Finally, it should be added that under the impact of a war scare, the negotiation of defense contracts, of which there are hundreds if not thousands under consideration, becomes accelerated to the extreme advantage of the military and its banker-industrial partners as against the civilian arm of the capitalist government.

"There is no time to dicker over petty details," so goes the sing song of the military. Hence hundreds of millions if not billions are just given straight away under fear of "undermining our defenses."

There is of course a clause giving the government the right to renegotiate contracts that involve massive fraud and corruption. But who will pay any attention to that?

Issues must be examined

While this unfortunate outbreak of war between two oppressed countries places them both in jeopardy and is such a boon to imperialism, this should not divert the working class of Iran and Iraq, or the world movement as a whole, from examining the issues which are presumably at the root of the struggle. In judging whether any particular war, even between two oppressed countries, is justified or not, revolutionary Marxism-Leninism should employ an independent class criterion, free from bourgeois influences.

Both Iraq and Iran are newly emerged nations attempting to emancipate themselves from subjection and dependence upon imperialism. Both countries historically have begun their emancipation by launching their respective bourgeois, democratic, and anti-imperialist revolutions. This is one of their truly imperative historical tasks growing out of urgent necessity. The transition from the feudal past and colonialism can only be conducted by successfully prosecuting to the end first and foremost the bourgeois democratic tasks of the revolution and freeing themselves from dependence on imperialism.

Everything has to be judged in the light of this supreme necessity. If the bourgeois, democratic, anti-imperialist revolution makes it imperative or absolutely necessary to launch a war against a neighboring oppressed country because the false policies of its government have become an insurmountable obstacle to the urgent need to complete the revolution, then the war could conceivably be justified.

Territorial dispute

But the dispute between Iran and Iraq is not over issues which concern the execution of tasks necessary to either perfect or complete their respective bourgeois democratic revolutions. Involved are issues concerning land and territorial arrangements made earlier which may no longer be satisfactory to either side. But are they issues which go to the heart of the working class struggle to strengthen the democratic rights and reforms necessary to complete the bourgeois democratic aspects of the revolution? Not at all. Nor are these territories necessary to maintain and secure the territorial integrity of Iraq as a nation, or, for that matter, of Iran.

Not even in those socialist countries formerly under the domination of imperialism have all the tasks of the bourgeois revolution been carried out. Far from it.

Democratic revolution far from complete

Both Iran and Iraq, which are bourgeois regimes, have a considerable distance to go to assure the execution of some of the fundamental tasks and reforms that are necessary to complete the bourgeois democratic character of the revolution. For instance, there is no free and independent working-class movement in either Iran or Iraq. Neither is free from government harassment and downright repression. The organized expression of the working class, such as the existence of a free working-class press and the ability of parties that base themselves upon the working class to operate free from government coercion, does not exist.

Nor are the elements of bourgeois democracy firmly established, if at all. The working class needs above all freedom to promote the prosecution of its class aims in such a way as to hasten the socialist revolution. Of course, it cannot do so effectively if the struggle is diverted over territorial claims which intensify national antagonisms.

Even justified claims of a territorial character, unless they really frustrate national sovereignty or unification of the country, or mutilate its territorial integrity, should be delayed until a more auspicious moment when international working-class solidarity can express itself more firmly either through pressure upon existing governments or later through genuine socialist goverments of their own. That would enable a more just solution in the interests of the solidarity of both working classes and unify them in the struggle against imperialism.

Contradictions in Iran and Iraq

Iran, which has released such a tremendous revolutionary momentum in the anti-imperialist struggle, has, as though to prove the dialectical and contradictory character of all social development, also released a deep and sweeping reaction in the sphere of social and class relations which mitigates, weakens, and threatens to divert the progressive course of the revolution.

Perhaps in the same vein, but on a lesser level, the Iraqi Revolution, in the words of the Chinese news agency of 1958, released a "social earthquake" which reverberated throughout all of the Middle East and commenced a new chapter in the anti-imperialist struggle. It too, however, did not go beyond the stage of overthrowing the colonialist regime. And while it went through several governmental changes and instituted significant social reforms, it has ossified class relations in Iraq and frozen if not completely stifled the living struggle of the masses.

Bourgeois nationalism

The proletariat has an international character. It is thoroughly democratic in its aspirations, in the sense that it does not seek to impose its religious or political ideology by force upon another country. It thrives upon international working-class solidarity and is free from the divisive influences of bourgeois nationalism.

The regimes in both Iran and Iraq are of a bourgeois nationalist character. Their aims are limited not merely by the bourgeois class outlook, but also by nationalist aspirations. National egoism is an invariable concomitant to every bourgeois regime.

It should not be confused with the progressive need for national identity, national independence, and cultural autonomy. These are consistent with socialist internationalism.

Bourgeois regimes are by nature expansionist and are therefore hostile to proletarian internationalism. The struggle against imperialism is of preeminent importance. This is firmly understood by the masses in Iran and Iraq.

A most interesting aspect of the struggle between the two regimes is that each is accusing the other of being supported by the imperialists or of playing into their hands. That's because the most progressive and viable elements among the population of Iraq and Iran, especially the working classes of both countries, are anti-imperialist.

Anti-imperialism should not be used as a mask to cover aggression against a neighboring country in the interest of bourgeois expansionism, which is divisive of working-class unity, disrupts the anti-imperialist struggle, and delays the necessary task of the urgent need for cooperation among the oppressed countries in the region.

Working class needs independence

While each country needs unity against imperialism, the working class and particularly its vanguard elements need to be independent of their respective governments in relation to the class struggle, even more than in times of united front struggles against imperialism.

The admonition of Marx and Engels to the German working class in the 1870s during Bismarck's time may be altogether out of context, because it deals with a different historic context. But it is nevertheless highly instructive. Before Bismarck launched his attack against the French to seize what was then Alsace-Lorraine, Marx and Engels perceived Germany's struggle against France as progressive. Bismarck was carrying out the bourgeois democratic task of national unification, something which Marx said to Engels "we ourselves would have to do." But when Bismarck turned it into a war of conquest, Marx and Engels of course considered the war from then on as reactionary.

Task of workers in Iran and Iraq

At the present moment there is no basis to state categorically that one of the governments, Iraq for instance, has embarked upon a war of aggression and conquest, as the preliminary reports in the capitalist press seem to indicate. Of course, if this should turn out to be true, it should be opposed by the working class of both Iran and Iraq.

The duty of the Iranian and Iraqi workers is to find common ground to restrain their respective governments from continuing the hostilities and to turn their tasks toward a united front against imperialist aggression.

It goes without saying, of course, that it is the paramount duty of the working class of the world, especially in the metropolitan imperialist countries and most of all the U.S., to work for the defeat of the imperialist governments and to extend all friendly assistance to the beleaguered oppressed countries under the heel of imperialism.

September 24, 1980

	Iraq	Iran
Population:	12 million	35 million
Oil:	Accounts for 98% of exports	Has one tenth of world's known reserves
History:	Completely subjugated by Western European and U.S. imperialism until 1958 revolution overthrew monarchy	Dominated by British then U.S. imperialism until mass popular revolution overthrew shah in 1979.
Social reforms:	Both are oppressed countries. Both made important strides when compared to colonial period: health care, elementary education, standard of living raised.	
Class character:	Both are bourgeois nationalist.	
Relationship to imperialism:	Relatively free from open U.S. pressure. After taking a strong anti-imperialist stance from 1967-1977, Iraq now has growing economic and technical links with Western imperialism. Air attack casualties reveal large numbers of U.S., French and British technicians.	Under gun of U.S. imperialism since overthrow of shah. U.S. attempted unsuccessful military attack in April (the "rescue" mission). Khomeini characterizes U.S. imperialism as "the great Satan."
Relationship to USSR:	Friendship Treaty since 1972. USSR the main supplier of weapons, intended for defense. Growing strains with Soviets as Iraq develops links with Western imperialism.	Growing hostility of Khomeini government toward USSR despite friendly overtures from Soviets. Iran, however, has not moved closer to U.S.
Working class organizations:	Suppressed. Iraqi CP, for example, once strong inside regime after 1958 revolution, now repressed, with some leaders jailed, executed.	Precarious existence. Revolutionary organizations constantly harassed, attacked by ultra-rightist supporters of Khomeini government.