

War of ideas breaks out over battle in Libya: Phony leftists exposed

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By directing their enormous joint military and economic power against a poorly armed, nonindustrialized country of 6 million people, the imperialist states of North America and Western Europe have imposed a criminal regime on the Libyan people.

Part of Libya's continued resistance to this attempted imperialist takeover of an African state is the ideological struggle within the left and workers' movement internationally. The only legitimate position for the left in the imperialist countries is to support the Libyan resistance to imperialism, whatever form it takes.

As Libyans continue to battle the takeover, the U.S.-NATO forces may still come in on the ground. The new Transitional National Council regime, however, has already been invited to represent Libya in imperialist-dominated international bodies even as its armed gangs are massacring Libyans and the mostly sub-Saharan guest workers remaining in the cities it dominates.

The TNC is not a real government at present, but a racist gang of hoodlums and mercenaries looting homes and museums in Tripoli and other cities. This is fitting, as its U.S. and European Union masters aim to loot all of Africa as freely as they did until the 1960s.

Remember though that in Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003, the imperialists won what appeared to be quick and easy military victories. But an active resistance movement has stalemated the U.S.-NATO occupation of Afghanistan. And the Iraqi puppet regime is still shaky enough that the U.S. occupation will be extended. Reimposing colonialism in Libya may be no easier.

Air war, propaganda war

The U.S.-NATO forces' advantage can be easily explained. Libya's GNP was \$96 billion in 2010, much of it in oil production. The combined GNP of Western Europe and the United States was \$29 trillion, or about 300 times greater than Libya's. Much of Libya's wealth from oil sales was deposited in imperialist banks, which simply confiscated it when their campaign to destroy the Libyan state began.

This enormous wealth advantage yields military dominance. The Pentagon has half the world's firepower. Britain, France, Italy, Spain and Belgium have a good piece of the rest. This hydra-headed giant faced Libya's tiny army.

The imperialist propaganda machine yields another monopoly of words and images. It demonized Moammar Gadhafi and his family. It disguised the TNC as a “democratic” movement, when it was a small collection of pro-imperialist Libyans, mercenaries, monarchists, reactionary religious forces and opportunist defectors from the Libyan government, with a narrow popular base only in the region around Benghazi.

The media exposed the decisive role of NATO forces only after the TNC entered Tripoli. It probably did so because the imperialist military agencies then wanted credit for what they proclaimed was a victory.

In the Sept. 1 Workers World, Abayomi Azikiwe cites the International Business Tribune, the London Daily Telegraph and the Associated Press, all of which point out the decisive role of Britain’s MI6 and special forces, U.S. and French special forces, U.S. air intelligence and heavy bombing by NATO in the battle for Tripoli. The truth is that without NATO leading the way, the TNC forces would never have made it out of Benghazi.

The Qatar-based agency Al-Jazeera has also given the news from Libya an anti-Gadhafi and pro-NATO slant throughout the last five months. Qatari troops are part of the TNC armed force that entered Tripoli on Aug. 21.

Ideological battle

There is another small contribution to imperialist war propaganda that deserves discussion. Political analysts who have an undeserved reputation of being progressive have brought the same arguments to a part of the left movement. These analysts only carry weight because their “leftist” argument coincides with what the imperialists need and want.

Following the Aug. 21 invasion of Tripoli, two such analysts were guests on the Democracy Now! news show, which is popular among progressives.

One “expert” was Juan Cole, a history professor at the University of Michigan. Cole argued that “Libya has reignited the flame of liberty in the Arab world.” He claimed the TNC could enter Tripoli easily because it had popular support. Cole ignored the role of NATO’s bombing, bribing and intelligence.

The other was Gilbert Achcar, a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He chided NATO for allegedly first trying to broker a deal between the TNC and Gadhafi. He also presented the TNC as a legitimate popular leadership. Since March, Achcar has promoted the misleading idea that Libyans could “use” NATO to back a legitimate popular uprising without being owned lock, stock and barrel by the imperialists.

Neither “expert” added that the NATO powers have waged this war for oil profits and a military foothold in Africa.

These and similar “experts” around the U.S. and Europe — who pretend to be progressive — are not acceptable as voices of the left and must be countered by honest anti-imperialist forces, just as one answers any imperialist spokesperson.

Fortunately, there is an attempt to mobilize anti-imperialist ideas — and action — in the United States. Former U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney has been on a North American tour organized by the International Action Center, bringing the truth about NATO’s war against Libya. Most of these rallies have attracted between 200 and 500 people. Much support has

come from the African-American community, which knows of McKinney's principled anti-racist and anti-war stand when she represented the people of her Georgia congressional district.

The tour is an example of how to build an anti-imperialist alliance that can answer the phony "leftists" and give political support to the resistance from within Africa.

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