

WHEN CRUSADERS AND  
ASSASSINS UNITE,  
LET THE PEOPLE BEWARE

بادشاہ، باخراک، ہم میری رست وادما کا اردو دنیا از این زم سمیدند و محسن کے کہ غاسان اورا کشند نظام الملک



نامہ نامتور کتبہ بردن قل ملا الشیطان اول لتعداد سال مارا از مشتاد و اندک شتہ و سید اب  
تیا نظام الملک و مال نامعدان ارحمارست آمدن

MIDNIGHT NOTES

Comune di Padova  
Sistema Bibliotecario

ALF - SLD

Sez. 6

Sottosez.

Serie 9

Sottos.

Unità 248

PUV 55

TABLE A

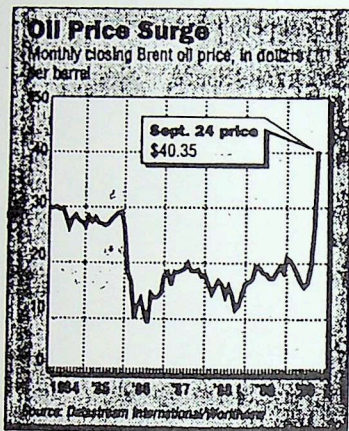
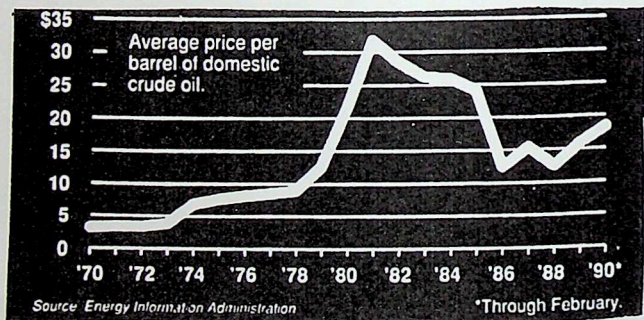


TABLE B





## WHEN CRUSADERS AND ASSASSINS UNITE, LET THE PEOPLE BEWARE

*When the elephants fight the grass gets trampled,  
When elephants make love the grass still gets trampled.*  
-African proverb with a Trinidadian twist

A movement is growing in opposition to the U.S. deployment of troops in the Persian Gulf region. The Midnight Notes collective is part of this movement but we disagree with many activists' reading of the present U.S. government strategy. As a consequence we fear that many are preparing themselves to fight the last great war, namely Vietnam. We question the following Vietnam-war like premises that guide the actions of many in our movement: (1) the U.S. troop deployments are largely directed against Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime; (2) the U.S. military is preparing for large-scale conventional warfare between U.S. and Iraqi troops.

We disagree with these premises and the scenario they suggest, hence we do not believe that the U.S. and Iraqi governments are the total enemies their propaganda ministries make them out to be. On the contrary, the U.S. and Iraqi invasions of August 1990 were aimed at achieving a goal shared by the ruling groups in Saddam's Iraq, Bush's U.S., Gorbachev's U.S.S.R. and Fahd's Saudi Arabia: increasing the price of petroleum (thus reducing the real wages of oil products consumers) and militarily intimidating the oil-producing proletariat throughout the planet.

Consequently, the best way to oppose present U.S. Persian Gulf policy and actions is to fight for lower gasoline, heating oil and electricity prices in the U.S. and demand that U.S. troops be brought back from the Gulf and be demobilized.

# I

*Nothing is true...all is permitted.*

- Hassan I Sabah, the "Old Man of the Mountains"  
and founder of the Assassins

The appearance of two armies in a dramatic face-off on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border seems to indicate irreconcilable differences between the U.S. and Iraqi governments. But appearances can deceive. During the Crusades, when Christians launched a jihad to take Jerusalem (and much loot) from the Moslems, Christian chiefs allied themselves with the heretical Islamic sect of Assassins to rid themselves of co-religionists in their fleshy games of power. The Assassins required that converts be ready to assassinate (the word originates with this sect) any one selected by the leaders of the sect. Richard the Lion-hearted, for example, called the Assassins to stab Conrad, Lord of Tyre and Marquess of Monteferrat, to death and then forged a letter from Hassan I Sabah to claim his innocence.

If Crusaders and Assassins connived in the past, is it not possible for U.S. and Iraqi leaders to do the same today? Consider the record. Two weeks before the Iraqi invasion, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, the main ally of the U.S. government in the region, suggested that Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates could not expect any military protection from the Saudi government since they were violating OPEC oil quotas and depressing the oil price. On the Friday before the invasion of Kuwait the Bush Administration lobbied against U.S. Senate and House legislation to impose economic sanctions on Iraq. Further, it is now public record that the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, on July 25 met with Saddam Hussein and said the following, "The president personally wants to expand and deepen the relation with Iraq.... We don't have much to say about Arab-Arab differences, like your border difference with Kuwait." Why was there such a meeting of minds in late July and such an apparent division in early August?

We claim that the invasions of August were aimed at achieving a goal shared by the ruling groups in Saddam's Iraq, Bush's U.S., Gorbachev's U.S.S.R. and Fahd's Saudi Arabia: increasing the price of petroleum (and thus energy) and militarily intimidating the oil-producing proletariat throughout the planet, the latter being a necessary prerequisite for



sustaining the former.

The unity of the Iranian, Iraqi and Saudi governments around the price increase was public knowledge in the summer of 1990. It was the first time in a decade that the three largest OPEC producers were in price agreement. The rationale for this new price strategy was set out in a report done by the Washington Center for Strategic and International studies and commissioned by Saddam Hussein's government at the end of 1989. This report has been kept secret but Henry Schuler, the Center's Energy Security Program Director, gave an interview to the *Arab Oil and Gas Journal* on March 1, 1990 that was apparently based on it. In the interview Schuler expressed anxiety about the internal instability of most governments in the Gulf, including Saddam's Ba'athist regime, and pointed to a way out. He said that Arab oil producers could get \$24 or \$25 a barrel without consumers searching for alternative energy sources. Schuler asked, "Why leave money on the table?" Indeed, if Arab nations did not follow their self-interest by pushing up oil prices, he added, they would be open to serious popular criticism. This strategy could not be carried out by simple market manipulations, however, and would require some change in oil pricing leadership. (For more details on this matter see Helga Graham's article in the *London-Observer* of October 21, 1990.) Saddam Hussein's government has largely followed these Washington-based policy proscriptions since.

The two largest non-OPEC oil producers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., were also seeking higher petroleum prices. The Soviet need and opportunity was obvious. Once its Eastern European "allies" walked off into the jaws of the IMF and freedom it could sell its oil on the world market and get the hard currency essential to the survival of perestroika. Moreover, the Soviet petroleum industry was facing declining production. It needed new investment that could only come from foreign capitalists assured of a higher oil price. Meanwhile, the U.S. government was planning a wage-reducing recession. What better method to start things off but another oil "shock" caused by a "mad" Arab leader? It needed, moreover, an initiatory shock that would simultaneously recapitalize the energy industries and the Southwest region—the sources of the S&L catastrophe—as well as sustain military expenditures.

The oil price "shock" has been manufactured quite smartly with the blockade of Iraq and the slow increase in supply by the oil-producing countries. But the oil price shocks of the past were different from August 1990. There were no invasions of the oil producing sites then. The 1973

shock used the Six Day War as incitement while the 1979 shock used the Iranian Revolution. This time Iraqi, U.S., French, British, Syrian, Egyptian (and even Eastern European!) troops and ships are at the wellhead and loading sites, inspecting tankers and interrogating oil workers. Why all this firepower to achieve a result that a bit of media manipulation of events accomplished in the past?

This militarization of oil production is necessary in order *to sustain and control* the oil price, for the oil-producing proletariat's demands must be contained as the revolutions and social contracts of the 1970s and early 1980s reveal. These decades showed that the surplus monies generated by higher oil prices were not used by the oil-exporting countries as profitably as possible, in a capitalist sense. Instead of investing the oil profits into energy and high-tech sectors of world capital, this surplus was too often converted into increasing the standard of living of the oil-producing proletariat. This proletariat not only includes the oil field workers, but also the entire community of workers necessary for the production of these workers. Thus Egyptian construction workers, Palestinian truck drivers, Filipino nurses and Sri Lankan prostitutes are part of the oil-producing proletariat in the Gulf region.

These foreign workers were especially important in pre-invasion Kuwait where 80% of the domestic labor force was made up of foreign workers (including about 400,000 Palestinians). They also played a central role in Iraq where 1.5 million Egyptians, 300,000 Sudanese and 200,000 other foreign workers made up about 25% of the labor force. At least 60% of the Saudi Arabian work force is foreign (including more than one million Yemenis and 300,000 Palestians). 90% of the United Arab Emirates labor force is made of foreign workers as well, with the bulk coming from India, Pakistan and Iran. In general, the oil-producing proletariat is transnational—frequently coming from the poorest parts of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. But it controls a decisive juncture in the circuit of capitalist production. For petroleum is still the most basic of commodities (i.e., it enters directly or indirectly into the production of almost all commodities including food, shelter and clothing) and the highly technical character of its production makes it most vulnerable to worker insubordination.

The Iranian revolution of 1979, in which the oil field workers seized the oil wells and the urban proletariat destroyed the Shah's regime, clearly indicated the dangers the oil-producing proletariat posed to capital



worldwide. But Iran was only the most spectacular display of oil workers' power in the 1970s and early 1980s. From Mexico to Nigeria and Indonesia, the oil price "shocks" raised expectations that could not be controlled by even the most repressive governments, as the Shah's demise showed. These expectations had to be stifled. Hence the reason for the price collapse beginning in 1982 and Mexico's default on payments of oil-guaranteed loans which initiated the Debt Crisis. With the so-called "oil glut," almost all the oil-producing countries have accepted International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity policies that radically cut the wages and expectations of the oil-producing proletariat. For example, IMF-imposed devaluations of the currencies of oil-producing countries immediately lower the wages of foreign workers, who must exchange their monetary wages in banks or in the black market to send home remittances.

The social tension in these proletarians has been rising since the mid-1980s; for they know they are producing the most basic of commodities, but the capitalist market tells them that their product is practically worthless (e.g., in the spring of 1986 oil was sold at less than \$10 a barrel—there being 42 gallons to a barrel). Since 1988 this tension had exploded throughout the world in riots and insurrections against IMF austerity policies and regimes, for example:

- 1988: Algeria, riots against austerity policies;  
Palestine, the intifada;  
Nigeria, riots against IMF austerity policies.
- 1989: Jordan, riots against IMF austerity policies.
- 1990: Nigeria, anti-IMF army coup attempt;  
Jordan, anti-austerity riots;  
Venezuela, anti-IMF austerity riots and coup rumors.

Islam-based social movements have also grown dramatically in Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Emirates in these years. They have been frequently called "fundamentalist" but they do not constitute a "medieval throwback," nor are they only a form of post-modern patriarchy. These social movements often are a form of internationalism as well which protests the inequality of the oil-wealth distribution, i.e., the capitalization of "the gift from Allah to all," and provides an ideological basis for the refusal of IMF austerity policies (since usury is still a sin in Islam as it was in Christianity).

A peak and synthesis of these anti-IMF reactions by the oil-producing proletariat was the Trinidadian insurrection of July 27, 1990, one week before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It came at the end of a period of political instability due to the Trinidad government's implementation of IMF economic policy recommendations. These policies, as usual, caused massive unemployment and wage reduction. In response: a "Day of Resistance" general strike was held on March 6, 1989 to protest the price hikes and the dismantling of social welfare programs; the oil field workers went on strike for the first time in thirty years, in September 1989; in May through July 1990 there were intermittent strikes of health care workers. In the midst of this situation of high tension, the Jamaat Al Muslimeen, an Islamic sect of Afro-Caribbeans, struck. They tied Trinidad and Tobago President Robinson and his cabinet to bombs, while the urban proletariat expropriated food, clothing and appliances from the central stores. The anticipation of a U.S. intervention was decisive, however, in defeating the insurrection on Aug. 1. In the aftermath, the government militarized its rule of the islands. But both the directness of the assault and the surprising appearance of militant Islamic revolutionaries on a Caribbean isle made it clear that the oil-producing proletariat had reached its breaking point worldwide.

The Iraqi-U.S. invasions of August 1990 were a response to the class meaning of the Trinidadian insurrection. For the guns on both sides of the Kuwaiti border are aimed at the oil-producing proletarians and their friends who are being told that any attempt to use the oil price "shock" to increase their wages, living standards or political power will face an immediate military response. That is why the U.S. government expects its troops to be in Saudi Arabia for years to come. The intensity of confrontation with this proletariat has forced the Gulf States ruling class to drop its "nationalist" pretenses and ally themselves, although reluctantly, with Israel and the U.S., i.e., with the state forms of international capital. This ideological realignment of the Gulf States at least follows the logic of their interests. They have already integrated themselves economically with international capital and have de-territorialized themselves. For example, Kuwait had invested \$100 billion in Europe and North America, while 60% of its 2.1 million population was non-Kuwaiti. It is an oil plantation, period.

These states have had to ask the U.S. to occupy them in order to send a message to the people working in their territories and the countries they come from: "the party is over" and this time the money will not be



“dissipated.” The huge exodus of immigrant workers from Iraq, Kuwait and neighboring areas demonstrate in spectacular terms the “vulnerability” of the oil-producing proletariat. This exodus will figure prominently in all future wage considerations throughout the oil regions. For the workers moving across the Iraq-Jordan border and dying in “refugee camps” near Amman are not refugees but the product of a huge layoff. They have experienced on their skins another visage of the “New Enclosures”—the worldwide expropriation of workers from their land and social guarantees of the 1980s—which is designed to tame their demands when they return to the oil-producing areas again.

Consequently, the invasions are essential to controlling oil prices and sustaining the increases. For only by forcibly preventing the oil-producing proletariat from obtaining a major share of the increased oil revenues and thereby freeing the petrodollars for capitalist production can the oil price and profits be sustained. The arms gathered around the drilling rigs, pump stations, refineries and storage yards have now become a direct part of the cost of petroleum production. The talk of the “mercenary” role of the American “Crusaders” is quite correct. They are like the petroleum Pinkertons of the late twentieth century while the Iraqi Assassin “threat” is functional to justifying and reinforcing the U.S. presence.

This is not to say that the Bush and Saddam regimes are in perfect harmony. There are a number of important, though resolvable, differences between them. First, although both Bush and Saddam agree that the oil prices should go up, the U.S. government does not want the Iraqis to control the price. This has been the Saudi Arabian government’s role as the price setter of OPEC and as a country with a ruling class that has more than a trillion dollars invested in the U.S., Europe and Japan. The Saudis have set the oil price in the interest of collective world capital, Saddam Hussein is not likely to be as amenable. Second, the Saddam government has used the Kuwaiti invasion to commit a most unspeakable crime against capital (indeed, this has hardly been uttered in all the outpouring of the media): it has unilaterally cancelled \$100 billion in foreign debt. This is a most troubling precedent, at once reminiscent of the Nazi cancellation of the WWI debts of Germany as well as the fear of a future militant, even military, Third World repudiation of international debt in the coming recession. Besides the cash will be missed in the coffers of increasingly strapped banks in the U.S.

These differences over oil pricing control and debt policy can be

mediated, though this mediation process might very well include the use of marginal military force. However, U.S. Crusaders are not in Arabian Peninsula to fight a large-scale, conventional shooting war with the Iraqi Assassins, as frequently envisioned. For the U.S. troops are not there to fight the soldiers of a government that plays the game of collective capital. A game the Saddam Hussein regime has shown itself perfectly willing and able to play. This U.S. invasion of the Persian Gulf, therefore, is not like the war in Vietnam where the U.S. military was sent to crush a directly anti-capitalist, revolutionary armed movement. It is more like the post-WWII U.S. occupation of Western Europe, whose main function was not to fight a Soviet invasion, but rather to repress the rise of any revolutionary forces within Western Europe itself.

The rapid deployment of hundreds of thousands of soldiers with a large cadre of logistical specialists, in militarily exposed concentrations indicates the preparation of permanent bases in Saudi Arabia rather than an invasion of Kuwait and Iraq. It is no accident that the greatest casualties of this invasion up to now have been among the expelled foreign workers and work-related accidents among the U.S. troops. For U.S. troops are being used as "scabs" in the construction of the infrastructure of the Gulf occupation, since there is a great official anxiety about the consequences of bringing U.S. troops and Gulf workers together. Indeed, the rapidity of the deployment makes it clear that the U.S. troops are not only "scabs" but they are "hostages" as well, since their very presence in the Arabian Peninsula will give the Bush administration military reasons for protecting this very exposed force.

## II

*There were always hundreds of people in the Arab homeland who, due to ignorance, adopted the Nazi view even prior to the emergence of Nazism.*

-Michel Aflaq, *Fi Sabil* (1955)

The above analysis of class relations and motives surrounding the August invasions indicate a functional unity between the Ba'athist and Republican governments of Saddam and Bush with obvious political consequences for anti-capitalists. But there is the equation, Saddam=Hitler, to deal with. For once Hitler's name comes up, all political thinking stops. Hitler seems to be the Old Man of the Mountains of the twentieth century



who freezes reason in a mix of terror and fascination. But at midnight the day's terrors take on a more commonplace character.

First let us consider the equation: is Saddam an Arab Hitler? Clearly Saddam's Ba'ath[=Action, Movement, Resurgence, Renaissance] Party is a form of national socialism. It aims at re-defining an Arab Nation stretching from Morocco to Iraq; therefore, all post-Ottoman empire borders are considered temporary. True, Aflaq, one of the founders of Ba'athism in the 1940s, rejected its identification with Arab Nazism, but even in his pronouncements the primacy of the racial Arabs in the national quest is unquestioned. Ba'athist socialism is also like Hitler's national socialism, i.e., a form of state-dominated capitalism where property rights are "natural rights...protected within the limits of national interest" (Article 34 of the Ba'athist Constitution). Certainly the performance of the Iraqi Ba'athist Party since it took power in 1968 has not led to a major decrease in income differentials while it has controlled the rise of real wages by importing foreign workers. Even in Saddam's pronouncements, much less his practice, Ba'athist socialism is hardly anti-capitalist. This, for example, is a definition of "socialism" he proposed a decade ago: "Socialism does not mean the equal distribution of wealth between the deprived poor and the exploiting rich; this would be too inflexible. Socialism is a means to raise and improve productivity."

If we add to this ideological picture the following:

- the gas attacks on Kurdish autonomists;
- the mass executions of Communists and Islamic fundamentalists;
- the brutal treatment of foreign workers which leads to the death of at least 1000 Egyptian workers alone per year;
- the Machiavellian slaughter of fellow Ba'athists in the chambers of power;

we get an image of Saddam Hussein as the leader of a fascist party. But Hitler? In form, perhaps, in dimension, hardly. The closest twentieth century comparison to Saddam's Ba'athists are the leaders of national socialist Zionism like Begin and Sharon. As with these Israeli fascists, Saddam Hussein could have no impact unless he and his party has the support of international capital.

And he, like the Zionists, has received it. For his Arab fascism divides Arabs from non-Arabs in the oil-producing proletariat. Ba'athism provides an alternative to the internationalist appeal of certain Islamic fundamentalisms from Indonesia to the Caribbean which project a ethical

vision of a non-statist brotherhood with welfare and redistributionist guarantees. Saddam's Ba'athist Party operates in the Persian Gulf and North Africa now just as the Nazis organized a pan-Germanism which recruited half the European working class to kill the other half with the connivance of international capital. His success could eliminate the Arabs, as the Zionists have largely eliminated the Jews, from the ranks of planetary anti-capitalism. Capitalists gamble that Ba'athist Iraq—which fought a country three times its size for a decade to a standstill—is the only force that can help the U.S. discipline and confuse the dangerous work force in the Gulf.

### III.

*Men pray for evil as they pray for good; for men are hasty.*

-Sura XVII, (The Night Journey) The Koran

If according to U.S. propaganda Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Ba'athists are the Hitler and the Nazis of the 1990s, then it is proper that the alliance of the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and most of the other "allies" should take place under the rubric of that product of WWII anti-fascist politics, the United Nations. Some have such a fond memories of the days when the Red Army and the U.S. G.I.s fought together to defend the world from "barbarism" that they see a great hope in the new united front gathering in the Arabian desert to defend the national sovereignty of weaker states. "Perhaps," they wistfully whisper, "this could be the first sign of a post-Cold War world government in the making." But just as the word "Hitler" stops thought in this century, the notion of a world government gives it a hallucinatory spin. Before we lose our senses, however, consider the actual operation of the U.N. in general and its particular role in the Kuwait crisis.

The U.N. is the collective association of capitalist states. It does not represent the world proletariat nor is it the first such world state association. Throughout the history of capitalism there have been moments when capitalist states have gathered together to organize the ground rules of the world market, the true and only embodiment of capitalist "world government." Indeed, the present international law of the seas was initiated in the seventeenth century to govern the naval traffic and struggles of states and firms in the new world market. In the late nineteenth century the major



powers gathered in Berlin to carve up Africa efficiently and collectively. The twentieth century saw in Versailles and Yalta the redivision of spheres of influence, national demarcations, and corporate entitlements that were to be overseen by the League of Nations and the United Nations respectively.

The current, rather nauseating, state smarminess at the U.N. and in the Arabian desert is but part of the immediate post-Cold War global redivision process. It offers no more hope for permanent peace than the 1885 Berlin, the 1919 Versailles and the 1945 Yalta Conferences did. For the purpose of capitalist collectivism is invariably to plan the separate defeats of its class antagonist, the present one is no exception.

But some have argued that the "protection of national sovereignty" principle the U.S. is using to justify its leadership in the U.N. invasion of Saudi Arabia is "progressive." Could not this very principle be used against the U.S. and its ally Israel in the Palestinian situation for example? Perhaps in a juridical debate this tactic might succeed. But it is rather vain to look for fairness in the application of this principle on a state level, and even more futile to believe that if there is an application of this principle it will be in the interest of the Palestinian proletariat. The U.S. as a state is a Rousseauian pre-contractual savage, it has yet to receive the kind of catastrophic blow that could tame it into even acceptable bourgeois behavior. Evidence for this can be seen in the last decade from the U.S.'s invasions of Grenada and Panama to its refusal to abide by World Court rulings condemning its attacks on Nicaragua. The state of Israel is simply its more shrill echo in savagery.

It is wishful thinking to believe the U.S. will change its Palestinian policy simply because it is shown that it inconsistently defends the principle of national sovereignty in the case of Kuwait and not in the case of Palestine. And if it did act on such arguments the results could be disastrous to proletarian struggles as the history of other U.N. armed "peace-keeping" initiatives like Korea in 1950 or Zaire in 1960 or, more recently, Namibia have demonstrated.

Then can the U.N. be used at all in this crisis? Perhaps. The development of international law from Grotius' seventeenth century theories to the latest Charters on Human Rights has not only involved the maneuvering of capitalist states. The United Nations itself was an issue of the elephantine coupling of social democracy with stalinism in the 1940s, but both these forms of class rule had to interject proletarian struggles or at least anticipate and attempt to absorb their energies. Thus these struggles

can find in the U.N. a formal arena for the capitalist recognition of proletarian power in the aspect of "human" rights. Such a formal arena is not to be dismissed as a mere bourgeois illusion any more than a court of law or a legislative chamber can be dismissed. Having a favorable court decision or law is not irrelevant but they are not the objects of struggle, for decisions can be overruled and laws repealed at a moment of weakness. The case of Kuwait is clear in this regard however. The "human rights" of most immigrant workers have been violated, their wages unpaid, their lives disrupted, their movements restricted. These are the rights that we can defend in the U.N. forum, however, if it to be used at all; not the rights of oil plantation owners to their profits.

#### IV

*Have you not seen how Allah dealt with the army of the  
ELEPHANT?*

*Did he not cause their stratagem to miscarry?  
And he sent against them birds in flocks,  
Claystones did they hurl down upon them,  
And he made them like stubble eaten down!*

-Sura CV (The Elephant), *The Koran*

The US military does nothing in the interests of the people of the world. It is in Saudi Arabia, for example, policing the oil-producing proletariat to sustain higher oil prices. The U.S. troops there have become the mobile migrant workers of death for the Egyptians, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis, and Palestinians of the oil fields. This is not, of course, the official line. The Crusader troops are there to defend the "American Way of Life" from Saddam Hussein's Assassins, according to George Bush. But the troops are proletarians—largely black, latino, poor whites, both men and women, many with young children—whose wages have been falling since 1973 to pre-WWII levels. The higher oil prices their presence causes and sustains further attacks their own standard of living (not George Bush's). For the higher oil prices have definitively precipitated a recession and inflationary period which will together further undermine wages, increase rents and give the government more cover to cut our few remaining entitlements. The lower the wages, however, the more attractive joining a



mercenary crusader army (which drives down its own real wages) appears to many. And so the vicious circle turns until it snaps from within or without. The most important piece of solidarity we owe to the working people of the Gulf and to the troops themselves is to help them snap the circle by forcing the U.S. government to take its armies out so that the oil-producing workers can move politically in their own interests without being slaughtered by U.S. death workers.

But what of Saddam and his Assassins? Won't the withdrawal of U.S. troops give them free reign over the oil-producing proletariat? On the contrary. The U.S. Crusaders are exactly those who keep Saddam in power. For the present Iraqi Ba'athist regime would be destabilized if it could not sustain the promise of higher future oil prices and have a strong apparent external enemy. But it is the presence of U.S. troops, planes and boats that satisfy both these conditions. If they withdraw, the Iraqi Ba'athist Party's weakness will be exposed. For it is totally dependent upon a most vulnerable form of production, that can be easily sabotaged and disrupted if, that is, one were not concerned with cash flows. Saddam's Ba'athism is as dependent upon the U.S. as is Shamir's Zionism, the definitive withdrawal of the U.S. from the region would be a condition for the doom of both.

We have shown it is against the interest of the oil-producing proletariat, U.S. workers and even U.S. troops for the U.S. military to remain in the Gulf, but we can go a bit further. These troops should be brought back from the Persian Gulf and Europe as well (where the alleged Soviet threat is now moribund). But don't just bring the troops home—DEMOBILIZE THEM. We must to ask the question: why does the U.S. government need a military? There are no alleged large-scale foreign threats to the interests of working class people here (again, many US workers have no homeland). The real purpose of a military is clear: it is to repress us. Since the demobilization of more than two million troops can be used to repress our already falling wage levels, the troops should be paid in full while demobilized until other income is available.

All the UN troops should also leave the Gulf, for they are also merely a repressive force behind the veneer of "peacekeeping." The capitalist organization of the world allows no peace because it must crush our resistance to exploitation and to the theft of the planetary commons, so it has no "peace dividend" to give. Here is a historic chance for a worldwide movement against militarism and the global capitalist production that

requires the military. Since virtually every nation has sent forces to the U.S./U.N. oil police whose job it is to control the demands of the oil-producing proletariat, an international movement against U.N. military aggression in the Gulf can disorient the covert alliance between Crusaders and Assassins.

## V

*The possibility, therefore of quantitative incongruity between price and magnitude of value, or the deviation of the former from the latter, is inherent in the price-form itself. This is no defect, but, on the contrary, admirably adapts the price-form to a mode of production whose inherent laws impose themselves only as the mean of apparently lawless irregularities that compensate each other.*

- Karl Marx, Capital (1867)

The price of oil under capitalism is politically determined by our struggles and by the efforts of our rulers to use oil to defeat us. The price at any given time will reflect both how effectively we have been controlled, thus how safe is investment in energy commodities politically, and also what price is needed in the future for a level of investment in technology, automation, nukes, and biotech that enables the price to remain stable at the higher level. For instance in the late 1970s, people from Mexico to Nigeria to Iran used the higher oil prices to demand a better living standard higher wages, social programs, schools, hospitals. Much of the wealth generated by the higher oil prices went to proletarians instead of being invested in the industries which require high levels of technology and energy and which are being developed to weaken the power of workers over the production of wealth. In the US, Europe and Japan, anti-nuclear activists pushed the cost of insuring nuke plants so high that the higher oil price still didn't guarantee the profitability of nuclear energy, dealing a serious blow to capitalist planners. Meanwhile, U.S. truckers, farmers and coal miners, European farmers, and Italian housewives organized against high oil prices, while Levittown, Pennsylvania youths and Japanese taxicab drivers rioted over gas prices. The price of energy commodities fell.

Thus the price system is a capitalist method to organize social production and consumption (in its interest) across a field of struggles.



There is no single price of a commodity, there can be many depending on conflictual circumstances. For example, the cost of extracting a barrel of crude is about \$2 or about 5 cents a gallon. The world price of crude oil, however, has fluctuated quite widely (as the tables A and B show). But though the price of exported petroleum on the world market tends to be the same in most places, but the actual price of gasoline at the pump in each country varies widely. Thus in December of 1988, when the world price of crude was less than \$15 a barrel the pump prices of gasoline varied from about 15 cents in Caracas to more than \$4 a gallon in Tokyo (see table C). This price range is the result of many struggles. For example, domestic gasoline prices are among the lowest in the world in Nigeria (about 30 cents a gallon) because every time the Nigerian government has, at the insistence of the IMF, tried to raise pump prices the people rioted in the taxi parks and city centers to protect the value of their wages.

There is, however, an unholy—though unintended—price alliance beginning to form in the U.S. between Third World redistributionists, ecologists and oil industry planners in the wake of the invasions. The Third Worldists see in higher oil prices in the U.S. a way to redistribute wealth to workers in oil-exporting countries in the Third World which would right the decades-long unequal exchange between these countries and the advanced capitalist ones. The ecologists see in higher oil prices a way of disciplining U.S. workers and capitalists into accepting ecologically sounder alternative sources of energy—solar, wind, even hemp—and the rationality of reducing our use of gasoline and the automobile. The oil industry planners, of course, see in the higher oil prices more profits that can be invested in high-tech energy based industry. All these perspectives see the U.S. proletariat as unjust (to its Third World brothers and sisters), irresponsible (to the needs of Gaian consciousness) and unrealistic (by ignoring rational resource allocation requirements).

We reject the assumptions of this peculiar alliance. Higher gasoline and heating oil prices in the U.S. are against our needs and desires as workers. To stop domestic price increases will not only destabilize capital's plans, it is the only goal that makes political sense for a proletarian movement in the U.S. Otherwise, whatever anti-invasion movement arises will immediately find itself in conflict with the bulk of the wage-earning population. Ecologists and Third Worldists who think they are making a heavenly deal with the oil industry and the some members of the U.S. Congress will discover the deal's demonic consequences.

This is not to say, of course, that the redistributive and ecological demands are wrong. But high prices are not the way to achieve them for the U.S. working class is not the cause of the uneven capitalist exploitation of the human race and the degradation of the planetary common. The price system itself is the source of this unevenness and degradation. To attempt to use this system to fundamentally do the right thing is to practice class suicide.

The demand for lower energy prices here does not contradict the demand for a better standard of living in Nigeria, Venezuela or Trinidad. So long as we need to use so much oil due to the capitalist organization of production, the work of oil producing workers creates wealth which they have every justification for demanding. That wealth goes not to us. As we see, oil company profits are now leaping—e.g., Exxon's increased revenue from a one cent per gallon increase in gasoline is equal to all the real estate value in South Dakota—yet U.S. real wages are falling. The wealth exists for a good life for all, and if there are any compromises to be made in the production and use of oil it must be between ourselves and workers in oil-extracting countries. Today the control of the "gift of Allah (or Nature)" by a few powerful institutions means that workers must recognize a common enemy.

So long as we live in a capitalist universe, reducing our energy use means lowering our living standard, working harder and receiving less. For example, if we didn't have to work for capitalists we wouldn't need to drive cars as often but the point is: the choice must not be the bosses'. Workers must not be forced into "good" behavior by ecological angels for the benefit rulers who only desire more efficient forms of exploitation. Playing the high oil price card is very dangerous, as long as the capitalists have the decision-making power to use prices to their advantage. The anti-Persian Gulf war movement must be at least as clever as the contemporary Crusaders and Assassins we oppose. Simply to demand alternative energy sources to counter high oil prices gives the energy industry more power to impose nuclear power on us. Simply to call for conservation on the part of working class people can legitimate government policies that will force us to go cold in the winter, or to become homeless. Our demands must be based upon our needs and wants and our solidarity with our fellow exploited humans across the planet.

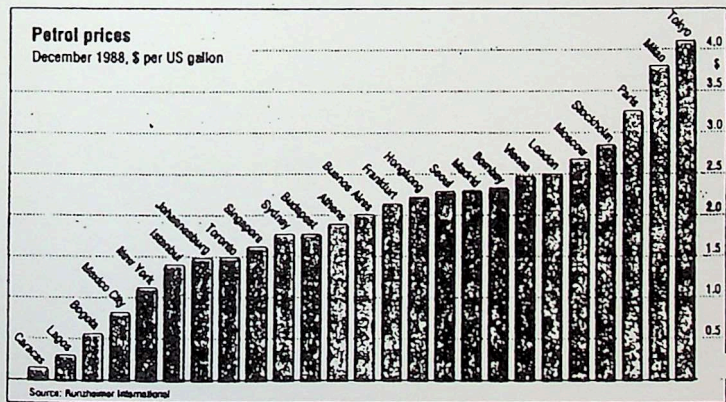


## CONCLUSION

The best way to oppose U.S. militaristic policies in the Middle East is to show the Bush administration, the international banks and the energy companies that they cannot profit from the price increases U.S. troops help sustain by being there. This we can do here by demanding and fighting for lower gasoline, heating and electricity prices as well as the demobilization of the U.S. military. This strategy appears indirect and economic. But remember, the elephantine army of Abraha, the Christian king of Abyssinia, was stopped from destroying the Kaaba in Mecca by a shower of little "claystones."

-BOSTON,  
NOVEMBER 1990

TABLE C





MIDNIGHT NOTES  
BOX 204  
JAMAICA PLAIN, MA  
02130 USA