



Oppose All U.S. and Australian Government Intervention in the Middle East – No to Military Intervention, No to Diplomatic Intervention!

Support Libya Against the NATO Imperialists!

March 31- For the last twelve days, the U.S., British and French militaries have pounded Tripoli and other Libyan cities with cruise missiles and bombs. Along with some military targets, many, many civilians are being hit and butchered by the bombing. All this has been fully supported by the Gillard Labor government, the right-wing Liberal/National Opposition and the small-l liberal Greens. Despicably, the Western imperialists have unleashed this terror against the Libyan people in the name of “protecting civilians.”

To see just how little the capitalist powers bombing Libya actually care about protecting Arab civilians, we only have to look at their attitude to the recent events in Bahrain. Over the last few weeks, the Western-backed Bahrain monarchy has killed dozens of protesters. Things became worse when 1,000 Saudi troops with the complicity of Washington were sent to back up the Bahraini monarchy seventeen days ago. The monarchy’s forces then barbarically started blocking the hospitals to stop injured protesters from being treated and held doctors, nurses and ambulance staff at gunpoint. So what stance did those attacking Libya take over these events? Well this is what Robert Cooper one of the European Union’s highest ranking diplomats and the councillor to the EU’s foreign policy chief on the Middle East said of this murderous crackdown in Bahrain during a formal statement. He said:

“It’s not easy dealing with large demonstrations in which there may be violence. ... It’s not something that we always get right in the best Western countries and accidents happen.

“One should understand the authorities were right to restore calm and order and that’s what they’ve done.”

This disgusting cover-up is what the Western imperialist rulers really think about protecting civilians.

Indeed one of the reasons they have attacked Libya is precisely to distract from the murderous terror that has been unleashed against protesters by their puppet regimes in Bahrain, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Another reason for their attack is obviously that Washington and Co. want a reliable henchmen in Libya who can ensure that Libya’s oil wealth stably flows into the pockets of the West’s corporate elite. Gaddafi was their man for many years but he is too much of a maverick, too hard to control, and was getting too unpopular to be dependable servant. They would prefer someone else – like perhaps something like the Bahraini monarchy? Or a new Mubarak type figure?

Thirdly, they want the attack on Libya to be the intervention that restores “credibility” to the Western powers after their debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan. What that means is that the peoples of other African, Middle Eastern, Asian and Latin American countries had better watch out. Because if the imperialists get way with imposing their will on Libya then anyone of these ex-colonies could be next. Especially if they are resource rich!

Fourthly and perhaps most importantly the attempt at regime change in Libya is aimed at poisoning the rebellions in the Arab world. The uprisings had previously targeted very strongly Western-backed regimes like the ones in Tunisia and Egypt. This had Washington, London and their ilk all worried. However, Libya to the rescue! The West wants Libya to be model to show that the inevitable result of the Arab uprisings must be to produce pro-Western governments, completely subordinate to imperialism.

Some liberal and soft-left supporters of the NATO intervention have argued that while the Western capitalist powers are predatory, they are at least “democratic” and can help bring democracy to countries like Libya. Well for starters, the democracy we have here is really only a democracy for the rich where the capitalist tycoons own the media and the wealthy disproportionately have the resources to finance political parties, pay for political advertising, hire lobbyists etc.

Furthermore, when the capitalist powers intervene in the so-called “Third World”, they dispense with even the limited political freedoms that they currently allow here. Why? Because they exploit these poorer countries so much that they can only keep the impoverished masses in line by carrying out, or supporting, the most brutal violence. The history of U.S. and Australian supposedly democratic intervention in the ex-colonies includes dropping napalm on the people of Vietnam and torturing at Abu Ghraib and Bagram Air Base. It includes supporting the recent massacre by the Bahraini monarchy and backing up the most oppressive regimes imaginable from the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile to the present Saudi monarchy.

Indeed if we want a pointer as to where Libya may end up we only have to look at Iraq. The prelude to the invasion of Iraq was also the imposition of a No-Fly zone. There too the Western imperialists said they were intervening in part to defend human rights. And look at what they did! They killed or caused the death of over a million Iraqis. Now Iraq is run by a murderous puppet regime even worse than Saddam Hussein’s and the country is torn by sectarian strife. On February 25 alone, this regime shot dead at least 11 protesters who were participating in rallies demanding “No to unemployment, No to corruption.”

Yet some who campaigned against the invasion of Iraq are today, albeit with misgivings, supporting the NATO intervention in Libya. One thing such people are arguing is that the Libyan opposition have only asked for a “No Fly Zone” and that this is all the influence the imperialists will be allowed to have. Well it doesn’t work that way! The imperialist powers, the most powerful and reactionary force on the planet cannot simply be controlled like one

controls water by turning on and off a tap. No. **Once you open the door to the imperialists, they gush in with great speed and take over. And you won't be able to close the door on them anymore.** Already, what NATO is doing in Libya is far more than simply establishing a no-fly zone. They are bombing Libyan cities and attacking the Libyan army even when it is far from population centres. Moreover, the CIA and British intelligence forces are already on the ground in Libya assisting the Libyan opposition movements and ensuring that they are subordinated to the interests of Washington, London and Co.

One of the reasons there is confusion here over the NATO intervention in Libya is the political impact of the Australian left's campaign to support the intervention of Australian troops into East Timor in 1999. Then in the wake of the killings of East Timorese by Jakarta-backed militias and an intense propaganda campaign by the Australian media, nearly all the Australian left groups built mass demonstrations calling for the Australian military to speed up its planned intervention to "Save East Timor." Of course far from "Saving East Timor", capitalist Australia's forces replaced the Indonesians as the colonial occupiers of East Timor and proceeded to steal East Timor's oil wealth for themselves. The Australian military went on to commit terrible atrocities there like the 23 February 2007 massacre of East Timorese displaced persons protesting at Dili airport. Yet the effect of the left's 1999 campaign to egg on John Howard's takeover of East Timor was to breed lasting illusions among left-minded people that the capitalist powers can sometimes play a progressive role when intervening abroad.

Partly as a result, today, even while most far left groups nominally oppose the NATO intervention in Libya, many have been half hearted in campaigning against it. Some have cited "community support for the intervention" as a reason to "hold off" calling actions against the NATO assault. However a blow was struck against this capitulatory thinking when on March 27 some 40 to 50 protesters rallied in Sydney's Town Hall Square to demand "NATO War Criminals – Hands Off Libya!" and to "Oppose All U.S. and Australian Government Intervention in the Middle East." In sometimes pouring rain, demonstrators chanted "De-feat, De-feat, De-feat the NATO thugs!" The protest was endorsed by the Supporters of the Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas, Trotskyist Platform and the Revolutionary Socialist Party. It was also addressed by a member of the Communist League (the group that sells the *Militant* newspaper).

The anti-NATO demonstration was held in the face of incessant demands to call off the rally, in the days leading up to it, by supporters of the NATO bombing. These supporters of the imperialist intervention also staged a counter-rally (hailing French President Sarkozy) on the day and sought to undermine the anti-NATO protest. However they were only one-third the size of the anti-imperialist action and hence were not able to sabotage it.

It is unfortunate that although the March 27 action was held some eight days after the bombing of Libya began, it was actually the first action in this country against the NATO assault. One of the reasons that we in Trotskyist Platform decided to initiate this action is that

we hoped that the call for the action itself would compel broader left forces who had hitherto been hesitating on supporting actions against the NATO intervention to call their own protests. This has indeed happened. A rally has been called for April 3 in Sydney that includes among its endorsers one or two groups that had previously argued against calling actions against the NATO intervention at this time.

This April 3 protest, which starts at 12 pm outside the U.S. consulate at Sydney's Martin Place, will demand "No US-NATO war on Libya" and rightly calls to "End the foreign military intervention in Libya." However, while opposing military intervention, the rally call promotes other forms of intervention by the capitalist powers. Thus the demonstration call asserts that, "Australian Government involvement in Libya should be diplomacy, negotiations and international pressure, not war." Yet as the administration presiding over the Australian capitalist state, any intervention by the Australian government, whether military or diplomatic, can only ever serve imperialist goals. In particular, any diplomatic or other political intervention would - just like military intervention - be aimed at strengthening the interests of Australia's U.S. ally, which Canberra incessantly backs up because it is the big power guarantor of Australian capitalist plundering of the South Pacific.

Nevertheless, despite this weakness in the rally call, we urge our readers to participate in the April 3 protest against the NATO bombing. However, we insist that if you participate, you do so not calling for Western diplomatic intervention instead of military intervention but to instead **brandish slogans opposing all forms of intervention into Libya by the capitalist powers. Say no to all methods for achieving imperialist-imposed regime change in Libya! Stand for the defence of Libya against imperialist attack** while giving no political support to the capitalist Gaddafi government!

Below we reprint in expanded and edited form, the speech given by Trotskyist Platform editor, Yuri Gromov at the March 27 action:

On March 2, the International Criminal Court formally opened an investigation into crimes against humanity by the Gaddafi government. The previous day nine innocent children were killed in an air strike while they were collecting firewood. Some may say: well, fair enough then that the Tripoli regime may be prosecuted— **But hang on**, those children were not killed in Libya! No, they were children **in Afghanistan** who were barbarically killed by the **U.S.** military. And that is the heart of the question here. You see Gaddafi is indeed an oppressive capitalist ruler but the damage he can do and the crimes he has committed dwarf in comparison with those who are today bombing Libya in the name of "human rights."

It is the imperialist rulers of the U.S, Britain and Australia who have together killed tens of thousands of people in Afghanistan and hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq.

There is a reason for their brutal violence. The multinational corporations from the rich Western capitalist powers make huge profits from exploiting the masses of the former colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They plunder a good chunk of Middle East oil wealth as well. This exploitation is enforced either through the imperialist violence of their own governments or through henchmen in the local ruling class - through the likes of Murbarak or the murdering monarchy in Bahrain.

Indeed one of the Gaddafi's main crimes is that over the last decade he turned himself into a servant of the Western imperial powers. His government handed over intelligence to the CIA and the British Secret Service. It also reversed some of the achievements made through the 1969 overthrow of the monarchy in Libya by carrying out privatisations and allowing Italian and other Western corporations to takeover previously Libyan state-owned oil fields. These policies led to a fall in the standard of living of the poor and to massive unemployment.

Yet the regime that Washington wants to install in Libya will necessarily be much more subordinate to them than even Gaddafi was. That means more theft of Libya's oil wealth by Western business bosses and thus more suffering for Libya's poor – and that means that the new rulers will only be able to keep the poor in line with still more cruel terror.

On the other hand if the colonial powers are defeated in their violent attempt at regime change in Libya, then everyone suffering under neocolonial domination will be encouraged to challenge it. They will say to themselves: “In Libya the imperialists were defeated. So let us now boot out their puppets too – from the death squad rulers of Colombia to the Bahraini monarchy – and let us kick out their one-time allies too, like Gaddafi himself.”

That is why we must take a clear side in this war going on now between the exploiting great powers and a semi-colonial country. We must stand for the defeat of the NATO imperialists and its allies and for defence of the Libyan forces being attacked by them.

So what of the anti-Gaddafi rebels. Now, certainly it was necessary to fight against Gaddafi's brutal rule. From the start however, while the opposition included some progressive elements and many courageous youth, the organised political leadership of it included monarchists, religious fundamentalists, former long-time supporters of Gaddafi and pro-imperialist liberal groups. The latter include a long-time CIA-funded group, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya. The Western imperialists also chose to politically back the rebels, which does not speak well of the opposition movement. Thus neither side in the conflict were worthy of support. Things have now changed however. The U.S., British and French have now gone in with bombs and intelligence officers to militarily support the opposition insurgency. Regardless of what some in the opposition originally intended, the sad truth is that they have now been made into NATO's ground forces just like how in Iraq some opposition movements against the dictator Saddam Hussein were turned into the allies of imperialism. Thus one cannot pretend to be at the same time for the defeat of NATO and for

the victory of the rebels. If one is serious about opposing the imperialist forces pounding Libya then one now also has to oppose their Libyan allies.

There is a hard lesson in this. In this age, where the imperial powers have perfected so many ways of shaping events, any opposition movement in the so-called “Third World,” must make clear that it is absolutely opposed to all forms of imperialist intervention. What is more, for an opposition movement to be progressive it must make clear that it is struggling for a government that will be more opposed to the imperial powers than the existing regime that it is opposing. This is doubly necessary for opposition movements fighting against governments that currently have frosty relations with the imperialists – like Syria and Iran.

Moreover if the courageous rebellions by the Arab masses are to go in a truly progressive direction, the idea of simply unity of all against whoever is the current ruler must be replaced by an agenda that is explicitly pro-working class, anti-imperialist and pro-women’s rights. And since all wings of the capitalist classes there are tied to and dependent on the corporate bosses of the imperial countries, the capitalist elements must be driven out of the opposition movements. In the end if political democracy and freedom from neocolonial subjugation is to be won throughout the Middle East, the toilers must seize state power. When they do make such workers revolutions, the toilers in power will naturally progress on to collectivise ownership of the oil fields, factories, land and banks. This will finally allow the masses to liberate themselves from poverty and unemployment.

It is leftists in the Arab world who will work out the best slogans to push forward this struggle. However we have a big role to play here too living in an imperialist country. It is imperialist intervention in all its forms that is the biggest obstacle to the liberation of the Arab masses. That is why Trotskyist Platform insists that we must oppose all interventions by the Australian ruling class. Canberra is strongly supporting NATO’s terror bombing of Libya. Furthermore the joint U.S./Australia spy base in Pine Gap in the Northern Territory is used for pinpointing missile strikes. We must thus demand the closure of Pine Gap and must oppose the government’s plans to open more yet more U.S. bases here. However we must also understand that the Australian regime is not just Washington’s puppet. They support U.S. expeditions in the Middle East only because they rely on U.S. might to back their own marauding in the South Pacific including in Papua New Guinea, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. The Australian rulers are imperialist bullies in their own right.

This is crucial to understand because some on the left while opposing the military intervention in Libya, are calling on the Australian government to intervene in Libya using negotiations and diplomatic pressure. However any diplomatic intervention by Canberra will necessarily be for imperialist purposes. For the capitalist powers, military intervention and diplomatic intervention are just different tools used to achieve the same predatory goals. Neither can play a progressive role because imperialism that wields it is not just a bad policy choice by a bad person. It is something far more remorseless – it is a system. It is capitalism at its highest stage – a stage where capitalism in the richer countries can only make up for its

economic crises at home by in the poorer countries devouring markets, natural resources and cheap labour. Asking the rich capitalist powers to intervene in a helpful way in a poorer country - whether militarily or diplomatically - is like asking a great white shark to be a vegetarian.

Unfortunately, this is not understood by much of the left in this country. Recently there were necessary demonstrations here in solidarity with the rebellions in the Arab world. However, one of the main slogans of the rallies was to “Call for the Australian government to support the movements in Egypt, Libya” and so on. Well Gillard and Rudd would claim that the Australia government is indeed intervening to “support the movement” in Libya – intervening that is by supporting the devastation of Tripoli by NATO missiles! Even if the imperialists were not launching military action and were instead purely supporting an opposition movement through political statements and funding, that would only be in order to co-opt the movement. Currently Washington’s National Endowment for Democracy is busy funding political groups within Egypt - including those that opposed Mubarak - in order to contain the stirrings there within boundaries acceptable to imperialism. **That is why it is just as harmful when the imperialists pretend to support you as when they oppose you.**

So how we are then going to stand up to these predatory great powers – with their finely honed devious methods and their military might? After all even the rulers of most of the countries suffering from their plundering are under their thumb. Yes, but not all countries. Notably, the world’s rising power the Peoples Republic of China is strongly criticising the NATO bombing. Socialistic China has a right to criticize. It is the world’s only non-imperialist power and alone of the world’s powers has not fought a war in the last 20 years. Unfortunately however the Chinese leadership made a harmful betrayal - it abstained rather than voted against the U.N. resolution. China’s compromising bureaucratic rulers have a policy of seeking to avoid annoying imperialism in the hope that imperialism will leave it alone. This is a suicidal policy. If imperialism is not defeated it will eventually gather the forces to destroy socialistic rule in China as it did in the former USSR. Not surprisingly those pushing hardest within China to appease imperialism are those factions within Chinese political layers that are also pushing to allow capitalism to make greater inroads into China’s economy. They must be defeated. We call on the PRC to strongly oppose the entire NATO intervention in Libya as part of the necessary struggle to both oppose imperialism and defend the Chinese workers state.

The greatest potential force for stopping the imperialists is the working classes in the imperialist centres themselves. In the NATO countries, Portugal, Spain, Greece and now Britain there have been huge workers struggles against the rulers who are trying to make workers pay for the capitalist economic crises. Here too there is much disgruntlement at deteriorating social services, a lack of affordable housing and workplace bullying by greedy bosses. In the end, the looting of the semi-colonies by the richer capitalist powers brings benefit only to the upper class elite of the imperial countries with a few crumbs flowing also to the middle classes and a small layer of better paid workers. Most of the working class

masses do not gain anything at all. Indeed, **whenever the imperialist rulers get away with running roughshod over a country like Libya it makes them more pumped up to attack workers rights and oppressed minorities in their own countries.**

This understanding must be brought to politically aware workers. We must point out that the same rulers who are supporting the bombing of Libya are the ones who are attacking our trade unions, unleashing tear gas against asylum seekers and brutally oppressing Aboriginal people. If we can build up enough understanding of this, then there can begin to be workers political industrial action against the attack on Libya. Now that would really hurt NATO's war! Such actions can indeed be built. A small taste of what is needed was seen on 1 May 2008, when dock workers in the West coast of the U.S held a stopwork against the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The obstacle to building such actions is the influence of the current parliamentary parties. And by that I not only mean the right-wing Coalition and the ALP sell-outs of the working class. I also mean the Greens. The Greens and Bob Brown are enthusiastic supporters of the murderous NATO attack on Libya. If any of you campaigned for votes to The Greens yesterday [ie at the NSW elections], I hope you reconsider. The Greens, as small-l liberals, may oppose some of the worst excesses of policies here but they are solidly supporters of the capitalist establishment and of Australian imperialism. What we need instead is a party that will truly serve the working class, a party that is consistently opposed to imperialism.

Sisters and brothers, in closing I would like to on behalf of Trotskyist Platform congratulate everyone who has supported today's action. You have come here in the face of overwhelming media propaganda and a lot of hesitation within the left on the question of actively opposing the imperialist attack on Libya. Today is a stepping stone for future action. I urge you to take what you have discussed here and get out there to the working class suburbs, especially the heavily migrant ones, and agitate for the defeat of the NATO attack on Libya. If we connect this campaign to the fight against racist capitalism at home I am sure we will make headway.



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