

STOP THE WAR IN OMAN !



BRITISH TROOPS ARE CURRENTLY FIGHTING A FULL SCALE WAR IN THE
MIDDLE EAST

IRAN AIRLINES BUY CONCORDES WHILE CHILDREN OF SIX LABOUR IN
IRANIAN WORKSHOPS

THE SULTAN OF OMAN SPENDS £4 MILLION ON PALACES (BUILT BY
BRITISH FIRMS) WHILE HIS PEOPLE STARVE

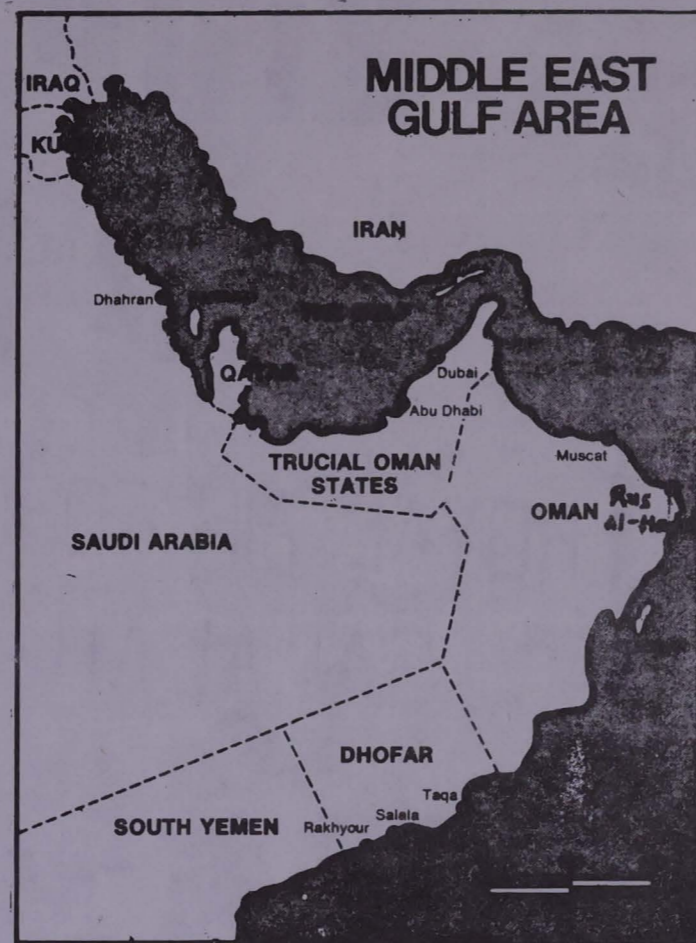
Few people in Britain are familiar with the heroic struggles of the people of Oman, which the press and TV only mention in their periodic and contemptuous claims that the "handful of guerrillas" have finally been liquidated. Why this curtain of silence? Because the Omani people are fighting British troops sent by successive Tory and Labour governments to shore up the corrupt regime of the Sultan, and thus keep control of the rich oil resources of the Gulf, in co-operation with the multi-nationals, U.S. Imperialism and their tool, the Shah of Iran.

This pamphlet gives a short account of the situation in the Gulf, the struggle for national liberation in Oman, and the involvement of British troops, the British government and British industry in propping up and financing some of the most backward and savagely repressive regimes anywhere in the world.

150 YEARS OF BRITISH EXPLOITATION

The Gulf is not only strategically vital to control of the Indian Ocean, it contains some 60% of the world's known oil resources. The U.S.A., Britain and other Western powers have not been slow to recognise the importance of 'political stability' in the area; that is, the maintenance of puppet regimes to facilitate foreign exploitation of the oil resources, and the immediate crushing of any popular democratic movements which threaten to change the situation.

The British colonialists began their classic policy of 'divide and rule' in the Gulf more than 150 years ago, dividing up the area into petty sheikhdoms and playing off one against the other by stirring up tribal disputes. The nationalist forces resisted by beginning to organise and unite all the oppressed classes throughout the area, calling down torture, execution and armed repression on themselves.



THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE

In October 1963, the people of Yemen (then the British Protectorate of Aden) began armed struggle, under the leadership of the National Liberation Front, against the British colonial occupation and the sheikhs who drew their economic and military strength directly from it. Within the space of four years, not only had the people won independence and forced the British into complete withdrawal; they had succeeded in convincing British imperialism that its best strategy was to begin handing over its military bases and its role as 'policeman' of the Gulf to the U.S. and its local agent, the fascist regime of the Shah of Iran.

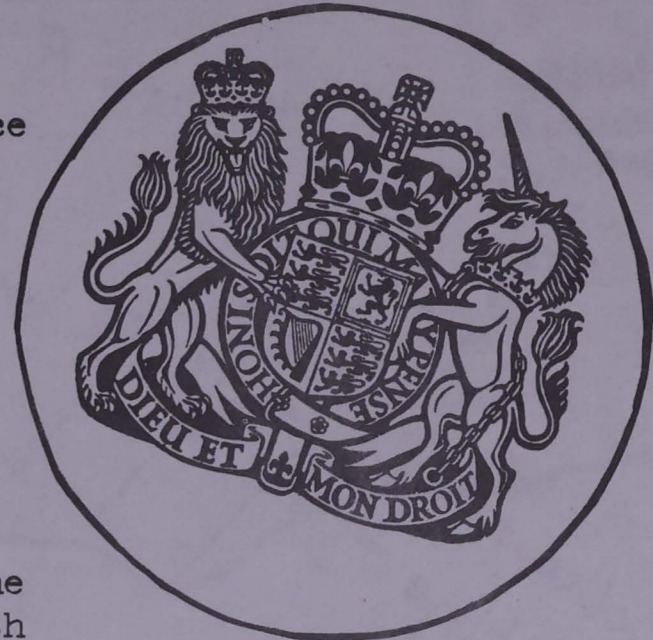
The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen has since been a thorn in the flesh of the Western powers - acting as it does as both a source of material provision and an inspiration for democratic movements elsewhere in the Gulf. The current attempt to liquidate the revolution in Oman, is only one strand in a strategy that also requires the destruction of the socialist government in South Yemen (through the willing agency of local states like Saudi Arabia and Iran) if the Western powers are to keep the oil wealth of the area firmly under their control.

On June 9th 1965, armed struggle was also launched by the people of Dhofar, the Western province of the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. Calling for the support of the whole Arab people, the Dhofar Liberation Front succeeded in uniting the local population around them, liberating large areas in the mountains, and gaining influence in the central towns. In 1968, the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf was set up. It managed, despite some set-backs, to extend the liberated zones, strengthen the unity of the people, lay the basis of a sound national economy and raise living standards. The whole population learned to fight. Now, however, as a result of increased foreign intervention in Oman, these victories are threatened; the revolution faces a critical stage.



THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN OMAN

Britain has exercised virtual control over Oman since the 1870's. Its policy under Sultan Said bin Taimur who ruled from 1932 to 1970, was to isolate the country completely from the outside. The education system consisted of 3 primary schools, there were no hospitals, and no books or medicines were allowed into the country- even spectacles, cigarettes and trousers were banned!



With the outbreak of armed struggle, however, new tactics were necessary. Bin Taimur was deposed by the British and replaced with his son Qabus, charged with

'modernising' the regime. What has been the nature of the modernisation? There are still no secondary schools, and only 30,000 school pupils in a population of 750,000. Infant mortality stands at 50%: scurvy, beri-beri and T.B. are widespread due to malnutrition and poor living conditions. Outside the wealthy capital, Qabus has built only 2 hospitals, though the vast majority of the population lives in the interior.



Meanwhile, 60% of the budget is spent on the armed forces, which now amount to about 14,000 men, equipped (mainly by Britain, of course) with the latest in military technology. (£20 millions worth of Skymaster jets; £45 millions worth of Jaguar jets; £47 millions worth of Rapier anti-aircraft missiles).

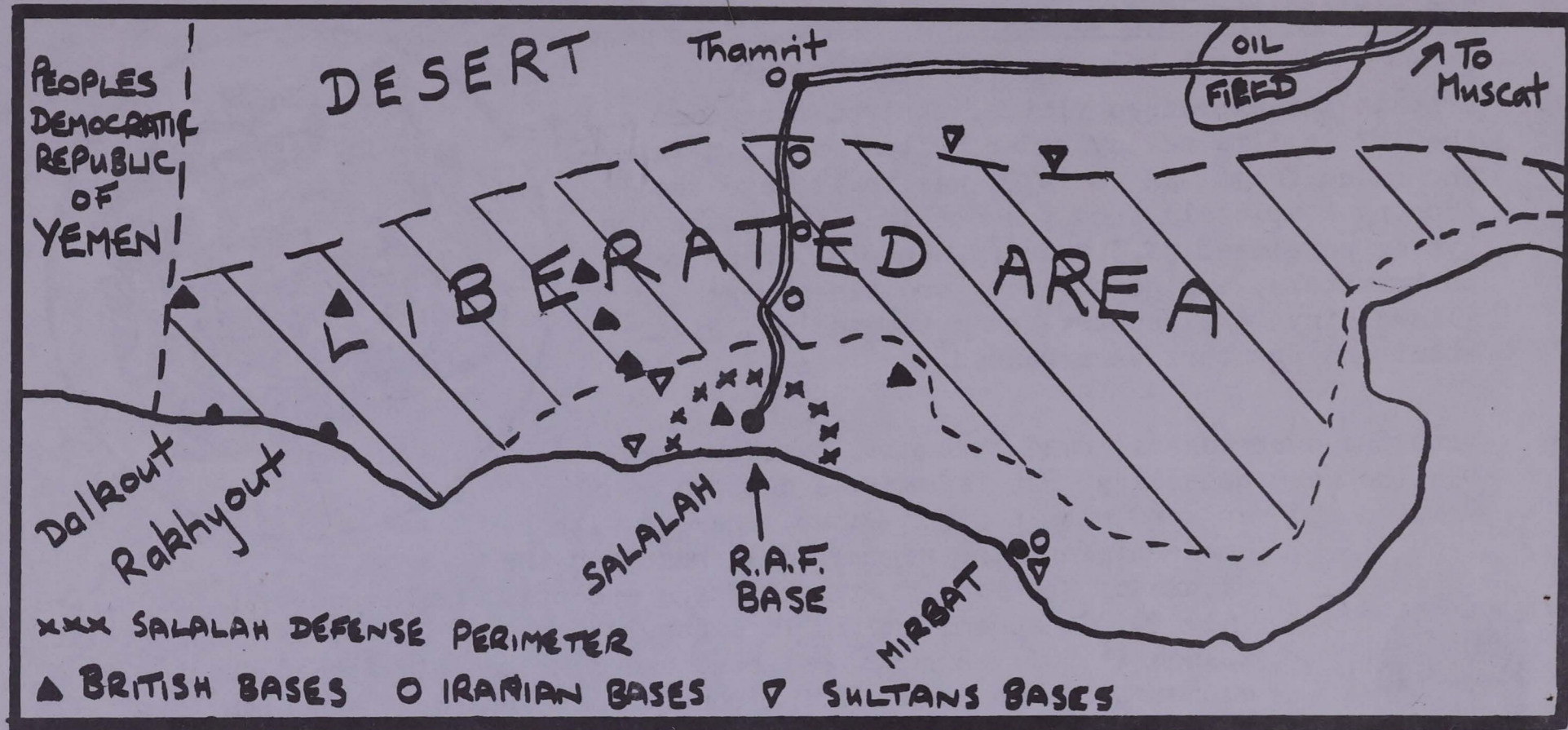
Included in the armed forces are 360 British officers and NCO's, some of whom make up units of the infamous Special Air Services, Britain's counter-insurgency troops who are so active in N. Ireland. R.A.F. pilots flying combat missions from British bases at Salalah and Masira Island can earn up to £9,000 tax free. There is no question of difficulties arising in co-ordination between the British and Omani governments: most key posts in the Omani administration are held by Britons.

A NEW IMPERIALIST OFFENSIVE

But despite this impressive military machine, Qabus and his British 'advisors' realised that they could not crush the 'rebellion' of the P.F.L.O. In December 1973, therefore, another 3,000 Iranian paratroops were called in to open up the 'Red Line', the road linking Salalah in the South to the capital Muscat, in the North, which passes through the mountains of Dhofar. The imperialists hoped to sever the liberation army's supply lines with Democratic Yemen and cut the liberated zone in two as a prelude to destroying each half separately.

In October 1974, the Omani Foreign Minister announced the withdrawal of the Iranian troops, whom he claimed had accomplished their mission. This was a deliberate lie designed to protect the Omani regime from criticism at the Arab League summit conference then taking place. Immediately the conference ended, the return of 11,000 Iranian troops and a new offensive against the liberation forces were announced.





The offensive was preceded last November by intensive bombing raids carried out by the RAF. Using 1,000 pound bombs and incendiary devices, they concentrated on destroying villages, crops, pasture and livestock so as to drive the people into the towns and deprive the liberation army of its support.

In the first month of the offensive, about 50 Iranian soldiers were killed. However, they succeeded in taking the town of Rakhyout, a stronghold of the revolution. By the end of the second month, the Iranians plan to have set up a line of barbed-wire entanglements, mine-fields and military posts, 40 miles to the East of the Yemen border, in order to cut the liberation army's supply lines. Meanwhile, 'search and destroy' operations, carried out by the Sultan's fleet of U.S. helicopters, continue to harass the guerrillas.

It is as a direct result of this increased aggression that, on January 28th of this year, the P.F.L.O. called for the support of democratic and progressive forces throughout the world for the struggle of the Omani people.

IRAN: DEMOCRATIC SHOW-PIECE OR FASCIST DICTATORSHIP?

If the press is silent about British activities in Oman, it is positively effusive in its praise for the Shah of Iran - a true Western democrat and gentleman we are told. Is it then conceivable that the Shah would sanction the use of his troops in the physical liquidation of the Omani people, and in supporting such a vicious regime as that of Qabus? Certainly - and the Shah makes no bones about it - when you pay 5 public relations firms to take care of your image you can afford to be blunt.

The Shah is fond of describing himself as the stooge of the Western powers:

"European security is just a vain word without security in the Persian Gulf. Western Europe, the USA and Japan consider the Gulf as forming part of their own security and yet they are not in a position to guarantee that security. That is why we do it for them... certain regimes on the other side of the Gulf might be overthrown by subversive activities going on at the present. Take for example, the Dhofar rebellion.



Q. Are you saying you cannot tolerate radical regimes taking over any of the Arab sheikhdoms?

The Shah: Yes."

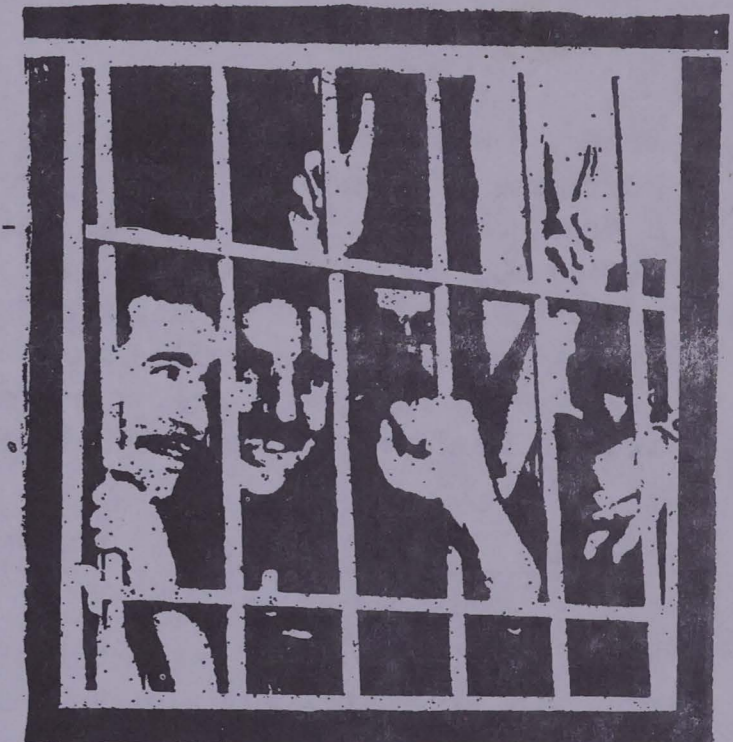
And this ally of the Free World is strangely afraid of his own people hearing about this freedom. He employs a secret-police force (SAVAK) of 60,000 with an estimated 3 million of Iran's 30 million population acting as occasional SAVAK informers. (SAVAK men are at this moment spying on Iranian students in Britain) Tens of thousands of workers, peasants and students have been arrested and tortured - there are at present 45,000 political prisoners in Iran, and 200 have been executed in the past four years.

Working people are denied any democratic political or trade union organisation. 80% of the population live in conditions of poverty, sickness and illiteracy. Persian carpets, international symbol of Iran's rich 'civilisation', are produced by children of 6 and 7, working in near darkness for a wage of around 70p a week.



Strikes and demonstrations against this savage exploitation and oppression have been steadily increasing over the past few years, despite their almost inevitable bloody outcome: a demonstration by students of Tabriz university resulted in 16 deaths; 20 striking workers at a printing mill in Yazd were arrested and tortured; striking workers in the Iran Gas Co. were conscripted into the army. In the past few years too, armed struggle has been initiated in the North of the country, and the organisations concerned have so far resisted every attempt by SAVAK and the armed forces to wipe them out.

Meanwhile, the Shah and his hangers-on share out the oil profits. Some go into their own pockets (in 1961, the Shah gave his wife a \$3 million diadem, a \$1½ million brooch, earrings worth \$50,000, plus a diamond bracelet and gold handbag). Some go on fabulously expensive public jamborees for the benefit of Western audiences (\$300 million on the 2,500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy). A lot goes on one of the best equipped military machines in the Middle East (\$915 million in 1974 - Iran is the world's largest purchaser of arms) to extend the Shah's reign of terror as far as possible. And the rest goes on the show-piece industrial projects that the armed forces, the oil industry, and the Shah's profits need.



BRITISH INVESTMENT IN IRAN AND OMAN

British capitalism's interest in Iran and the Gulf extends beyond simply keeping control of oil resources and preventing the people from taking power. Along with other Western powers, British firms compete for valuable contracts in machinery, equipment and technological aid. Negotiations for these agreements are often carried out by government ministers. David Ennals, (Labour) Minister in the Foreign Office responsible for Middle East affairs, as just got back from a tour of the Gulf. The Shah of Iran, while holidaying in Switzerland, frequently entertains British



officials and businessmen. The increased income from oil has made these countries a very important market for British goods and technology, while the cash they can invest in Britain during the economic crisis offers another very good reason to cosset their support.

Among the contracts recently fixed with Oman is a £22 million deal with Hawker Siddley. Nineteen power stations are to be built as part of Qabus's 'modernisation'. This might be justified as part of an attempt to improve the Omani people's living standards - until we look at the other recent deals. Taylor Woodrow, for example, is committed to building a £4 million naval base, a new military H.Q. and runway at Salalah, and part of the £20 million luxury house and hotel complex, modestly called 'Qabus City'. Qabus has also spent nearly £4 million on two new palaces, helped by British construction firms.

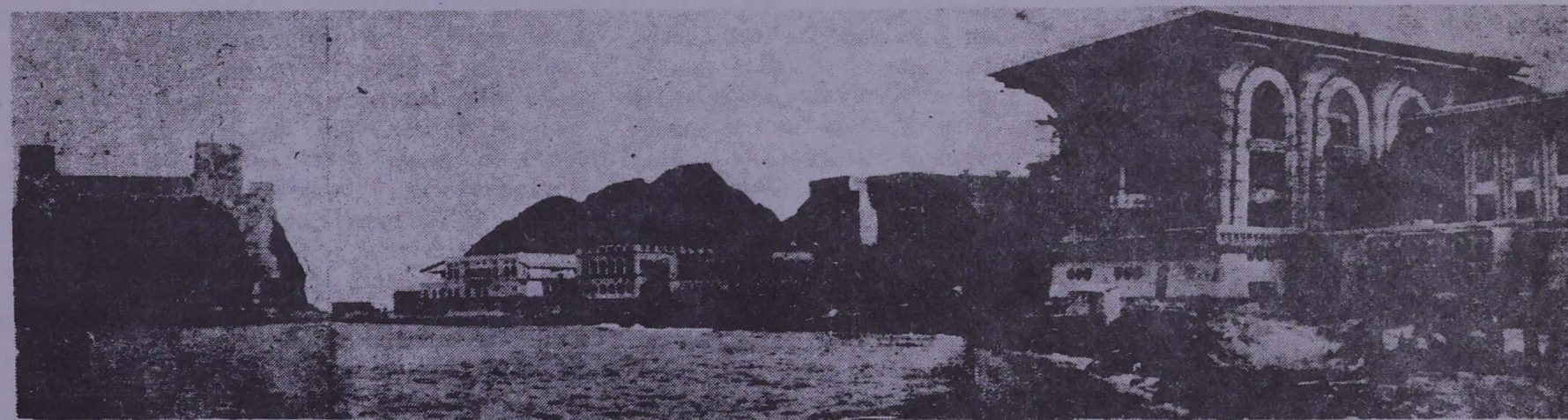
Other British contracts in Oman involve Wimpeys (military centre, luxury hotel, government buildings); Cementation International (deals worth £30 million); Costains; and Mothercat. Consultancy firms heavily involved include Sir William Halcrows and John R. Harris.

But it is in military aid and deals with Oman that British firms lead the field. A recent Sunday Times report (19.1.75) applauded "Oman is also a profitable market still for British military exports". Apart from artillery, and Ferret and Saladin armoured vehicles, almost the entire air force is British equipped.

Iran's business links with Britain are also very strong. Apart from the Shah's purchase of Concorde, Peter Shore (Labour Minister for Trade) recently concluded a deal for British firms to build 100,000 houses in Iran! Other parts of the contracts concerned the supply of 13 ships, construction of warehouses, silos and modernisation of the railways (G.E.C., including the Sheffield factory, are involved) Other British firms well-known in Iran are ICI, Bowater, and Hawker Siddley. Sheffield interests are represented by, amongst others, Davy United and BSC. A former Master Cutler is head of BSC's Iran subsidiary.

SUPPORT THE STRUGGLES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE GULF!

With the intensified attacks of Britain and Iran, and the military and economic support given to Qabus's regime, the revolution in Dhofar now faces a critical stage. Why should democratic and progressive forces in Britain give their full support to the people of Oman?



(Symbols of Qabus's reign. From left to right: the fortress housing political prisoners, the British Embassy, and Qabus's new £2 million palace.)



The strategy of the Western Imperialist powers since 1970 is summed up in the word "Vietnamisation". This means that they now fight their battles for the control of the world's resources indirectly, through local agents, rather than by direct intervention: in the Gulf, chiefly through Saudi Arabia and Iran.

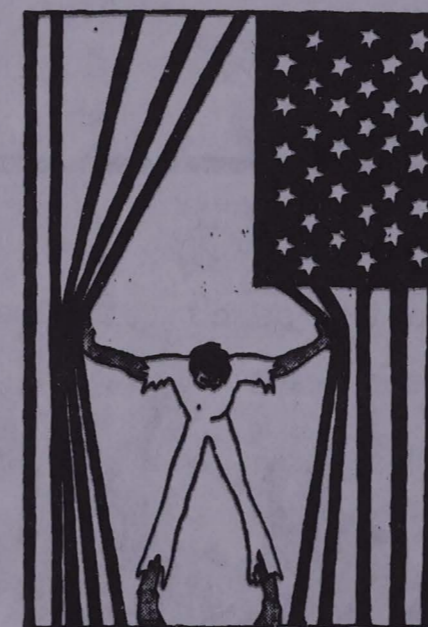


In this way, Imperialism tries to present the anti-imperialist struggles of the people of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, as purely local affairs in which its only interest is a desire for 'peace' and 'stability'. It tries to separate these struggles from each other, and to keep these anti-imperialist struggles separated from the anti-capitalist struggles of working class and democratic forces within the imperialist countries themselves.

It is 'divide and rule' on a global scale: just as the British colonialists set up separate sheikhdoms in the Gulf and stirred up inter-tribal feuds, so Imperialism plays off the aspirations of the working class in one country against those of workers and peasants in the others.

It is urgent we shed any idea that the national liberation struggle in Oman is a local affair, and the British government's interest in it only peace. If the revolution in Dhofar is defeated, it will inevitably be followed by intensified attacks on the socialist government of Democratic Yemen and a full-scale attempt by the Western powers and the multi-nationals to destroy the hard-won gains of the people of the Gulf and the Arab people as a whole.

Through the invasion of Oman, Imperialism seeks to shore up its own tottering position, weakened as it is by both internal and external opposition. The intensified military campaign in the Gulf is only the other side of Imperialism's desperate attempt to preserve profits and economic stability at the expense of its own working class: two complementary solutions to a single 'problem' - Imperialism's very survival.



The defeat of all foreign troops by the Omani people will be a valuable gain for working class and democratic forces in Britain and throughout the world.

STOP THE WAR AGAINST OMAN!

RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN OMAN!

VICTORY TO THE PEOPLE'S FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF OMAN!



HAROLD WILSON



THE SHAH OF IRAN



KING FEISAL OF SAUDI ARABIA



SULTAN QABUS OF OMAN

WHAT WE ASK YOU TO SUPPORT:

A SUMMARY OF THE POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF THE P.F.L.O.

Expulsion of British forces, defeat of Iranian invaders, and replacing of Qabus's corrupt regime with a united, democratic and independent Oman.

Release of all political prisoners. Guaranteed freedom of speech for the Omani people.

Nationalisation of the oil companies, and control of the economy by the Omani people.

Land to the tiller. Confiscation and redistribution of land granted foreign companies. Agrarian reform and modernisation based on co-operative principles.

Recognition of workers' right to organise trade unions and strike. Participation of workers in running factories. Fighting unemployment.

Abolition of laws discriminating on the basis of tribe, race, sect or social standing. Provision of a free health service.

Building of a new education system. Fighting illiteracy. Development of a national culture rooted in the history of the Omani people.

Building of a strong national army. Arming the people for self-defence.

Firm support for the Palestinian people in the struggle to return to their homeland.

Ending of all military pacts. Establishment of friendly relations with all freedom- and peace-loving peoples.

Support for national liberation movements throughout the world, and for people's struggles for justice and social progress everywhere.

DEMONSTRATION in London. Sun. MARCH 9th. "British and Iranian troops out of Oman."

For further details about this and other events, and for information about the campaign, contact:

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