

International Bolshevik Tendency

1917

8 January 2020

DEFEND IRAN! IMPERIALISTS OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST!

American imperialism has brought the Middle East one step closer to an all-out regional, and possibly global, conflagration with its drone strikes that killed Iranian military commander Qassim Suleimani, together with deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in Baghdad on 3 January 2020.

These assassinations follow a series of escalating U.S. provocations against Iran: Washington's withdrawal from the JCPOA agreement (aka Iran deal) in 2018, reimposition of punishing economic sanctions aimed at isolating the natural gas and oil-rich country, deployment of nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to an American airbase in Qatar in May 2019, U.S. airstrikes targeting Shia militias in Iraq right before the drone strikes. The U.S. now promises to deploy 3,500 more troops to the Middle East, adding to the already 14,000 sent there since May.

Motivations for President Donald Trump's authorization of the attack lie partly in the domestic arena, as he maneuvers for re-election later this year and seeks to consolidate a position of strength in the face of impotent attempts by the Democrats to impeach him. But U.S. involvement in the Middle East has long been a matter of strategic and economic interests largely centered on access to oilfields and pipelines (for background, see "Middle East Chaos: Imperialism, Islamic Reaction & Syria's Civil War," 1917 No. 38).

Washington's attack, apparently carried out without consulting any of its putative allies, has the potential to intensify inter-imperialist rivalries. French Secretary of State for European Affairs Amelie de Montchalin warned that "We have woken up to a more

dangerous world," while a spokesperson for German Chancellor Angela Merkel called it "a dangerous point of escalation." Dominic Raab, Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, representing a government that has staked its post-Brexit strategy on seeking an advantageous trade deal with the U.S., was rather more understanding of Trump's actions, but even he urged de-escalation. Iran's imperialist ally Russia, on the other hand, praised Suleimani for "protecting Iran's national interests with devotion" and declared his killing "an adventurist step that will increase tensions throughout the region." Russia has been a key Middle East power in recent years, backing the governments of Iran and Syria, but is extremely wary of direct engagement with U.S. forces, knowing that this could spark a worldwide conflict in which it would be the weaker party.

Marxists call for all imperialist powers to be driven out of the Middle East. We side with Iran (and Iraq or any other neocolonial country under imperialist attack) and favor the defeat of all imperialist forces. We defend Iran's right to retaliate against imperialist military targets, as it has just done in Iraq. This does not entail any political support to the likes of Suleimani and the ruthless regimes in Iran and Iraq. Our perspective is for the working classes of the region, organized in communist parties and allied with revolutionary workers in the imperialist powers, to overthrow these despots and bring about a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. In the U.S., we call for workers' strikes against the imperialist war machine – a step that could aid in the struggle to build a revolutionary party to bring down capitalism and the imperialist system. ■