

## **The Outrageous War Crimes Committed by US/NATO in Libya**

by Jeremy Salt via jalal - ICH *Wednesday, Oct 19 2011, 9:12am*

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### **The Legend of the Resistance in Sirte**

A legend is being created that is going to haunt the people who have been propelled into power in Tripoli. In Sirte a handful of men have set an example of bravery in the face of impossible odds that will eventually find its place in Arab history. Weeks of missile and bomb attacks have reduced the centre of the city to ruins and killed an unknown number of civilians.



***Sirte residential area after NATO 'humanitarian' bombing!***

The photos coming out of the city show Beirut-style devastation. The fighters defending the city would seem to be doomed. They have their backs to the sea and are surrounded on three sides. We don't know who they are or how many of them there are. Some might be the remnants of the Libyan army and others civilians who have taken up arms to defend their city. We don't know why they are fighting. We are told that they are just fighting for their lives. We are told that they are mercenaries, but mercenaries put down their arms when the money runs out. We are told that they are 'Gaddafi loyalists'. That discredits them immediately. No one really knows what they are fighting for, but their country has to be a possibility for at least some of them.

Why was this war launched? The Gaddafi who has now been dislodged is the same old Gaddafi who arrived in Rome a couple of years ago with photos of Umar al Mukhtar pinned to his tunic as he stepped off the plane. He is the same Gaddafi who was embraced in Paris by Sarkozy and, according to Saif al Islam, gave generously to Sarkozy's election campaign. He is the same Gaddafi who was embraced by the ever-smiling Tony Blair in Tripoli. He was the same Gaddafi with whom Shell was very happy to do business. Between those occasions and now he didn't change. Years ago it was the 'stray dogs' - Libyan dissidents - he wanted to hunt down. This year it was the 'greasy rats' he vowed to pursue street to street - zenga zenga - and house to house. This was what gave the US, Britain and France their justification for taking military action. This was not supposed to be about regime change, but that is how it ended and if it was not planned from the start it was inevitable once these three powers intervened.

Whatever Libyans thought of Muammar Gaddafi, there were no signs that anything like the majority supported the uprising against him. As Gaddafi himself asked on October 6: 'The NTC, who gave

them legitimacy? How did they obtain legitimacy? Did the Libyan people elect them? Did the Libyan people appoint them? And if only the power of NATO bombs and fleets grants legitimacy, then let all rulers in the Third World beware, for the same fate awaits you. To those who recognize this council as legitimate, beware. There will be transitional councils created everywhere and imposed upon you and one by one you shall fall'.

This was not a popular revolution or a war of liberation. This was not Egypt or Tunisia, where it was the people who overthrew the government. This was a war of conquest by Britain, France and the US, coordinating their efforts with armed groups on the ground. These three powers turned an uprising into a civil war, and then ensured victory for one side through the massive use of aerial fire power. The soldiers on the ground - the 'Gaddafi loyalists' - were as defenseless from the missiles being rained down on them as civilians in plain clothes. By themselves the 'rebels' would have been quickly scattered.

With the attack building up and the outcome all but certain, senior Libyan government ministers began to defect. The common metaphor is rats jumping from a sinking ship. Musa Kusa flew to London and told British intelligence everything he knew, which must have been quite a bit, because whatever crimes Gaddafi committed over the past four decades, Musa Kusa was in them up to his neck. Mustafa Abd ul Jalil was the Minister for Justice in the old regime. He also got out just in time. Deserting Gaddafi, he then agreed to head an interim governing council set up in collaboration with the attacking foreign powers. People who do this kind of thing are usually called traitors. In the Second World War Marshal Petain collaborated with the Nazis and would have been executed afterwards but for his advanced age and his distinguished war record in 1914-18. William Joyce ('Lord Haw Haw') was executed just for broadcasting Nazi propaganda against his own country, Britain. Vidkun Quisling acted as the regent for the Nazis in occupied Norway and was executed after the war for treason. The foreign powers with whom Mustafa Abdul Jalil has collaborated have attacked his country and killed thousands of his fellow countrymen, women and children. Unless the word has lost its meaning, that makes him a traitor, too.

With NATO planes clearing the path ahead all the way to Tripoli and then to Sirte, the end result was inevitable. Without air cover and without ground defence against aerial attack the Libyan army - the 'Gaddafi loyalists' - had no chance. There are numerous parallels in the long history of western attacks on Muslim countries. In 1882 a British fleet bombarded Alexandria and then blamed arsonists and brigands for the massive destruction they had caused. Troops were landed to restore the order which had just been destroyed. Egyptians tried to defend their country but against the firepower, training and organization of a modern European army, they had no chance. In 1898 about 60,000 followers of the Sudanese khalifa, the successor to the mahdi, stormed across a plain outside Omdurman towards the British battle lines. It was their country and they fought for it with enormous bravery but against Maxim guns, lined up in a row on the battlefield, they also had no chance. There were exceptions to the rule. In the early 1880s the Sudanese destroyed the Hicks expeditionary army, but that was before the invention of the Maxim gun. In 1896 an Ethiopian army all but wiped out an Italian army in the battle of Adowa. Nearly four decades an Italian army invaded Ethiopia again, suffering severe battlefield defeats before superior weaponry and the use of mustard gas gave them victory. Driven into exile, the emperor Haile Selassie told the League of Nations 'It was us today. It will be you tomorrow'. Indeed it was.

In 1911 the Italians invaded Libya but failed to penetrate the interior because of the resistance of the Sanusi tribes and the small Ottoman force sent to do what it could, Libya then being part of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1920s Italy embarked on a full-scale program to tame the Libyans. Thousands were moved from Jabal al Akhdar in Cyrenaica and penned up in concentration camps. The resistance was led by a Quran teacher, Umar al Mukhtar, who was captured in 1931 and hanged

in the Suluq concentration camp. Now, getting on for a century later, Libyans themselves have opened the door to another foreign attack on their country.

Without the 'humanitarian' intervention of the US, Britain and France, Gaddafi would be still be in Tripoli but thousands people now dead would be alive. The buildings and the infrastructure that has been destroyed would still be standing. Libya would still be the most advanced country in Africa, instead of a country that has been battered by war and will now need repairing in accordance with the prescriptions of 'disaster capitalism'.

As an investment this war was not even a risky one. Libya is a large country with a relatively small population and almost no capacity to defend itself against outside attack by powerful states. It is rich in oil, foreign reserves and gold bullion. Would the attack even have been considered if it were poor? Its financial situation was far healthier than that of the countries attacking it. The notion that this was done for altruistic reasons has to be scotched immediately. Whatever the humanitarian packaging, ulterior motives lie behind every war launched by the western powers in the Middle East and North Africa over the last two centuries. The war on Libya is no exception. At a time of extreme financial crisis, the attacking countries are not sinking billions of dollars into the war without expecting a generous strategic and commercial return on their investment.

In all the weeks Sirte was being devastated from the air, where was the UN Security Council, which opened the door to the attack on Libya with its 'no fly' zone resolution but has taken no responsibility for the consequences? Where was the EU, where was the OIC, where was the Arab League, where was the outrage in the media, where were all the governments upholding a 'responsibility to protect' which had turned into a license to kill? They were all mute. Not a word of concern or even of condemnation passed their lips. They only wanted to talk about Syria. The pictures of destruction now coming out of Sirte give some indication of what Britain, France and the US have done. How many civilians have been killed we don't know, but the estimates being made for the country as a whole suggest a death toll running into the tens of thousands. Such is the cost of 'humanitarian intervention'. Such is the price the Libyans have had to pay for their own 'liberation'. They did not want this war. It was the governments of the US, Britain and France who wanted this war, for reasons of their own, and used the rising in Benghazi as their leverage.

A country which was stable is now in turmoil. The news agencies refer to the government in Tripoli but there is no government in Tripoli. The 'National Transitional Council' has still not got its act together. Uncertainty, turbulence and possibly a spreading war of resistance lie ahead, as the implications of what has been done sink in. History is written by the victors, so we are told, but if this western triumph over yet another Middle Eastern madman cannot be consolidated, the day may yet come when Libyans will be building statues to commemorate the bravery of the small band of men who fought to the last for Sirte.

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