

Listen to the Iraqi labour movement

Help build the ‘Third Camp’

IRAQ HAS A growing, militant new labour movement – independent trade unions, unemployed movements, women’s organisations, and working-class political parties.

In oilfields, oil refineries, the railways, factories, and elsewhere, workers have organised trade unions and sometimes won victories by removing Ba’thist managers or improving wages.

In Baghdad, the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions has regained control over the offices from which they were evicted by American troops in December last year.

Different strands in the Iraqi labour movement have sharp political differences between themselves. But all the main groups agree on two points:

That Iraq must gain democratic self-rule, free of US/UK military occupation;

And that the various “resistance” militias are not a national liberation movement. They are reactionary groups, offering only an ugly future of communal division and conflict within Iraq, and clerical dictatorship.

“The freedom-loving people of Iraq and the Worker-communist Party of Iraq struggle to separate their ranks from both poles of this conflict and to establish and consolidate a third camp as a humanist, liberationist and progressive alternative which stands up to both poles of reaction and terrorism”.

Worker-communist Party of Iraq

“The ‘resistance’ of the ethnocentric and Islamist groups is reactionary... ‘Occupation’ and ‘resistance’ are two poles of the same reactionary camp... The real basis for struggle against the USA’s new world order is the workers, the proletarians, and their programme, liberty and equality”.

Union of the Unemployed of Iraq

On the new Iraqi labour movement rest all hopes for a democratic, secular, and free Iraq. That free Iraq cannot possibly be won by way of the

victory of the reactionary militias which will crush the labour movement.

Activists in the West must therefore combine all our condemnation of Bush and Blair – their war, their occupation, the way their military campaign against the Mahdi Army and other militias has recklessly killed so many civilians along the way, and, politically, only boosted those reactionary movements – with positive support for the positive alternative in Iraq: the labour movement.

“The so-called ‘Iraqi resistance’ referred to in the media represent neither a national liberation struggle (but rather an attempt to ‘balkanise’ Iraq) nor the possibility of rebuilding Iraqi civil society (except on the model of a mediaeval theocracy).

“The Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions welcomes the many expressions of support from the international labour movement for their task of rebuilding Iraq’s trade unions and believes that they are fundamental to establishing a free and democratic secular Iraq in which civil society can be rebuilt”.

Abdullah Muhsin, British representative of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions

What you can do:

– Support the TUC’s Iraq Aid appeal to provide funds for Iraq’s trade unions.

– Support the Iraqi Labour Solidarity Fund, which raises money for all sections of the Iraqi labour movement.

– Invite speakers from the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions, the Union of the Unemployed of Iraq, and other Iraqi labour organisations to your trade union branch or student union.

– Contact the Iraqi Workers’ Solidarity Group, which acts as an information centre for workers’ solidarity and carries all the details you will need on its website,

<http://www.iraqworkerssolidarity.org>.

Nationalism or socialism?

For workers' unity!

THE NATIONAL question is one of political democracy – national “self-determination” means that a nation may democratically decide, without being threatened with blockade or invasion, whether to form a separate state or to remain in a political union with another nation. The Marxist commitment to international working-class unity implies consistent support for the right of all nations to self-determination.

It does not mean that the separating-off of smaller nations is inherently progressive or anti-imperialist. Marxists such as Lenin argued strongly to establish the right to self-determination, including separation, as one of the principles of consistent democracy that we support; they also argued that in general Marxists should prefer democratic amalgamation, and the creation of larger political units providing a wider arena for working-class struggle.

There has been a tendency among socialists, influenced by the backwash of decades of Stalinist agitation, to identify “anti-imperialism” with support for any force, however regressive or reactionary, clashes with the USA, or the European Union, or Britain, or whatever may be the big capitalist state designated as the “main enemy”. But it is false to think that we can advance towards socialism by supporting more backward, more regressive, or more walled-off versions of capitalism against the more advanced “global” capitalism.

The Scottish people have an unbridgeable right to self-determination. At the same time, capitalism’s development of the productive forces long ago outstripped the framework of the nation states. In every country of Europe, the aim of socialists must be a workers’ federal united Europe, not an “independent” socialist system in their own one country, which is impossible.

We therefore stand:

- For a democratic federal united Europe. Our response to the capitalist and bureaucratic nature of the European Union is to work for Europe-wide workers’ unity, and a cross-Europe fight for full democracy - not to advocate that countries withdraw from the European Union and seek to

return to a more walled-off economic life, which would be regressive. While we hold no brief at all for the United Kingdom, we are therefore against Scotland withdrawing from the European Union.

- For a democratic federal republic in Britain.
- For the right of the Scottish people to establish a separate state within a European framework if the majority wish it; for radical reform measures by the Scottish Parliament unrestrained by any concerns about disrupting the British state (or breaking European Union rules); but against nationalist agitation which presents Scottish independence as any sort of solution to the social, economic and political problems of the Scottish working class.
- For class against class, not nation against nation. For unity of Scottish workers with English workers, European workers, and the workers of the whole world.

For the platform and documents of the *Solidarity* tendency, see:

www.workersliberty.org/scotland

Workers’ Liberty magazine

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