

# COMMUNIST REVIEW 4

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Imperialism in the



Middle East

Plus:

The International Bureau in India

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# Editorial

For Marxists recent world events have confirmed the growing danger to humanity from the present system and the urgency of our task to create the basis for a revolutionary alternative. As the crisis of the world economy follows its own inexorable downward spiral it brings in its wake heightened social and political tensions. At the same time it is becoming more and more difficult for even the strongest capitalist economy (the USA) to push the burden of the crisis onto the weakest states. With a growing domestic and balance of payments deficit, the value of the dollar is falling and the US is seeking not just to make allies like West Germany and Japan pay more of the economic cost of maintaining Western imperialism: it wants to see a more unified support behind its immediate strategic and military objectives. For, as both Russian and American imperialism find themselves with less and less room for manoeuvre, it is the military option which is more and more becoming the only option for the bourgeoisie.

Thus, while the flimsy pretext for the US demonstration of its brute military might by the April 15th air strikes on Libyan cities (Ghadafy's supposed responsibility for the hijacking of the Achille Lauro, the Rome and Vienna airport bombings and the Berlin discotheque bombing) has since been revealed as spurious the media has kept quiet about it. This is not surprising because the real reason for the US attack is nothing to do with Ghadafy. As the article on the Middle East in this issue shows, US imperialism has suffered a series of setbacks in the area. The Libyan bombings were both a demonstration to Moscow that the US has no intention of seeing this continue (without as yet risking a direct confrontation with Russia) and at the same time a sharp "reminder" to the USA's European allies that defence of the "free world" means not flinching from whole-hearted defence of US interests. In other words what we have witnessed is a significant step in the slide towards world war.

And while the various organisations of the

capitalist left reacted by demanding the expulsion of NATO bases from individual European states and protested their defence of "Libya" against US aggression it remained for the internationalist communist left to state clearly that the fight against imperialism means neither support for "Reagan and his allies, nor Ghadafy and his friends". In the statement which the IBRP issued (and which has now been translated into Arabic, Farsi and Bengali) we underlined the need for the international working class to recognise that it can have no allies in the governments of existing states and the need for workers everywhere to continue their struggle first of all against their own governments and from an independent political basis, through their own international party. The full statement is printed on page 14.

In the same month as the Libyan bombings the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Ukraine enabled the Western media to draw attention away from the dubious attempts by the US to defend the "free world" against terrorism and hypocritically howl about the inferiority of the "communist" bloc's safety precautions and concern for human life. As the extent of the fall-out (which respects no state boundaries) began to sink in, the Western propaganda campaign began to backfire as local populations were awakened to the danger of locally produced radioactivity. After Chernobyl only the incurably blind can continue to pretend that the Russian state's economic plans have anything to do with socialist planning. For the Eastern and Western bloc alike nuclear power is a product of imperialist military strategy and research. Its use as a 'domestic' fuel will be continued by both blocs on the grounds of cheapness regardless of the risk to human health and life.

Thus, in the latter half of the Eighties, more than fifteen years since the post-war 'boom' gave way to generalised world economic crisis, the words 'capitalist decadence' take on their full social and cultural as well as economic and political meaning. While, for example,

a pop singer gains an honorary knighthood for turning the plight of millions into a series of media spectacles (thereby uniting "the people" of the imperialist metropolises in a wave of moral sympathy which successfully obscures imperialist relations and capitalist agriculture as the real cause of the problem) imperialism continues to increase its military spending and reduces its "aid" to the weakest states. While the anger of millions of oppressed and exploited in South Africa is being channelled into nationalist ideology the economic austerity which sparked off their rage will continue to grow.

And it is here - in the ever-harsher effects which the capitalist crisis imposes worldwide - that the material basis is growing for a real alternative to the existing system. Even amongst the strife-torn, nationally-divided proletariat of the Middle East the fight against economic austerity and material deprivation is the basis for a united class response against all aspects of imperialism. The seeds are there, whether it be in such actions as the Israeli nurses' strike against wage cuts in June/July; Iranian workers' refusal to allow levies for the war against Iraq to be deducted from their wages; or the general strike in Beirut against the civil war which drew the city to a halt in July. What is needed is an independent political force to promote their ripening into a full-blown revolutionary class response. As the article in this issue says, this is the only realistic and concrete solution to the problems of the Middle East.

It is a sign of the times that the bulk of the IBRP's work at the moment involves discussion

and polemics with individuals and organisations outside of the capitalist metropolises. In those areas which are subject to the worst effects of the crisis the absence of an independent programme and class organisation are being felt more keenly by revolutionaries who daily witness the divisions imposed on an impoverished working class by imperialism's various nationalist, racist, religious and sexist ideologies. Thus the correspondence with the Alptraum Communist Collective (CCA) in Mexico is continuing (We hope to publish this in a later issue) and since our last issue we have received news from other comrades there (Colectivo Internacionalismo Comunista) who are interested in learning more about our politics.

We must thank our Iranian sympathisers who have translated key articles of ours into Farsi and compiled the first issue of an IBRP publication in Farsi which best translates as Communist Notes. Thanks also to those comrades who have begun to translate our texts into Arabic and have thus given our politics a small opening into the Arabic-speaking world.

Finally, our efforts to promote political discussion and the development of a firm revolutionary nucleus within the political milieu in India are reflected in this issue. While we extend a warm hand of welcome to Lal Pataka we do not deceive ourselves that this task has been completed. On the contrary, our comrades in India are well aware that the task has only just begun, but the very existence of Lal Pataka is a sign that our forces are growing worldwide and is an encouragement to us all to continue the task of extending our forces internationally.

IBRP, July 1986

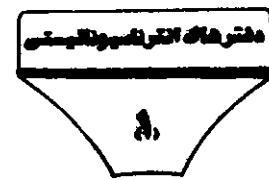
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شماره ۱

# Imperialism in the Middle East

For those who see imperialism as simply a concept of political literature, a mere sociological definition, the present world crisis (partially controlled but never overcome), accompanied by growing economic, political and military competition between the world's largest powers, is capitalism's normal routine - of no special significance except for the updating of the list of the world's hot spots of war and tension. On the other hand, those who see imperialism as the daily operation of the economic contradictions of capitalist relations of production, which become more ferocious the worse the crisis becomes, recognise that the events in the Middle East (and elsewhere) deviate from capitalist "normality" and enter the framework of the clash between the interests of the great powers in a tragic preparation for the Third World War.

Recent events like the Israeli raid on Tunisia, the hijacking of the Achille Lauro, the "Sigonella" affair with the links between Italy and the USA, the Rome and Vienna bombings, are not only the obvious manifestation of local problems (like the unresolved Palestinian question, the difficult relations between the Israeli state and the rest of the Arab world, the controversial "link" between the Arab bourgeoisie and the Palestinian proletarians they make use of.), they are also the symptom of a crisis which has hit the area and exacerbates the internal tensions of the mini-imperialisms. But above all we see the entanglement of the two major imperialisms which have been induced to intervene either diplomatically or militarily, according to each specific case and the opportunities opened up. It is certainly no accident that the Middle East and, by extension, its immediate geopolitical surroundings, are the theatre for conflicts like the Iran/Iraq War,

for civil wars like those in the Lebanon, South Yemen and Afghanistan, for serious tensions between states (Syria and Israel, Libya and Egypt) and of unresolved national questions like those of the Palestinians, the Kurds and the Armenians.

No matter how the Arab proletariat pays - whether as Palestinian fighters expelled and massacred by Israelis, Jordanians and Syrians; Lebanese sub-proletarians fighting among themselves in the service of the tattered Moslem bourgeoisies of the Berri, Jumblatt or Karame versions; or Iranian and Iraqi workers obliged to kill each other in trench warfare to decide whether the oil-bearing Shatt-al-Arab will be dominated by the Imam's theological bourgeoisie or by President Saddam Hussein's - all these episodes are partly the legacy of previous American imperialist politics and partly the fruit of Russian pressure for a bridgehead in the area.

It is no accident that tension in the south Mediterranean countries has increased geometrically, accompanied by the revival of the desperate terrorism of a few fringes of the Palestinians and involving the imperialist governments of Washington and Moscow. Fearing the destabilisation of the south Mediterranean, the Western press has been too quick to cry wolf (e.g. over Ghadafy and the anti-Arafat Palestinians). At the same time, the way America has reacted to something which is not new leads to the suspicion that the latest terrorist events, much more than a tactic in the hands of a few Palestinians or even of Ghadafy himself, are being used as the means to justify a much wider clash in the Middle East and the south Mediterranean.

It's difficult to give a handful of desperate