The Socialist Position on the Latest U.S. Attack on Iran: The Assassination of Suleimani

written by Dan La Botz | January 4, 2020

President Donald Trump has virtually declared war on Iran with the assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, leader of Iran's elite Quds Force, in an airstrike near Baghdad International Airport. The assassination of Suleimani will very likely lead to war, though it is unclear how such a war will develop and what form it will take. How do American socialists decide our position on this new situation?

Oppose U.S. Imperialism

First, we oppose the U.S. government's latest attack on Iran, the most recent of a series of diplomatic, economic, and military measures against the Iranian government. The economic measures have affected the entire population, In May of 2018 Trump withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear agreement and then in June and then again in September of 2019 he announced new economic sanctions against Iran. All of these were building toward the latest attack on Iran in the form of the assassination of Suleimani. Now the Trump administration has sent an additional 3,000 troops to the Middle East. We socialists must stand against U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military pressures or attacks on Iran.

Trump has created an imperial presidency and has acted in an authoritarian and completely undemocratic manner in taking the United States to war. In carrying out the attack on Iran, Trump did not ask Congress for a new War Powers bill, nor did he invoke the old war powers acts, now outdated, nor did he even consult Congressional leaders. According to the U.S. Constitution, of course, only the Congress can declare war, though congresses have since World War II declined to take responsibility for declaring or refusing to declare war.

Wars depend ultimately on the military budget, which last July passed the Senate 67 to 28 and passed the House 284-149; that is both Republicans and Democrats voted to fund arms and war. To his credit, presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has either voted against or not voted for the last several military budgets by not being present.

For decades, Washington has sought to maintain its dominance in the Middle East, particularly over its immense petroleum resources. This has meant invading Iraq, propping up dictatorial regimes, imposing deadly sanctions, and providing the diplomatic support and weaponry to enable Saudi Arabia to wage its brutal war in Yemen and Israel to wage multiple deadly assaults on Gaza. While

attempting to maintain a reactionary order, U.S. intervention has wreaked havoc on the region and its people. We oppose U.S. imperialism in all of its economic and political forms.

The Democratic Socialists of America, of which I am a member, put out an excellent statement opposing the United States attack on Iran and here in New York, where I live, organized a protest against a war on Iran at the home of Democratic Senator Charles Schumer, demanding that he too oppose the attack. We should demand that he and all Democrats take a forthright stand against a war on Iran and not simply on procedural grounds. We demand that every Democrat take a stand against war in Iran and those who don't should receive no future political support.

No Political Support for Iranian Government

Our opposition to the U.S. attack on Iran does not imply any political support to the authoritarian, right-wing, theocratic government of Iran. Within Iran, we stand on the side of the movement for democracy, for political pluralism, for civil rights, for freedom, and within that democratic movement, we stand with the working class and socialist forces. As the Alliance of Middle Eastern and North African Socialists write:

> In Iran, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and other government forces brutally suppressed the nationwide popular protests that broke out on November 15 in opposition to a rise in the price of petroleum and called for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic and an end to its military interventions in the region. According to Reuters, at least 1,500 protesters were killed in four days. Between 8,000 and 10,000 mostly young protesters have been arrested and most have not been heard from. Many political prisoners, including labor, feminist, and oppressed minority activists languish in prison from previous protests. These and revolutionary protesters in Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan and Algeria are the forces that socialists around the world need to reach out to and support.

We oppose U.S. imperialism but also support the democratic forces in Iran, knowing that in the short run Trump's attack on their government will make their tasks more difficult, but that in the long run the war could undermine the Iran government's credibility and support. We as socialists would certainly support a political or democratic revolution in Iran, though we would oppose any U.S. intervention in such a situation.

Oppose U.S. and All Other Imperial Powers

At the same time, as international socialists, while we focus our attention on opposition to the United States' role in the Middle East, we also oppose the intervention of other powers in the area. We oppose Russia's authoritarian ruler Vladimir Putin and his aid to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad by bombing the province of Idlib, the last refuge of the Syrian opposition, including bombing of schools and the killing of civilian men, women and children. We must oppose Saudi Arabia's role in the terrible destruction and slaughter of human beings in Yemen, and also Turkey, which has sent troops into Libya.

Even while opposing the U.S. attack on Iran, we must also oppose the Iranian-Russian-Chinese naval drills in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. Both Russia and China have demonstrated their imperial ambitions, Russia in seizing the Crimea and China in annexing Tibet and in seeking to obliterate the culture of Tibet and of the Uighurs, while also building new islands and naval bases in the South China Sea to intimidate neighboring states.

In all of these situations, we as socialists oppose the great imperial powers like the U.S, Germany,

France, Russia and China, and we also oppose the regional imperial powers such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. And we stand for self-determination for all of the nations and peoples in the Middle East, such as the Yemenis and the Kurds. We place ourselves on the side of the democratic and, where they exist, on the side of the socialist movements in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. Everywhere we stand with the working people against the tyrants.