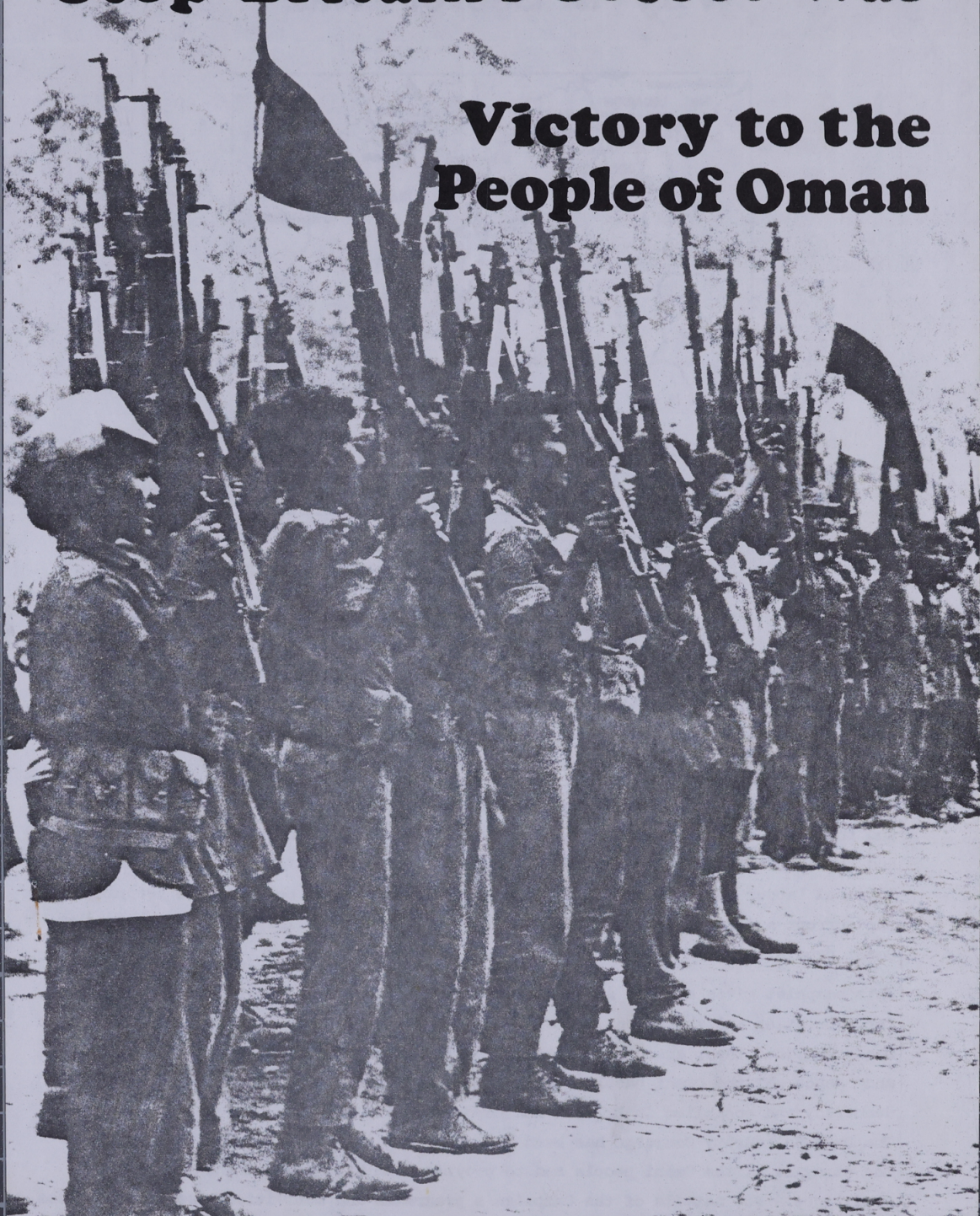


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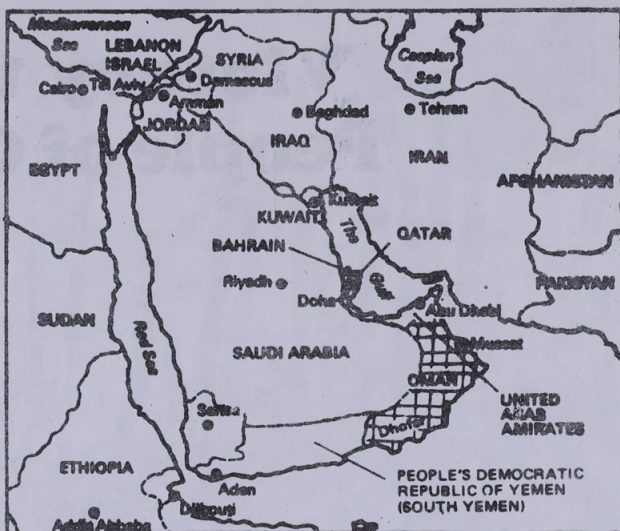
# Stop Britain's Secret War

## Victory to the People of Oman



**OMAN SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN**

# Why a Secret War?



For ten years now, a full-scale war has been raging in Oman. The people of Oman, a small backward country in the Gulf area of southern Arabia, are fighting heroically for freedom and democracy against a vast army made up mainly of foreign invaders and mercenaries equipped with the most sophisticated weaponry money can buy. Thousands of patriotic Omani workers and peasants have been killed, tortured or imprisoned and their lands and livestock destroyed by napalm and incendiary bombs.

And yet the people of Britain know next to nothing about the war. Television, radio and the press maintain almost total silence on what is happening, the forces involved and the issues at stake. Why? The main reason is that British troops, successive Tory and Labour governments and major British firms are all committed to propping up the corrupt and tyrannical regime in Oman and crushing the liberation struggle of the Omani people.

This pamphlet gives a short account of the situation in Oman, the people's struggle for liberation and the extent of British involvement. It also explains how the war in Oman fits into the plans of Imperialism for the Gulf and the Middle East as a whole, and hence why the Omani people's struggle demands the support of those fighting for democracy and socialism in Britain and throughout the world.

The Oman Solidarity Campaign has been set up to win political support in Britain for the struggle of the Omani people and to provide them with medical and material assistance. For details of the Campaign's programme and activities, please turn to the later pages of this pamphlet.

## Oman: extremes of wealth and poverty

Oman is a country about the size of Britain but with a population of less than one and a half million, at the south-east tip of the Arabian peninsula. Though one of the lesser oil-producing countries of the Gulf it is very important strategically. It guards the narrow entrance of the Gulf, which contains two-thirds of the world's oil resources, and faces the Indian Ocean.

In spite of the country's oil revenue (400,000,000 in 1975) the majority of the people live in extreme poverty: few receive any education, there is virtually no health service outside the principal towns, and there is hardly any regular employment apart from the Sultan's army. Most of the people scrape a living by herding cattle, sheep, goats or camels, though some are able to cultivate fruit, vegetables and a little grain, and others are fishermen.

In contrast, the country's ruler, Sultan Qabus, lives in luxury supported only by a wealthy elite of sheikhs and merchants. In the last five years Qabus has had three palaces built for himself by British contractors (one alone cost seven million pounds).

Without massive foreign intervention this corrupt and repressive ruling clique could not survive. Until recently Britain was solely responsible for directing the country's affairs. It supplied all top government officials and economic advisers, while seconded and retired British officers ran the Sultan's military machine.

With the growing success of the war against the Sultan, led by the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman, other foreign forces - chiefly Iran and Jordan - have been drawn in by Imperialism. Britain itself is being gradually forced to hand over control of Oman to United States Imperialism.

## Britain's colony for 180 years

Britain has a long history of involvement in Oman. In the 19th century the security of the Indian Empire and the British trade routes depended on control of the Arabian coast which in addition gave British merchants a monopoly in the Gulf itself. Since the treaty of 1793, successive British governments have imposed a series of unequal agreements on the ruling Al-bu Said family of Oman. In return, they have maintained them in power against all internal and external opposition.

Until 1970 the policy of the British was to keep Oman virtually isolated from the modern world. In 1933, they installed Sultan Said bin Taimur. Under his feudal rule the people of Oman were kept in poverty and ignorance and denied even the most elementary freedoms. Medical care and education were almost non-existent, there were no hospitals and only three primary schools were ever built. Even spectacles, radios, cigarettes and trousers were banned!

However, two factors made it essential for the British to alter their strategy: the discovery of oil in Oman in the 1950's and the advance of the people's national liberation struggle. The oil resources could not be successfully exploited without a 'modern' state which allowed free movement of labour for the foreign companies; and the war against the 'rebels' could not be won without increasing military spending which in its turn required the development of the oil industry. This 'modernisation' of Oman was intended also to check the opposition of the people and their growing support for the liberation struggle.



Sultan Qabus of Oman  
British-backed,  
Sandhurst-trained  
military dictator.



Roy Mason, Minister of Defence (centre), gives on the spot approval to the activities of British officers (right) during his April visit to Oman. With him is his Parliamentary Secretary Pat Duffy, M.P. for Attercliffe, Sheffield.

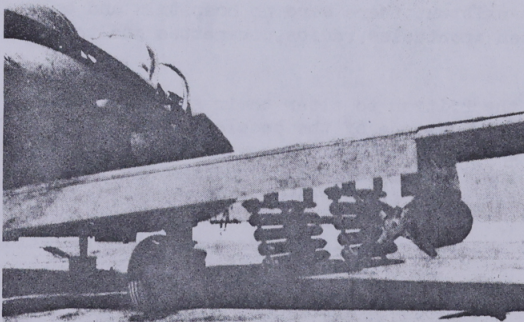
## The arrival of Sultan Qabus, 1970

In 1970 therefore, Britain staged a coup against Sultan Taimur and installed his son, Sandhurst-trained Qabus, as ruler. What has his 'modernisation' programme accomplished? The majority of the people live outside the capital Muscat (there are few towns in Oman anyway): to serve these there are just two hospitals. Only 30,000 children attend school - and these are limited to primary education. Infant mortality stands at around 50%. Scurvy, beri-beri and T.B. are widespread due to malnutrition and poor housing. All fundamental democratic rights are illegal; justice remains feudal and arbitrary.

The only thing to be modernised was the Sultan's Armed Forces. Under British direction new weapons were ordered, the air force was expanded (using British Aircraft Corporation Strikemaster jets), and the army increased to 15,000 men. 60% of the nation's budget goes on the military. Much of the equipment comes from Britain and there are currently £45 million worth of orders for Jaguar jets and £50 million worth for Rapier missiles.

## The People's Response

The armed struggle began on 9th June, 1965, in Dhofar the southern province of Oman. Initially led by the Dhofar Liberation Front, the local people united to overthrow the repressive rule of Sultan Taimur and his British backers. Within a few years most of the province had been liberated.



A 'Strikemaster' jet in Oman used in attacks on people, their homes, crops and livestock. Flown by serving and retired RAF pilots for £6,400 a year tax free. It is the policy of the British-led armed forces to force the rural population into fortified villages. These concentration camps prevent the people from giving food and shelter to the liberation army. Arms include cannon plus the 16 rockets and 500lb bombs.

(picture: From "Flight International")



Originally under the influence of Arab nationalism, the movement developed wider perspectives in the late 1960's through its relationship with workers' struggles in the oil-states of the Gulf and the successful revolution in neighbouring Yemen.

This 1967 revolution in the Aden Protectorate (now the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) was particularly important. After six years of armed struggle, the people defeated the British army and destroyed the old colonial regime. This decisively altered the balance of forces in the Gulf. Not only was the hold of the British weakened; the P.D.R.Y., particularly after the Corrective Movement of 1969, became the staunchest ally of the Omani revolution, providing both material and political support.

By 1968, the initial demands of independence for Dhofar province were replaced by a programme of independence, democracy and socialism for all the Gulf. The now re-named People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf, adopted a clearly anti-imperialist position.

## Inside the Liberated Areas

Despite the unceasing attacks by the reactionary forces, in particular the indiscriminate bombing raids carried out by British pilots, the People's Front consolidated its position in the liberated areas. The British were only able to control the narrow coastal strip around the RAF base at Salalah.

Inside the liberated zones the lives of the people have been changed dramatically. Popular democracy has replaced the rule of the sheikhs and religious leaders. Slavery has been abolished and old tribal feuds settled. Schools have been established for the first time in an effort to wipe out illiteracy. Women play an equal part in the social and military struggles. Essential health services have been set up. The basis of a sound national economy has been laid by a programme of land reform, the settling of nomads and the participation of the whole people in economic construction. Disputes which do arise are settled by People's Commissions, while the arming of the whole people guarantees that the gains of the revolution are protected.

## A new Imperialist offensive

The Sultan's own army (by now around 15,000 men), its British officers, command structure and RAF support, were clearly incapable of destroying the People's Front. On the contrary, the struggle spread far beyond Dhofar to the northernmost regions of Oman. The Sultan and his British 'advisors' therefore turned for help to the Shah of Iran, possessor of the most expensive, best equipped and largest military machine in the Middle East. The Shah was only too willing to oblige; his own expansionist ambitions in the Gulf had already been manifested in November 1971 when his forces occupied three strategic islands in the Hormuz Straits.



A PFLO unit training



British Intelligence Officer with Sultan's troops in Salalah.

The Iranian invasion began relatively modestly in December 1973 when 3,000 troops were sent - all the Shah felt were required to deal with a "handful of illiterate guerillas". But the Iranian military presence currently stands at over 20,000 front-line, air-borne and logistic troops. As in Vietnam, the people of Oman have demonstrated that sheer weight of sophisticated weaponry is no match for a people united in arms to achieve their liberation. Not only have the Iranian forces largely failed in their military objectives ("truncating the rebels towards the Yemeni border" Roy Mason, British Minister of Defence, 1975) the invasion has helped strengthen the P.F.L.O.'s position politically.

The immediate tasks of the Iranian invasion were to reopen the road linking Salalah base to Muscat (called the Red Line by the liberation forces in memory of the bloody fighting necessary to secure control of it), to 'clean up' the eastern zone of Dhofar province, and thus to avoid the extremely expensive air-supply of Salalah. The Iranians established a host of military posts along the Red Line to guarantee the passage of convoys. But not only are the troops pinned down for surprise attacks from the liberation army the constant ambush of convoys necessitated such heavy air support from Iranian helicopters that the cost of the convoys is greater than the original air-supply! Moreover, Iranian losses have been very heavy. In August and September this year they were losing helicopters at the rate of 5 in 4 weeks; the liberation forces' practice of drawing Iranian troops deep into the liberated areas, harassing them with ambushes and avoiding large engagements, has led to a high casualty rate among the Iranians, low morale and outbreaks of mutiny.

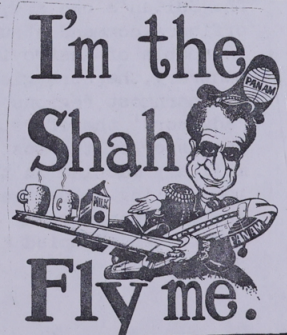
On the political level, the invasion proved to the Omani people and to the Arab people as a whole, that the true patriots are with the People's Front, not Qabus. The growing popularity and support for the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman (renamed in response to growing, independent movements in other parts of the Gulf) among the Omani masses necessitates ever harsher repression. The invasion has also led to the growing isolation of the Qabus regime in the Arab world. Condemnation of the regime now comes from many Arab states, the Union of Arab Lawyers, etc., and it is faced with the threat of expulsion from the Arab League.

"European security is just a vain word without stability and 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 extremists and by subversive activities going on at present. Take for example, the Dhofar rebellion in the Sultanate of Oman...."

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

"Yes".

The Shah; Newsweek, 21.5.1973



## British investment in Oman

"Britain has close political and economic relations with Oman. Within our resources we are assisting the Sultan's Forces against the Dhofar rebels who threaten the security of both Oman and the Gulf".

Mr. David Ennals  
Labour Secretary of State for Foreign  
and Commonwealth Affairs.

British capitalism's interest in Oman 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, quoted above, went to the Gulf early this year. The Shah of Iran, while holidaying in Switzerland 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 Siddeley. Taylor Woodrow 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'. Other British contracts in Oman involve Wimpeys (military centre, luxury hotel, and government buildings); Cementation International (deals worth £30 million); Costains and Mothercat. Consultancy firms heavily involved include Sir William Halerows 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 (19.1.1975) applauded "Oman is also a profitable market still for British military export". Apart from artillery, and Ferret and Saladin armoured vehicles, almost the entire air-force is British-equipped.

This advert for ex-officers to go on active service against the Omani people appeared in "The Guardian" 15 Aug. 1975

### SULTANATE OF OMAN ARMED FORCES APPOINTMENTS

Applications are invited from suitably qualified Officers of the British Services, who have recently retired or expect to retire within the next three months, to fill interesting and challenging appointments on a contract basis in the Armed Forces of the Sultanate of Oman, in the following specialisations (the normal age limit is shown in brackets in each case):

**AIR FORCE** Project Officers Air Defence (Tech./Eng) (49)  
Staff Officers (Air 1/Air Plans/Eng. Mech.) (49)  
Fighter Controllers (49)  
Air Traffic Controllers (40)

**NAVY** Navigating Officer (for Royal Yacht) (40)  
Seaman Officers (for small ships) (30)  
Weapons Electrical Officer (40).

**ARMY** Infantry Officers (for combat duties) (28)

Contracts are for three years initially renewable by mutual agreement and the appointments are unaccompanied although there are facilities for short family visits.

Successful applicants are engaged in the rank of Flight Lieutenant (Air Force) or equivalent, and there are promotion prospects in certain categories. Conditions of service are attractive including annual emoluments commencing at the equivalent of £6,400 at current rates of exchange (tax free), an end-of-contract gratuity, air conditioned mess type accommodation and services free of charge, and generous home leave with air passages paid.

Apply with brief details to:

JT 147 THE GUARDIAN



(Symbols of Qabus's regime. From left to right: the fortress housing political prisoners, the British Embassy, and Qabus's multi-million pound palace, built by the British)

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

The strategy of the imperialist powers since 1970 is summed up in the word 'Vietnamisation'. This means that they now fight their battles for control of the world's resources indirectly, through local agents, rather than by direct intervention. In addition to the Iranian forces, King Hussein of Jordan has sent 3,000 troops, plus bombers and pilots. Sudan's President Numeiri has sent an equal number.

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 set up separate sheikhdoms in the Gulf and stirred up inter-tribal feuds, so imperialism plays off the aspirations of the working class in the capitalist countries against those of workers and peasants in the Third World.

The national liberation struggle in Oman is not a local affair. If it 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.



Wilson



Qabus



The Shah



Hussein





The struggle of the Omani people currently has the support of a number of Arab states. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen is the main ally of the revolution, providing both material and political support. Libya, Iraq, Syria and Algeria also provide assistance in varying degrees. But equally important is the solidarity shown by progressive and democratic people around the whole world.

Where the British and American governments draw a blanket of silence over the war and seek to isolate the Omani people, solidarity work offers them moral support by laying bare what is going on and publicising their military and social successes. While the imperialist forces try to defeat the People's Front by attacking and terrorising the civilian population in Oman, solidarity groups can provide some material support by way of urgently-needed medical supplies.

Active solidarity groups already exist in the U.S.A., Canada, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, France - and Britain. The first inter-European Solidarity Conference was held in Copenhagen last March to establish a basis for future co-operation and co-ordination between them. Solidarity with the revolution in Oman has existed in Britain for some years; but when, in December 1974, 84 Members of Parliament signed a motion calling for an end to British involvement in Oman, it became clear to those groups already active that support for the people of Oman could be gained amongst broad sections of democratic and progressive opinion in Britain. It was therefore decided to establish a national Oman Solidarity Campaign.

Already, local groups cover London and the South East, the West country, the Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West and Scotland; and the campaign, sponsored by many M.P.s and prominent figures has the active support of trade unionists, immigrant workers, Labour Party members, British and overseas students and representatives of all shades of democratic opinion.

The aims of the campaign are given below. We ask you to help in whatever way you can: by contributing generously to the Dhofar Medical Aid fund; by passing a motion in your trade union or organisation, supporting these aims; by joining and working with your local O.S.C. group as an individual, or affiliating as an organisation; or simply by publicising the situation in Oman wherever and however you can.

## Victory to the Omani People!

### EXHIBITION

An extensive exhibition can be borrowed for display at meetings, colleges, etc. It contains up to 70 colour and black & white pictures arranged in topics (e.g. British involvement, The Peoples War, Liberated Areas) each with a caption and explanatory comments on each section. A charge may be requested to help cover expenses.

### POSTERS

Large black & white posters are available at 50p each (inc.post)

### RECORD

An L.P. record of revolutionary songs from Oman, Yemen and Iran is also available at £3 (inc.post)

All the above are available from the campaign address overleaf.

### BOOKS

#### 9th June Studies

OMAN : A CLASS ANALYSIS  
THE OMAN WAR 1957-59  
THE UNITED ARAB AMIRATES

#### Gulf Committee Publications

DOCUMENTS OF THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE  
IN OMAN  
POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE OIL  
STATES  
OIL AND INVESTMENT IN OMAN  
ARMS BUILD UP IN THE INDIAN  
OCEAN & THE GULF

The above pamphlets are available from local Oman groups or direct from the GULF COMMITTEE, C/O I.C.D.P. 6 Endsleigh St. London W.C.1

Reference book on the situation in Oman and the Gulf:  
ARABIA WITHOUT SULTANS by Fred Halliday (published by Penguin).

## Tasks of the Campaign

The Oman Solidarity Campaign supports the just struggles of the people of Oman led by the P.F.L.O. and it denounces the aggressive war being waged against them by Britain and its agents, Iran and Jordan.

The tasks of the Campaign are as follows:

1. To mobilise trade unionists, immigrant workers, Labour Party members, British and overseas students, and all other progressive people in Britain to support the just struggle of the people of Oman.
2. To make widely known the political programme of the P.F.L.O., and to use it as the basis for solidarity work; and to publicise the political and social achievements of the Omani revolution.
3. To expose the nature and extent of British involvement in Oman and to demand the withdrawal of all British troops and other personnel, military and civilian advisers; to close down military bases and to bring an end to all support for the puppet regime.
4. To demand the return of all military bases to the Omani people and to oppose their transference to any other foreign power.
5. To demand the ending of all military supplies to Oman, Iran and Jordan.
6. To demand the withdrawal of Iranian, Jordanian and all other foreign troops from Oman; and to oppose the introduction of any other non-Omani forces.
7. To demand the release of all political prisoners in Oman.
8. To oppose anti-Arab and all other forms of racism which exist in Britain.
9. To collect funds to provide material support for the Omani people in their struggle: medical aid, funds for the construction of hospitals, educational materials, etc.
10. To establish cooperation with all organisations and individuals who accept broadly the political platform of the Solidarity Campaign, and in particular to support the efforts made in Parliament by the 84 M.P.s who have called for British withdrawal from Oman.
11. To publish a regular journal and occasional pamphlets, to organise meetings and demonstrations etc. in fulfillment of the above aims.



## Oman Solidarity Campaign

If you are interested in the work of the Oman Solidarity Campaign and would like to be informed about the activities of the group nearest you, then please contact the address below.

We shall be pleased to help any Trade Union, Student Union, Club, society or other organisation which wants to know more. Speakers, exhibition material, pamphlets and other materials are available.

Donations towards the work of the campaign would be very welcome. Alternatively, Medical Aid can be sent to the Oman Red Crescent organisation by sending your donations to:

DHOFAR MEDICAL AID,  
c/o I.C.D.P.

6 Endsleigh ST. London, W.C.1

OMAN SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Please address to:

The Secretary,  
38 Burngreave Bank,  
SHEFFIELD S 4 7HL.