cut slogans; our hostility to 'easy' and 'comfortable' decisions which deliver from cares today, but prepare a catastrophe on the morrow. Coming from opportunists, the accusation of sectarianism is most often a compliment.

So, we are proud to be called 'sectarian' by opportunists like the ISO. There has already been a good indication of the type of "catastrophe on the morrow" which refusal to publicly oppose UN intervention right now promises. Last Saturday, a demonstration organised by the Rainbow Alliance was attended by most of the Melbourne 'Left'. The demonstration objected to Australian and US military involvement in the Gulf, but demanded instead simply that the UN do the same thing. The demonstration also supported UN economic sanctions against Iraq. Yet, apart from most of the Arabs present on the day, it was only

the tendency around *Workers Revolution* magazine which opposed this barely-disguised war-mongering at the demonstration. All groups approached by us - the ISO, the Spartacists - refused to even physically separate themselves from the main body of the demonstration.

This incident points to a universal problem. Both in Australia and internationally, workers and the oppressed need new organisations and new leaders who are prepared to go all the way in fighting to stamp out all exploitation. Everywhere the masses of the workers and the oppressed want peace. The key to achieving this to eliminate the cause of war. In the Gulf and elsewhere that means bringing down capitalism.

Only the destruction of the profit system in each country can eliminate the vested interest of a tiny minority of exploiters (on behalf of the imperialists), in waging wars for profit and political benefits. When the workers run their own countries, they can co-operate economically, to begin to build a new social system - socialism - in which exploitation and all forms of oppression and national chauvinism are eliminated forever. Only workers' power can put the warmongers out of business for good.

Barricade therefore asks you to seriously consider doing two things. Firstly, we urge you to attend the demonstration planned, as part of our anti-UN contingent. It is vitally important that the emerging anti-war movement is not poisoned in its infancy by capitalist deceptions about the UN.

Secondly, we ask you to consider getting involved in **Barricade**. As we said above, **Barricade** and *Workers Revolution* are the only groups consistently opposing UN intervention in the Gulf crisis. This is a very good reason for you to help us build a revolutionary socialist alternative leadership.



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BARRICADE



Barricade is the newly formed revolutionary socialist youth and student group formed in alliance with the Workers Revolution Group. It is fighting for a revolutionary unity of students with the working class. At present, we are based at Melbourne University, with contacts at other Universities. We hold regular meetings and information tables, and we publish a magazine on worker - student issues. If you wish to join us in this fight, or want more information about us, just fill in the form below, and send to:

Barricade
GPO Box 1729 P
Melbourne, Vic. 3001

Name.....
Address.....
Postcode.....

The unfolding military crisis in the Gulf has once again thrown the volatile politics of that region into public view. The Iraq/Kuwait crisis erupted less than two years after the ceasefire in the earlier Gulf War, between Iran and Iraq.

Why is this region in continual turmoil? Is it because of oil? Are there other reasons? What is the role of the superpowers? Can the United Nations bring peace? Drawing upon the experiences of both Gulf crises, this pamphlet suggests answers to these questions and more. It is particularly concerned with the response of ostensible Marxists to each confrontation, examining what is common as well as what is different in each situation.

Many will find this publication useful; drawing upon a wealth of historical and factual analysis, it will provide handy data on this important region for activists and all concerned with these events.

Paul White, a founding member of Workers Revolution, has a long history of middle east solidarity work. He is currently a postgraduate student in middle east politics. at the University of Melbourne.