

Libya: Demonization and Self-determination

The Pentagon Lynch Mob

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If you went to a shopping center, a street corner or a graduate school of a top university in the U.S. and conducted a pop quiz asking who are the kings or crown princes of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco and Bahrain; the emir of Kuwait, Qatar or Dubai; and the sultan of Oman, most people would not be able to name any of them.

These dictators and feudal monarchs hold absolute control in corrupt and brutal regimes. Their rule is kept in place by U.S. arms, troops and mercenaries, but they are anonymous to the U.S. population and to most of the world's people.

But if you went anywhere in the U.S. today and asked who lives in Libya, there is only one name that a large part of the population could tell you: Gadhafi. Many people, even if they do not know that Libya is in Africa, might tell you that Gadhafi is an evil man who "must go."

The corporate media can demonize the leader of a country targeted by the Pentagon to the point that the consequences of using the most deadly weapons against a totally defenseless population are hidden and dismissed.

No other country in history has the capacity to wreak such havoc, using cruise missiles, bunker busters, drones, depleted uranium and dense inert metal explosive bombs, anti-personnel razor shredding bomblets, and anti-personal mines.

What should be the response to this terror?

Unfortunately, a minority of groups or individuals who present themselves as opponents of war spend more time cataloguing Gadhafi's past real or alleged shortcomings than rallying people to respond to this criminal, all-out U.S. attack. Their influence would be small, except that it coincides with the opinions of the U.S. ruling class. Thus it is important to thoroughly answer their arguments.

Whatever mistakes made by the leaders of a small, underdeveloped country facing U.S. sanctions, sabotage and assassination attempts, they are not the reason the U.S. is hell-bent on destroying Libya today.

What is at stake?

U.S., French, British and Italian imperialists are determined to lay hold of Libya's now well-developed infrastructure of oil refineries, pumping stations, gas lines, ports and pipelines directly into Europe, as well as billions of dollars in gold reserves, oil reserves — the largest in Africa — and Libya's other rich assets. All of this has been built up over the four decades

since U.S. and British imperialism were kicked out of the country.

The imperialists are especially determined to stop Libya's assistance in the development of other African countries. The plans for a United Federation of Africa, which were put forth by Libya and backed with \$90 billion in investment funds, deeply threaten the continued multinational corporate looting of the continent.

The people of Libya have resisted more than four months of nonstop aerial assault. The bombing has united the population. Their cohesion has grown. More than 1 million people hold giant rallies in Tripoli.

A government in fear of its population would never hand guns to the public, but Libya's government has distributed more than 3 million weapons in a country of 6.5 million people to enable them to resist occupation.

Incredibly, it looks like the imperialists are facing still another failed war. A falling out among thieves seems to be taking place as NATO's frustration mounts.

The response to this colonial war of aggression should be the same as the response to a racist mobilization, a racist lynch mob or a police attack on an oppressed community: Mobilize all possible forces to stand up to the crime and say "no!" Refuse to take part in the orchestrated campaign of vilification.

This may not be an easy position to take. But it is essential to reject the racist political onslaught that accompanies the military onslaught.

Demonization is meant to disorient and put the massive, criminal destruction planned by U.S. imperialism beyond debate. Enormous pressure is placed on every level of the U.S. population to accept the premise that the targeted country and its leadership are to blame. The attacks are presented as if only one person lives in Libya, and not 6.5 million people.

In preparation for a war of conquest, the role of the corporate media is to endlessly repeat every charge and statement made by the institutions of U.S. power. An almost frenzied level of lies, wild fabrications, racist stereotyping and ugly caricatures saturates all political discussion.

The corporate media spread the demands that the Pentagon death machine must act in the name of "humanity" in order to "save lives." The war itself is cloaked in neutral terms. In the case of Libya, more than 16,000 bombing sorties against people are described as implementing a "no-fly zone." The White House has assured the population that this bombing is not an act of war. The administration won't even discuss it with Congress.

The response to media demonization in the midst of a war mobilization must be to focus on the outrageous crime being committed and refuse to accept or give weight to any justification for it.

Despite an ocean of propaganda, poll after poll has confirmed that from 60 percent to 65 percent of the U.S. population is against the U.S. war on Libya. This should give all opponents of this imperialist war great hope and confidence.

But the demonization and racist war propaganda have seeped down into a layer of the

progressive and anti-war movement.

In every imperialist war for decades, a whole series of writers, commentators and political organizations considered to be progressive have buckled under enormous social pressure. While claiming to be against U.S wars, they allocate their greatest energies to focusing on and discussing every shortcoming, mistake and inconsistency of the targeted country — in the very same condemnatory tone as the corporate media.

They have said “neither NATO nor Milosevic,” “neither Bush nor Saddam,” “neither Israel nor Hizbollah,” thus helping to weaken the anti-war forces.

The responsibility of progressive intellectuals and groups in the United States is to utilize their considerable research skills to extract every piece of information that could explain the corporate stakes — the anticipated profits behind the imperialist war. And never to echo in left terminology the charges made in the imperialist media.

Working people need to know the real reason behind the attack. Thus every effort must be made to avoid reinforcing government propaganda. Progressives should look to build the broadest possible unity in order to speak with one voice against the war.

Of course, such misguided groups are a small minority in the progressive movement. But there are those political organizations, which six months ago had not bothered to mention Libya, that now suddenly seek out respectable venues to add their own reasons that the dictator Gadhafi “must go” — an echo of the imperialist demand. Some even insist that in order to be part of the political discourse, every anti-war voice must first join in condemnation of Gadhafi.

In a few places this chorus on the sidelines has even disrupted anti-war meetings, calling on the anti-war movement to fall in line and echo the racist ruling class.

The Cynthia McKinney tour

In their determination to join with all the “respectable voices” condemning Libya, some groups have even sounded just like the imperialist media by seeking to silence the courageous voice of former U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney. This is how arrogant and offensive those who demand collusion in U.S. wars have become.

McKinney risked her life to visit Libya with a U.S. delegation in the midst of the U.S./NATO bombing. She deserves respect.

McKinney was first a target of national media condemnation as a young, first-term state representative in the Georgia Assembly, when she dared to speak out against the U.S. war on Iraq. The entire chamber of representatives stood up, turned their backs on her and walked out.

When elected to the U.S. Congress, her outspoken opposition to and questioning of the orchestrated national frenzy surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001, attack; her clear opposition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement; her defense of political prisoners; and her support of the Palestinian people generated national campaigns to pour funds into opposing candidates in her small Georgia congressional district. Again and again the district lines were redrawn in an attempt to disqualify McKinney from the U.S. Congress. She has earned international acclaim for her

candidacy for president on the Green Party ticket, for her participation in humanitarian convoys to Gaza and for being jailed by Israel.

McKinney's tour to six cities organized by the Answer Coalition, and now to 15 cities organized by the International Action Center — all of which have successfully mobilized forces against the U.S./NATO invasion of Africa — have also come under criticism and cowardly attack. Some of these elements are even writing and speaking against McKinney's right to speak against the war in Libya.

Even more arrogant and insensitive are their attacks on the Nation of Islam and Pan-African voices opposing the war.

For more than three decades many Pan-African activists, African people and Muslims have followed developments in Libya with great interest and enthusiasm. Many people traveled to Libya and favorably compared the social accomplishments in Libya — which, according to the U.N., scored highest in Africa on the Human Development Index in education, housing, length of life, nutrition and infant mortality — to the enormous poverty and glaring underdevelopment of most of the continent. They have spoken out forcefully against the looting of Africa and defended Libya as a country that, although sanctioned, sabotaged and under continuing attack, managed to maintain a level of independence from imperialism.

It is criminal to dismiss those actually mobilizing, writing and speaking against war as just pro-Gadhafi.

Pentagon lynch mob

What should be the attitude toward a family or a town seized by a lynch mob?

How does one respond if a racist gang of thugs, with torches and gasoline, is ready to set fire to a home with children inside, or is determined to capture someone who they felt had not shown proper "respect?" Is that a time to wander off into analysis of the targeted victims' credit card payments, driving record or other possible past mistakes or personal shortcomings?

Bombs are falling on Tripoli. Isn't that a Pentagon lynching?

In the face of a criminal terror campaign against a whole country, it's imperative not to do anything to support the attack. It's essential to do everything in your power to mobilize people to resist.

To use every possible argument of defense, and not give a shred of legitimacy to the racists who are attempting to burn the whole country down, along with all of its proud accomplishments.

Don't allow yourself to be on the same side as the imperialist war makers.

Leave it to the Libyan people to decide their own future without U.S./NATO bombs. Leave it to African, Arab and especially Libyan people to discuss and debate, without outside interference.

But here in the center of the U.S. empire, it is important to refuse to join in the demonization and attacks used to justify atrocities committed by corporate power. Most important: Don't

echo imperialist propaganda in the midst of a war of aggression. Don't join in a lynch mob being organized by the Pentagon!

Unite behind one clear slogan:

Stop the U.S./NATO war on Libya.

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