

RAY O' LIGHT NEWSLETTER

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“A Smoking Gun”: The Obama-Clinton War on Libya and Africa

by RAY LIGHT

The 2016 Presidential Primary Campaigns leading up to the Republican and Democratic National Conventions this summer have set a political-cultural tone among the people of the USA that is an especially misleading one. It is true that among the candidates, there are some big programmatic differences *on domestic policy*.

The predominantly white Christian Republican voters are increasingly angry about their deteriorating economic conditions. Till now, however, the Wall Street ruling class has been able to divert their frustration and outrage into fruitless channels, i.e., safely away from making demands on the finance capitalists of Wall Street. Mainly by pushing the “All-American” buttons of

White Supremacy and Christian religious bigotry, the Republican Primary candidates have largely focused their voters’ bitterness on chauvinist hatred for the first African American U.S. president and on the Arab and Muslim peoples of the Middle East and the USA, as well as on the more than ten million undocumented Latino immigrants who have served as scapegoats for the U.S. monopoly capitalists and imperialists ever since the 2008 economic crisis erupted. This is what has made Donald Trump so effective on the campaign trail.

Under the Obama Regime, the rich have done better than ever, while the middle class, the working class and especially the working poor are still mired in economic
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The Tragic Quest for Education

by CINDY SHEEHAN



“He who opens a school door,
closes a prison.”
—Victor Hugo

Article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “education is a right.” While public education from K-12 is technically “free” in the United States, access to safe

education of an acceptable “well-rounded” quality is essentially disappearing.

Article 26 also declares that: “Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” Of course many elementary, middle, and high schools here in the US are being closed due to budgetary concerns and as I stated before, quality public education is hard to find while colleges and universities in this nation are not even close to being “equally accessible.”

Most nations around this world have free, or highly subsidized universities, including Cuba (depicted as “evil” by the US Empire) which has a higher literacy
(contd. on p. 2)

Do you know who said it??

“I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by a few trembling, scarred, and foot-sore bondsmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage, and whose heartfelt ‘God bless you’ has been your only reward. The midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism. Excepting John Brown — of sacred memory — I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people than you have.”

Hint: This is an excerpt from a letter addressed to Harriet Tubman, the Moses of her people, in 1868.

—Still stumped? See page 10 for the mystery answer.

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rate than the US! Even the public colleges in the US are becoming increasingly over-priced and with good jobs that have fair wages and decent benefits also disappearing, many of our young people are being forced to weigh the cost of education with will it be realistically “worth it?”

* * *

I have a tale of two young Americans from the working-class who dreamed of obtaining a University degree.

The first was a young man who always felt great responsibility to “do the right thing.” His parents sent him to Catholic School from K-8 and he was an Eagle Scout. After graduating around the middle of his class in high school, he studied Theater Arts at a local community college for three years before he was able to complete his AA degree. He worked full-time at a local department store and was active in his church whenever he had the time.

In his final semester of courses at the community college, an Army recruiter preyed upon his trusting nature at a college “Job Fair.” Long story short, the young man was promised a college education, paid for with veteran’s benefits and he enlisted in the Army in 2000 and was murdered in the illegal and immoral war in Iraq on April 04, 2004. What the slimy Army recruiter failed to tell this young man (along with many other things) was that less than 20% of veterans are able to access their college benefits — either because they die, are wounded, or just find themselves unable to navigate the (intentionally?) complicated VA system.

Our other young working-class American is a woman who did well in high school and on her SATs, but her family couldn’t afford to send her straight to university and she did not do well enough for many scholarships.

She struggled in community college because she also had to work full-time as a food server to make ends meet. She matriculated to a university after spending about eight years at community college and within 4 years of that, she had completed not only her B.A., but obtained an M.A. as well. The young lady did not join the military to do this, but she now has a lifelong debt of \$50k. After all her hard work, what was her reward? She now works at two bars as a bartender. She jokes wryly, “I needed a Master’s degree to tend bar in San Francisco.”

The above examples come from my own family, my son Casey and my daughter Carly. Of course, if university were free here in the US where would the military get its cannon fodder and where would the banks get their debt slaves?

* * *

Why is it that the children of the “99%” have to go into the military or onerous debt to obtain what most people/governments of the world consider a “human right?” A

The U.S. Empire: A Modern Day Pirate

by RAY LIGHT

In our first article addressing the unprovoked U.S. Imperialist attack on Libya, we noted the following: “On Friday, February 25, 2011, Obama signed an executive order calling for the seizure of all assets controlled by Colonel Gadhafi and four of his children ... insisting that the assets would be turned over to a *new* Libyan government. According to the Treasury’s acting undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, David Cohen, this was the largest such seizure in U.S. History, more than thirty billion dollars worth!” (*Ray O’Light Newsletter #65*, March-April 2011)

After reading the accompanying article in this issue, is it possible that this “grand theft” played an outsized role in the Obama Administration’s clear decision, announced by Obama a few days after the seizure, that “Qaddafi would have to go?!”

country that sends all good jobs with decent pay and benefits overseas, and fails to properly educate all of its young people cannot sustain itself for long: Neither can the same country which places murder for profit in many other countries over basic human rights for its own citizens.

Another aspect of this unattainability of education that is free and high quality for everyone is that universities which were once considered to be hotbeds of leftwing organizing have basically gone silent on especially the issues of war and an out-of-control empire. I have thought long about this and by talking to my own children and other young people, the students who are in the working, or poor classes, are struggling just to keep their heads above water, much less join in protests and other principled actions.

Of course, the children of the ruling-class or bourgeoisie profit off of empire and other exploitation, so we can’t expect many of them to join us in the struggles for peace and equality.

I recognize education as a human right and I am in solidarity with the struggle. But should this access to education in our own country “trump” (sorry, no pun intended) the right to peace and to be free from war and occupation in the 180 plus countries around the world that the US infests and infects with its military? Besides saving countless numbers of lives around the world, the end of empire would also fund any social program that would help the people who live in the United States; and the world could be on a path to true healing and very needed worker solidarity.

Especially in an election year, the demand for an end to this leprous empire must accompany any demands for justice here in the US. I believe that we must be internationalists in our approach to these demands to have any credibility or gravitas in our movements.

depression. Thus, the Democratic Primary voters, like their Republican counterparts, are frustrated with the fact that the rich in the USA have never been so much richer and more powerful than the rest of us! The Bernie Sanders Campaign, standing on the shoulders of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, has given expression (at long last) to the class warfare that has been waged by the U.S. Ruling class against the working class and oppressed nationalities in the USA. And Sanders campaign platform contains a *domestic* program that would serve the class interests of the workers and the 99% and is mobilizing some thousands around it *and* in opposition to Wall Street. (This is precisely why the Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ROL-USA) has critically participated in this campaign.) Indeed, Hillary Clinton, the only major “Republicrat” candidate of either Republicrat party still clearly in the running for the Presidency, has been forced to adopt most of Sanders’ domestic platform – at least until she captures the Democratic Party nomination at the July Convention.

Nevertheless, ***from Sanders on the “left” to Trump (or Cruz or Clinton) on the “right,” there is no candidate that represents an alternative foreign policy to the bestial Bush-Obama “Republicrat” foreign policy of Empire, an endless war of terror against any country it chooses, and against the international working class and the oppressed peoples of the earth.***



Many would still argue that President Obama, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, inherited the War in Iraq and the War in Afghanistan, from the Bush-Cheney Regime and that these ongoing wars are therefore not their responsibility. To make it crystal clear that Obama-Clinton have been every bit as bloodthirsty as Bush-Cheney in their defense of Wall Street’s pursuit of maximum private profits no matter the public cost, this article thus focuses on the U.S. imperialist-led war against Libya, a war that is clearly **Obama’s War**.

Moreover, ROL-USA opposed this vicious and brutal, unprovoked imperialist war of plunder and terror from its very beginning. But the thorough exposure of this *Democratic Party administration’s absolute rejection of any negotiation with the Qaddafi Regime in Libya, the Obama Regime’s insistence on an all-out war to drive Qaddafi out of Libya and then to murder him* is documented here not by us but by a *pro-U.S.* imperialist adviser, Alan J. Kuperman, an Associate Professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the

University of Texas in Austin! Then, when two former National Security Council (NSC) senior advisers with some real responsibility for Obama’s Libya policy in 2011 challenge Kuperman using “plausible deniability,” Kuperman responds with an even more scathing exposure! **Kuperman provides the “smoking gun.”**

Kuperman’s think-tank article appeared in the March/April 2015 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, arguably the most authoritative political magazine representing U.S. Imperialist interests published in the USA. Kuperman’s article is entitled, “Obama’s Libya Debacle.” But, declaring his pro-imperialist, pro-Empire bona fides up front, the subtitle is: “How a *Well-Meaning* Intervention Ended in Failure.” (ROL emphasis) Of course, a careful reading of Kuperman’s piece provides no evidence that there was anything *well-meaning* in the criminal U.S. Intervention. Kuperman’s goal is not to oppose the U.S. Empire but to bolster it.

In fact, Kuperman’s main aim here is to get the U.S. Government to frankly admit that, “in retrospect, Obama’s intervention in Libya was an abject failure, judged even by its own standards. Libya has not only failed to evolve into a democracy; it has devolved into a failed state. Violent deaths and other human rights abuses have increased severalfold. Rather than helping the United States combat terrorism, as Qaddafi did during his last decade in power, Libya now serves as a safe haven for militias affiliated with both al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). The Libya intervention has harmed other U.S. interests as well: undermining nuclear nonproliferation, chilling Russian cooperation at the UN, and fueling Syria’s civil war.”

Kuperman’s article begins on March 17, 2011, when the UN Security Council passed Resolution 73, spearheaded by President Obama, “authorizing military intervention in Libya.” It was done in the name of saving “the lives of peaceful pro-democracy protesters who found themselves the target of a crackdown by Libyan dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi.” Said Obama, “We knew if we waited one more day, Benghazi – a city nearly the size of Charlotte – could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world.” Kuperman observes: “Two days after the UN authorization, the United States and other NATO countries established a no-fly zone throughout Libya and started bombing Qaddafi’s forces. Seven months later, in October 2011, after an extended military campaign with sustained Western support, rebel forces conquered the country and shot Qaddafi dead.” (Kuperman, p.66)

Kuperman asserts that, “Despite what defenders of the mission claim, there was a better policy available — not intervening at all, because *peaceful Libyan citizens were not actually being targeted.*” (ibid. p. 66, ROL emphasis)

Without explicitly pointing to Obama, Kuperman exposes “the big lie” that Obama used to perpetrate the
(contd. on p. 4)

war against Libya’s sovereign government. Kuperman goes on to document that “striving to minimize civilian casualties, Qaddafi’s forces had refrained from indiscriminate violence.” (p. 70) To this end, Kuperman provides exact statistics drawn from the fighting in Misurata, Libya’s third largest city, where there were very few women and children casualties, “which indicates that Qaddafi’s forces had narrowly targeted combatants, who were virtually all male.” “The same pattern of restraint was evident in Tripoli ... These statistics refute the notion that Qaddafi’s forces fired indiscriminately at peaceful civilians.” (p.70)



Especially contemptible about the Obama Regime’s assertion at the UN on March 17, 2011 (in order to obtain authorization for military intervention in Libya) that Qaddafi was about to commit a bloodbath in Benghazi is that, according to Kuperman, “From March 5 to March 15, 2011, [Qaddafi] government forces recaptured all but one of the major rebel-held cities, and in none did they kill civilians in revenge, let alone commit a bloodbath. Indeed, as his forces approached Benghazi, Qaddafi issued public reassurances that they would harm neither civilians nor rebels who disarmed. On March 17, he directly addressed the rebels of Benghazi ...” “Two days later, however, the NATO air campaign halted Qaddafi’s offensive ... Benghazi did not return to government control, the rebels did not flee, and the war did not end. ... All told, the intervention extended Libya’s civil war from less than six weeks to more than eight months.” (p.71)

“Moreover,” continues Kuperman, “unlike Qaddafi’s forces in 2011, the militias fighting in Libya today do use force indiscriminately ... This grim math leads to a depressing but unavoidable conclusion. Before NATO’s intervention, Libya’s civil war was on the verge of ending, at the cost of barely 1,000 lives. Since then, however, Libya has suffered at least 10,000 additional deaths from conflict. In other words, NATO’s intervention appears to have increased the violent death toll more than tenfold.” (p 72)

Kuperman also cites real “war crimes” being committed by the victorious, imperialist-backed rebels still vying with each other for power.

There are many other important points made by Kuperman in this *Foreign Affairs* article, including the fact that “the intervention in Libya may also have fostered violence in Syria. In March 2011, Syria’s uprising was still largely nonviolent, and the Assad government’s response ... was relatively circumscribed. After NATO gave Libya’s rebels the upper hand, however, Syria’s revolutionaries (sic) turned to violence in the summer of 2011, perhaps expecting to attract a similar intervention. ... The result was a massive escalation of the Syrian conflict, leading to at least 1,500 deaths per week by early 2013, a 15-fold increase.” (p.75) “NATO’s mission in Libya also hindered peacemaking efforts in Syria by greatly antagonizing Russia. With Moscow’s acquiescence, the UN Security Council had approved the establishment of a no-fly zone in Libya and other measures to protect civilians. But NATO exceeded that mandate to pursue regime change.” Explained Russian foreign minister Lavrov, “... as a result, in Syria, Russia ‘would never allow the Security Council to authorize anything similar to what happened in Libya.’”

Kuperman also documents that Mummar Qaddafi was laying the groundwork for transition to his son Saif and his reformist agenda after the elder Qaddafi had sacked his more hard-line son Mutassim in 2010. According to Kuperman, the imperialist adviser, “The prudent path is to promote peaceful reform of the type that Qaddafi’s son Saif was pursuing.”

Kuperman concludes the article by criticizing Obama for having drawn the exact wrong lesson from his Libyan debacle. He quotes Obama as viciously telling *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman in August 2014, “I think we underestimated ... the need to come in full force.” Kuperman states: “The error in Libya was not an inadequate post-intervention effort; it was the decision to intervene in the first place.”

* * *

In the next issue of *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2015), Derek Chollet and Ben Fishman, who had been Obama’s Senior Director for Strategic Planning and Director of North Africa and Jordan respectively on the National Security Council staff in 2011, took sharp issue with Professor Kuperman’s position (pp 154-157). Their response was entitled, “Who Lost Libya? - Obama’s Intervention in Retrospect.” And there was a brief “Kuperman Replies,” (pp 158-159) as well.

It is enlightening to read the bankrupt patter of these two corrupt functionaries, seeking to defend their criminal roles in Libya, in response to Kuperman’s facts. First, they try to besmirch Qaddafi’s record, painting him as the worst kind of despot in the world. However, Kuperman

(contd. on p. 5)

“A Smoking Gun” continued)

has already provided ample documentation of Qaddafi’s concern to avoid civilian casualties even in the midst of the civil war. And he has pointed out that, “the recent privation represents a stark descent for a country (Libya) that the UN’s Human Development Index traditionally had ranked as *having the highest standard of living in all of Africa.*” (p. 69) (ROL emphasis)

Chollet/Fishman also hide behind the idea that the “world saw a slaughter in the making.” According to Kuperman, “that’s simply not true. The world’s top two human rights organizations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, never warned of an impending massacre in Libya.” (p. 158) Kuperman also points to his own reporting in *USA Today* in March 2011: “Despite ubiquitous cellphone cameras, there are no images of genocidal violence, a claim that smacks of rebel propaganda.” Kuperman concludes that “Given that experts in the intelligence, human rights, and scholarly communities expressed strong doubts at the time about the rebel warnings of an impending bloodbath, it is the Obama administration that must accept responsibility for spearheading a disastrous intervention on phony grounds.” (p. 158)



Regarding Chollet/Fishman’s allegation that it was Qaddafi who was responsible for failing to negotiate a different outcome, Kuperman exposes “The facts show otherwise. Just three days into the bombing campaign, it was the Obama Administration that unilaterally terminated peace negotiations between U.S. Africa Command and the Qaddafi regime.” Kuperman cites Charles Kubic, a retired rear admiral in the U.S. Navy, who brokered the negotiations. Kubic recounted that “Qaddafi was willing to step down and permit a transition government” under two conditions: that his inner circle receive free passage out of the country and that Libya’s military retain sufficient force to fight radical Islamists.” Said rear admiral Kubic, in looking back: “If their goal was to get Qaddafi out of power, then why not give a 72-hour truce a try?” Kubic concluded: “it wasn’t enough to get him out of power; they wanted him dead.” (p. 158)

Kuperman continues: “Unaware, Qaddafi continued to pursue peace talks in vain.” And Kuperman cites an April 10th African Union proposal and a May 26th proposal by the Qaddafi government rejected by the rebels with the backing of the U.S. Government. “The rebels declared they would reject any cease-fire until Qaddafi had left power, and the Obama administration backed this intransigent position.”

One issue not remarked upon by Kuperman is that, in their response to his article, Chollet/Fishman’s repeated “proof” of Qaddafi’s alleged unwillingness to negotiate is that he would not negotiate his own exit. This is a dangerous reflection of the Hitlerian character of Obama’s order to Qaddafi that he leave his own country and its Hitlerian impact on these two corrupt functionaries! How many Libyans elected Obama to give that order?! How could Chollet/Fishman now some five years removed from the situation still be so blind to their own and Obama’s imperial arrogance?!*

Nonetheless, *Kuperman is clear* on who is responsible for this brutal war in Libya. He states: “The Obama administration had insisted on regime change from the very start. On March 3, 2011, two weeks before NATO intervened, Obama declared that Qaddafi ‘must step down from power and leave.’ That explains why the State Department ordered U.S. Africa Command to halt peace talks on March 22, and why NATO kept bombing even after the rebels repeatedly rejected negotiations.” (p. 159)

And he is indignant that Chollet/Fishman try to blame Qaddafi for his own murder. “Not so,” says Kuperman. “Instead it was the result of the Obama administration’s serial errors [crimes-ROL]: starting a war of choice based on a faulty premise, exceeding the UN’s mandate to protect civilians, rejecting Qaddafi’s peace offers, insisting on regime change, and supporting an opposition composed of radical Islamists and fractious militias.”

The tragic destruction of Libya and the tragic blow to the people of the African continent struck by U.S.-led Western imperialism is an important part of the legacy of Barack Obama, the first African-American U.S. President, and his Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

But let us give the last word to Professor Kuperman, the imperialist adviser who began with his characterization of a “well-intentioned” intervention in Libya, as he quite

(contd. on p. 6)

*Chollet/Fishman are in the tradition of fascist political functionaries. They blame the lame Libyan puppets, installed in power by U.S. bombs and armaments, for the inability of the U.S.-led imperialist powers to make post Qaddafi Libya “a success.” And they say, in the most cynical and sinister fashion, “... there was never a realistic option for establishing an international peacekeeping or post-conflict security mechanism, because the Libyans did not want it. And no viable candidates from the West or the region stepped up to lead or compose such a force, because *no one wanted to participate in an enterprise that might appear neocolonial.*” (ROL emphasis)

("A Smoking Gun" continued)

correctly ties together the Bush/Cheney and Obama/Clinton "Republicrat" rulers:

"After Qaddafi's death was confirmed in October 2011, **a gloating Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** declared to a television reporter, **'We came, we saw, he died!'** She was justified in claiming credit on behalf

of the Obama administration for the outcome in Libya, including Qaddafi's brutal murder. Back then, however, she and her colleagues believed their intervention was a success. Now that it has turned into a dismal failure, it is too late to shed responsibility. As President George W. Bush learned the hard way, 'mission accomplished' can be declared, but subsequent events may haunt you."

Self Critical Letter from Reader Regarding Sanders Campaign

Editor's Introduction: *Ray O'Light Newsletter #92* (September-October 2015) included an article entitled, "The Emergence of Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Presidential Election Campaign and its Revolutionary Significance." This was our first article on the 2016 Campaign and in an editor's note I called for readers to respond. One brief but thoughtful response came from comrade Muhsin Y. We published it with my editorial response in *Newsletter #93* (November-December 2015).

Among our small forces, more than a few of us held similar "purist" views on participating in bourgeois electoral politics in the belly of the beast, in the heartland of world capitalism, in our early years in the proletarian revolutionary movement. And the fact that Sanders pledged and continues to pledge allegiance to the Democratic wing of the "Republicrat Party of War and Empire" further complicates this question.

In March, we received the following self-critical letter from the comrade which we publish here with a few slight editorial changes for purposes of clarity. We are encouraged by the honesty, seriousness of purpose and principle reflected in the letter and hope that other readers will weigh in, as comrade Muhsin did, based on their own experience in dealing with the Sanders Campaign and the 2016 election season.

We heartily endorse comrade Muhsin's shift from his initial rejection of any electoral participation around the Sanders campaign to an endorsement of the Revolutionary Organization of Labor's approach of critical support for the Sanders campaign guided as we are by the Leninist teaching that proletarian revolutionaries need to be "wherever the masses are to be found." At the same time, we want to caution comrade Muhsin *not to overcorrect his initial sectarian error*. Whereas in the first letter, his rejection of this electoral work was partly based on the idea that "there is nothing to trust in Bernie Sanders," in this current letter, there appears a tendency to equate Sanders with the Sanders campaign, to draw too great a distinction between "a progressive reformist trend" led by Sanders and "an openly reactionary

trend" led by Clinton within the Democratic Party and to refer to Sanders as among the "moderate and well-intentioned reformists."



In my initial response to comrade Muhsin last Fall, I pointed out that the fact "that 'there is nothing to trust in Bernie Sanders' is beside the point from the Leninist standpoint. ... we cite Marx stating that, 'the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them in parliament.' Sanders is among this ilk."

Moreover, I concluded: "... in relation to the international working class and the oppressed peoples of the world, ROL, USA, in my view, cannot and will not be silent on Bernie Sanders' vicious stand on the side of the U.S. Empire and against us ... When Sanders says ... he will support whatever Democrat is nominated for President, he is declaring himself a war criminal defender of the U.S. Empire. But that will not automatically keep us from working with his campaign on a tactical basis ... [We cannot] allow Bernie Sanders and the Democrats to mobilize the dissatisfied masses for their dead-end politics, as Obama did in 2008, without our forces struggling to mobilize the people for the short term and long term struggles ahead."

We applaud comrade Muhsin's self-critical letter and encourage other readers to weigh in on this important political question.

—Ray Light, Editor

Response and Self-Criticism

by MUHSIN Y.



Dear Brother Ray,

Since my initial thoughts on the Bernie Sanders Campaign were published in newsletter #93, I, like all of us, have borne witness to the dynamics within and around the Democratic Party of the United States as the campaign for Democratic candidate [for President] of the United States has been reduced to a fierce contest between two trends, an openly reactionary trend, represented by Hillary Clinton, and a progressive reformist trend represented by Bernie Sanders.

As we know, the Democratic Party itself is a tool of finance capital, and as your analysis in the latest newsletter (#95) makes clear, US finance capital is flexing its muscle in both wings of the “Republicrat” apparatus to ensure that its interests are reflected in “parliamentary politics” in the US. So complete is the “Republicrat” apparatus’ control of the discourse in this country, that at the outset of the Sanders Campaign my reaction was one of total rejectionism not only of the significance of the Bernie Sanders Campaign, in spite of its significance being made increasingly clear by its dialectical opposite, the fascistic Donald Trump campaign, both of which are indicative of the erosion of the legitimacy of Wall Street “politics as usual” in the US.

Since then, it has become clear that no matter how much the “Republicrat” apparatus would like to have Trump and Sanders relegated to two equally unacceptable “extremes” (!) ... both candidates have actual mass support. Trump’s support shows that even if fascism is not imminent in the United States at present, it has begun to put down roots in preparation for a sharpening of the contradictions. Sanders’ support, contrary to my initial dismissiveness, has been revealed through the media and through all contacts of mine around the United States – no matter how dismissive they also were of the Sanders Campaign at first – to represent a genuine mass resentment of rule by Wall Street and the big banks. Even relatively moderate US citizens I know of oppressor nation background have not only been inspired by Sanders’ Campaign, but in many cases through it have been taught to resent Hillary Clinton and her corporate sponsors, in spite of Clinton’s unearned status as a “feminist” icon.

On an unprecedented scale, one hears talk of rejecting the Democratic candidate if they fail to meet the aspirations of the people in favour of a write-in campaign for Sanders. On an unprecedented scale, one hears talk of the Democrats and their Wall Street backers as being a force which can be combated from the left. All of this is contrary to my defeatist predictions.

It was my view that because the Democratic Party will not peacefully accede control of its political line even to moderate and well-intentioned reformists like Bernie Sanders, that the campaign should be ignored entirely

on the grounds that “pure” revolutionaries must “draw a line in the sand” between us and those who work to “better the system.” This was, as you pointed out in your response in Newsletter #93, contrary to the teachings of Comrade Lenin, and a prime example of an “ultra-left” deviation from the correct Marxist-Leninist line.

In an academic “left” context, where one is surrounded by careerists with petty bourgeois aspirations and only the vaguest nominal “socialist” commitments, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture and believe that simple posturing as the “harshest” critic of the system is sufficient to fulfill our duty to the class and to history. This was a grave error on my part. As you pointed out in the aforementioned newsletter (#93), and again in newsletter #94, Comrade Lenin taught us that tactical compromises must be made in order to push forward existing struggle and expose the shortcomings of the system. Our duty is not to individually feel ourselves more clever than professional pundits in the mainstream media, but to engage in agitation among the masses to lead them towards a radically new understanding of their relationship to the system. As you said, for much of the 99% in the United States, Bernie Sanders “represents a step, though a small one” forward.

Taking heed of your advice, reinforced by words of encouragement from others taking a “bird’s eye view” to US politics, I have made every effort to ensure your analysis of the Sanders Campaign is read by as wide an audience as possible. I have encouraged its distribution on my humble blog, Old Relations Collapse (oldrelationscollapse.wordpress.com), in the hope that they will reach a wider audience, both in the US and around the world.

As we have both witnessed, discussion around the Sanders Campaign continues to centre on many important issues, from his dismal track record on US imperialism to his increasingly sharp rhetoric at home aimed at the Wall Street power behind the Democratic Party and their favoured candidate, Hillary Clinton. You were indeed right when you said that we must make compromises. And concerted tactics of support for the Sanders Campaign and its progressive stance against Wall Street rule and criticism of the shortcomings of Sanders are just the sort of compromise revolutionaries in the US must make. [This will] push forward a conversation about revolutionary change, a conversation which is increasingly meaningful to the millions of supporters of Bernie Sanders as they witness a propaganda war carried out by the capitalist class against the candidate which represents their immediate aspirations.

In struggle,
Muhsin Y.

Editor's Note



Berta Cáceres was a beautiful and passionate 44 year old woman leader of the Indigenous Lenca community in Intibucá, Honduras. She organized and led the Lenca people in standing up to multi-national corporations which were trying to take over the land, privatize the resources, contaminate the rivers and destroy the life of her community.

These corporations are supported by the U.S imperialist-backed Honduran military. Cáceres was the coordinator of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). Since the U.S. imperialist-backed military coup on June 28, 2009 in which Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton played key sinister roles, Berta Cáceres had been an active leader of the Honduran Resistance. Berta Cáceres was assassinated on March 2, 2016. The following poem was written by a Honduran patriot in the USA. There have been protests and vigils held in Berta Cáceres' memory across Latin America and around the world, including as part of March 2016 International Working Women Day's activities. We join our voices to other anti-imperialists in saying: "¡Berta Vive! ¡La Lucha Sigue!" (Berta Lives!! The Struggle Continues!!)

–Rose Brown, Assistant Editor

BERTA CACERES LIVES!

by TITO MEZA

Standing erect with your lance of truths,
Your forehead held high in plain sight of the venomous vermin
You – leaving footsteps of love with each taken step
And in every battle you rode into

Today, the people that you loved
Profoundly cry your absence
We tell you – YOU will live eternally in our hearts
Because you are of those who never really die

Intibucá is in mourning
Honduras laments your loss
Thousands will lift up your fallen sword
And only justice will allay their tears

Bertita, comrade of walks
Comrade – defender of the rivers
Flower of love of the beautiful day
You have opened the road to liberty
Your example lives

Your name runs through our America
The vermin hide in their sewer of hate
The guitars of the night sing for you
And thousands raise their voices and shout – **BERTA CACERES LIVES!**

–March 4, 2016

An Excerpt from

Fidel Castro's "Brother Obama"

With an Introduction by Ray Light:

The Year 2015 was witness to the growing normalization of relations between the Cuban government and its longtime tormentor, U.S. Imperialism. The lead front-page article in the November/December 2015 issue of *Ray O'Light Newsletter* (#93) addressed the challenges facing the Cuban people and leadership *and* the world's working people in this process. Entitled, "The Thaw in Cuba-U.S. Relations: A Proletarian Revolutionary Perspective," we examined four topics: "What brought about this change in U.S. Policy toward Cuba?" "For its part, why is the Cuban government participating in this rapprochement with U.S. Imperialism?" "Will this rapprochement with U.S. Imperialism prove to be a good or a bad development for the Cuban people, for Cuban society and for the longstanding anti-imperialist and democratic Cuban government?" And "Finally, will this change in the relationship between the Cuban government and the U.S. Imperialist government represent an advance for the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples?"

Among the points we made were the following: "As the Obama government has reached out to Raul Castro and Cuba with an olive branch, it has accelerated its military provocations against Venezuela on its border with Colombia. In fact, on December 18, 2014, the day after his statement on improving relations with Cuba, Obama signed a law that imposed sanctions on Venezuela for 'violating the democratic rights of the forces opposing the government of Nicolas Maduro.' This 'law' helped set the stage for more U.S. warfare against the Maduro government. Thus, no time was lost by the U.S. Empire in attempting to split Cuba and Venezuela whose alliance has been at the heart of the Latin American resistance to U.S. Domination."

"Certainly, Obama and U.S. imperialism hope they can conquer Cuba economically when they could never defeat Cuba on the military battlefield or the battlefield of ideas. They hope to compel the Revolutionary Cuba that never deserted its friends in the face of the open threats of U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism, including the threat of nuclear annihilation in 1962 during the U.S.-Soviet missile crisis, to become an accommodationist Cuba that doesn't get involved when others are attacked. This would represent the ultimate triumph of imperialism, headed by U.S. imperialism, and the ultimate destruction of all the great achievements of the Cuban Revolution — from universal literacy and healthcare domestically to self-sacrificing internationalist solidarity with oppressed peoples from Central America to Southern Africa and around the world."

Utilizing the "new" relationship, 2016 has already been witness to a trip to Cuba by U.S. Imperialist Chieftain Barack Obama in which Obama perpetrated his lies and attempted to bully the Cuban leadership, brandishing the weapon of economic power. It is in this setting that the outstanding revolutionary Cuban leader, **Fidel Castro, issued his "Brother Obama" article** which concluded with the following:

"There is an important issue:

"Obama made a speech in which he uses the most sweetened words to express: 'It is time, now, to forget the past, leave the past behind, let us look to the future together, a future of hope. And it won't be easy, there will be challenges and we must give it time; but my stay here gives me more hope in what we can do together as friends, as neighbors, together.'"

"I suppose all of us were at risk for a heart attack upon hearing these words from the President of the United States. After a ruthless blockade that has lasted almost 60 years, and what about those who have died in the mercenary attacks on Cuban ships and ports, an airliner full of passengers blown up in midair, mercenary invasions, multiple acts of violence and coercion?"

"Nobody should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights, or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science and culture.

*"I also warn that we are capable of producing the food and material riches we need with the efforts and intelligence of our people. We do not need the empire to give us anything. Our efforts will be legal and peaceful, as this is our commitment to peace and fraternity among all human beings who live on this planet."**

As we concluded our article last November on the Thaw in Cuba-U.S. Relations:

"In defense of democratic, anti-imperialist, internationalist Cuba, let us rally around the Cuban Revolutionary Slogan:

**¡Patria o Muerte, Venceremos!
Fatherland or Death, We Shall Win!**

Let us commit to helping to build a new Communist International in the tradition of the Third International:

**Workers of the World and
Oppressed Peoples Unite!"**

*First appeared in Spanish in *Granma*, 3-27-16

HARRIET TUBMAN: THE NEW FACE OF THE U.S. TWENTY DOLLAR BILL

A person of unparalleled courage and determination, **Harriet Tubman** first escaped from U.S. slavery herself. Then she went back into U.S. slave territory *nineteen times* to rescue family members and ultimately *over three hundred other enslaved Afro-American sisters and brothers!* As a “conductor” on that Underground Railroad she never lost a passenger on her freedom train.

During the Civil War, she served both as a nurse and as a scout with the Union Army. In this latter capacity, she never lost a soldier in her company. But she never received the military pension that she had so richly earned, even with the intervention on her behalf of Secretary of State William Seward.

On April 20, 2016, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced that Harriet Tubman’s face would replace that of U.S. President Andrew Jackson on the \$20 dollar bill, one of the pillars of U.S. Currency. Her contribution to the cause of human freedom in the USA — priceless.

—*the Editor*

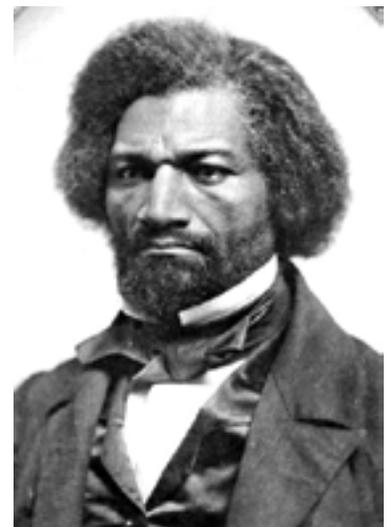


**Still stumped?! See answer below
to front page mystery quotation.**

Frederick Douglass, the famed Afro-American Abolitionist, one of the most eloquent speakers in the USA in the Nineteenth Century and himself an escaped slave, wrote this letter of tribute to Harriet Tubman. The letter appears in the appendix to “Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People” by Sarah Bradford (1869). Frederick Douglass was a courageous and inexhaustible force struggling and organizing for Afro-American freedom leading up to and during the Civil War. After the Confederate surrender, he was an important figure in the political struggles involving the early years of Afro-American enfranchisement. A man of supreme talent, Douglass’ first book, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,”

was first published in 1845, almost a generation before the abolition of U.S. slavery. It caused a sensation as one of the first books written by an escaped slave about his experience in legal U.S. bondage.

—*the Editor*



Police Attack on Starving Filipinos Arouses Widespread Outrage

by Professor JOSE MARIA SISON, Chairperson, International League of Peoples' Struggle

As early as April 2014, the Philippines Atmospheric, geophysical and Astronomical Services warned against the development of the El Niño phenomenon in the Philippines, arising from unusually warm ocean surface temperature in the Pacific Ocean and possibly causing drastic reduction in rainfall and severe drought. On January 20, 2016, the province of North Cotabato and other provinces were placed under a state of calamity due to the El Niño phenomenon already drying up large areas of agricultural land.

Philippine government agencies promised billions of pesos to aid farming communities affected by El Niño. The money was supposed to be used for food relief, cloud seeding operations, managing water resources, distribution of early maturing rice varieties and other measures. Some 11,000 peasant families of North Cotabato were promised 15,000 sacks of rice as food relief. But when they were already suffering from hunger for months, the provincial government authorities from the ruling Liberal Party of the Aquino regime refused to distribute the rice.

Thus, on March 30, 2016, some 6,000 peasants and Indigenous people from different towns of North Cotabato staged a demonstration along the Davao-Cotabato highway in Kidapawan City, in front of the Spottswood Methodist Center in order to demand what had been promised to them: the release of 15,000 sacks of rice as calamity assistance; subsidy of rice, seedlings, fertilizers, and pesticides until the drought ends; and the withdrawal of police brigades and military troops from their communities.

The thousands of demonstrators were confronted by Special Weapons and Tactics team and the Special Action Forces of the Philippine National Police. On March 31, while still asleep in the wee hours of the morning, they were awakened by loud announcements from the police repeatedly telling them to go home and subsequently

threatening them with mass arrest. Throughout the day until the following day, the police subjected them to physical harassments and provocations, including random abductions.

The all-out violent dispersal of the peasant demonstrators was carried out on April 1. The first wave of police attacks consisted of truncheon beatings and water cannons from

fire trucks. The people defended themselves only with bare hands and stones. The second wave of police attacks consisted of indiscriminate bursts of gunfire. Even those already beaten down by truncheons or fleeing were gunned down.

Two unarmed peasants were murdered; several scores were injured or arrested. Twenty-seven of those arrested were women, including three pregnant and two elderly. A large

number of the demonstrators were able to seek refuge at a religious compound but were immediately encircled by hundreds of armed personnel of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines who cut off the electricity and prevented food and medical supplies from entering.

The starving peasant masses and Indigenous people did not get the food relief and seedlings that they had been promised. Instead, they received gunfire, death, injuries and arrests. Worst of all, they are being misrepresented by the entire propaganda machinery of the US-supported Aquino regime as the criminal aggressors instead of being the unarmed victims of state terrorism. They are also being falsely depicted as either communist agitators or as dupes of communists.

The injustice inflicted to the victims of human rights violations has been so gross and brazen that instantly the broad masses of the Filipino people have become outraged and have vigorously demanded justice. Philippine human rights organizations and the

(contd. on p. 12)



(Police Attack on Starving Filipinos continued)

International League of Peoples' Struggle have taken the initiative to call for a Global Day of Action for Justice on April 8 for the victims of the brutal attack on the peasants and Indigenous people in Kidapawan, North Cotabato.

The people are demanding respect for fundamental rights to free speech and assembly, the immediate independent investigation of the brutal police attack, compensation for the victims and the free medical treatment of those injured, the withdrawal of the police and military units surrounding the religious compound where the demonstrators have found refuge, and immediate release of food relief and other calamity assistance to the peasants and the accountability of governor Emmylou Mendoza.

In the meantime, some national officials of the US-Aquino regime have shed crocodile tears only to allow the police to investigate themselves and whitewash their own criminal actions. They have not called the governor of North Cotabato to account for ordering the attack on the demonstrators. Mendoza is also accountable for the absence of food relief and other resources that ought to be readily available for calamity assistance. The people know that several layers of corrupt bureaucrats have

privately pocketed the public funds earmarked for that purpose.

Among the imperialist powers, the US is most culpable for the global warming that has made the El Niño phenomenon more devastating than ever before. The extreme and unnecessary violence of the police forces is also the result of their militarization under the US-promoted policy of state terrorism and within the framework of Oplan Bayanihan, the US-designed strategic plan for countering the revolutionary movement and for suppressing the people.

The US-instigated neoliberal policy has aggravated the land and food problem in the Philippines because of land grabbing by foreign and domestic corporations and the penchant for expanding plantations for export crops instead of food crops for the Filipino people. The US, in so many ways including local landlordism, is responsible for the worsening economic and social plight of the peasants and Indigenous peoples.*

*This article was originally published by teleSUR on 4/6/2016. For more information about the Kidapawan Massacre or the *International League of Peoples' Struggle* (ILPS), check out the ILPS website at www.ilps.info

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*"The great appear great to us
Only because we are on our knees:
Let us rise."*

— Camille Desmoulins

Revolutionary Organization of Labor (ROL), USA is a revolutionary working class organization that fights for working class power and the elimination of all human exploitation. **Ray O' Light Newsletter** is the regular publication of ROL, USA. We believe, with comrade Lenin, that the working class "... needs the truth and there is nothing so harmful to its cause as plausible, respectable petty bourgeois lies." In the spirit of Karl Marx who taught that "our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action," we welcome your comments.

Comradely the Newsletter Staff,

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