

No to imperialist intervention in Libya!

World Socialist Web Site editorial board
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The *World Socialist Web Site* categorically opposes any military intervention in Libya. The drive toward war, which was given the green light by the UN Security Council on Thursday, has nothing to do with the humanitarian pretexts offered up by the major powers. Rather, it represents the violent imperialist subjugation of a former colony.

The bombing of Libya by French, British and American planes will not protect human life, but will transform the country into a battlefield with thousands of innocent victims. This is an imperialist war. Libya is an oppressed, former colonial country. The WSWs rejects fundamentally and in all circumstances military attacks by imperialist powers on such countries.

Moreover, this war will take place without any democratic legitimacy. There is not the slightest indication that it is supported by the populations of the countries involved. Once again, huge sums are being spent on a war even as the same governments declare there is no money for social programs.

Those who say a military attack on Gaddafi's bases would bolster a democratic opposition movement against a bloody dictatorship must answer the following question: Why are the great powers not applying the same criteria in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the regimes they back employ brutal violence against any opposition? And what of Bahrain, headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet, where Sheikh al Khalifa has shot down unarmed protesters with Saudi support? What about Gaza, where these same powers stand by as the Israelis massacre Palestinians? What about Yemen, where the Western-backed President Ali Abdullah Saleh on Friday shot dead some 50 protesters?

Not a single government or newspaper that supports a military strike against Libya has taken the trouble to explain these glaring contradictions. However, the real target of the violent action against Libya is clear, if one considers the logic of recent events.

It is only two months since the Tunisian ruler, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, was overthrown in a popular uprising. One month later, he was followed by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. As a result, the Western powers have lost two of their key allies in the region.

As with Gaddafi himself, the US and Europe had

collaborated closely with these dictators until the last minute. France, which is now shouting the loudest for military action against Libya, even offered Ben Ali police assistance when the uprising against him was in full swing.

Only a few weeks later, the great powers are preparing a military intervention in North Africa. Coincidence? Only someone who is politically blind can fail to see the relationship between these events.

The domestic opposition to Gaddafi, a brutal tyrant and a close ally of the Western powers, may initially have expressed real grievances of the Libyan people. But in the underdeveloped desert state of Libya, forces quickly materialized that were ready to do the dirty work of the great powers. They were to be found in the figures making up the so-called National Transitional Council, who not only guaranteed international oil companies unhindered exploitation of the country's mineral wealth, but also called for the bombing of their own country. The Transitional Council is composed of senior officials of the old regime who turned their backs on Gaddafi in response to the shift by the imperialist powers.

Military intervention in Libya, whose energy resources have made it the object of imperialist intrigues for decades, is being used both to secure access to oil and to contain the revolutionary movements in the region, which are increasingly directed against the interests of the imperialist powers and capitalist property. A military presence in Libya, which is bordered by Egypt to the east and Tunisia to the west, would help the major powers to intimidate revolutionary movements throughout the Arab world.

Reference in the UN resolution about excluding the military occupation of the country by foreign troops is hogwash. Military necessity has its own logic. Officially, neither Afghanistan nor Iraq are "occupied" by American troops, but this does not change the fact that in both countries tens of thousands of American soldiers have taken up permanent residence.

It is significant that it was the Arab League that called for a no-fly zone over Libya, giving the US and its imperialist allies a cover of "regional support" for military intervention. The representatives of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other

emirates, who are in the process of arresting, torturing and shooting opponents of their own regimes, have voted in favor of a military intervention for the supposed purpose of strengthening democracy in Libya!

The major powers are acting with extreme recklessness. Apart from the greed for oil and domination, they seem to have no thought-out strategy. President Sarkozy, who received Gaddafi four years ago with great pomp in Paris to negotiate trade deals worth billions, recognized the National Transitional Council as the official representative of Libya without even consulting his own foreign minister, let alone his NATO allies.

No one seems to have considered the likely economic, geopolitical and security implications of a longer war in Libya, a country on the Mediterranean in the immediate vicinity of Europe. Those expressing warnings of the consequences of military action come mostly from conservative circles of the military, who, after Afghanistan and Iraq, have little desire for another military adventure.

Both President Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron also have their own domestic political reasons for intervening. A year before the next presidential elections, Sarkozy is falling in opinion polls and hopes to make up ground through an aggressive foreign policy.

Cameron faces growing opposition to his austerity measures and—echoing his model Margaret Thatcher’s 1982 Malvinas war—hopes a war against Libya can divert attention. Since the British army has been weakened by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and is barely able to intervene independently, Cameron has worked hard to engage the US.

The imperialist adventure against Libya is reawakening old divisions in Europe. The European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is once again in tatters. Germany abstained in the vote on the UN Security Council, stressing it would not be party to any military intervention. It thus found itself in a bloc with Russia, China, India and Brazil against NATO allies France, Britain and the United States—a development with far-reaching implications.

These divisions result from the imperialist character of the war. It is significant that for the first time since the Second World War, Britain and France are jointly involved in a military conflict and have taken a position opposed by Germany. One should also recall that the last war between German and British armies included major battles in North Africa.

Germany does not in principle reject taking military action against Libya, and the German government has pushed for tough economic sanctions. However, it has to date based its influence in North Africa and the Middle East less on military than on economic factors, and fears losing out in any military adventure. “Germany fully supports the

economic sanctions, because the rule of Muammar al-Gaddafi is over and must be stopped,” said UN Ambassador Peter Wittig to justify Germany’s abstention. “But the use of the military is always extremely difficult and we see great risks.”

While there are disagreements within the European and American ruling class over a military offensive against Libya, among the “humanitarian” imperialists there is full and enthusiastic approval. This category also includes political tendencies that support military operations in the name of an abstract “humanity,” ignoring class issues and questions of history—such as the Greens, Social Democrats, the Left Party, etc.

Since the German Greens supported the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, they have become enthusiastic supporters of war and play an irreplaceable role in the imperialist war propaganda. The same applies to the preparation for a military intervention against Libya.

The Greens have attacked foreign minister Guido Westerwelle because he did not support the resolution in the UN Security Council. “We have a responsibility to defend human rights,” parliamentary faction leader Renate Kuenast said. The Social Democrats also attacked Westerwelle because he does not favor the war effort.

Green EU Parliament representative Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a major figure in the 1968 student movement, campaigned aggressively for the recognition of the Libyan National Transitional Council and the establishment of a no-fly zone. The parliament finally adopted such a resolution on March 10 by an overwhelming majority.

In addition to the Greens, a variety of pseudo-left organizations in France have demanded recognition of the National Transitional Council. A resolution to this effect from the Committee of Solidarity with the Libyan People bears the signatures of the Communist Party, the Left Party and the New Anti-Capitalist Party. President Sarkozy is now fulfilling their demand and launching a military offensive.

The *World Socialist Web Site* calls on workers and young people to reject the war propaganda under a humanitarian guise with the disgust it deserves. The fight against political oppression, social exploitation and war is inseparable from the building of a socialist movement that unites the international working class in a struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

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