

## PM: On Libya: What Washington Wants, Washington Gets

By Polly Mann

Several years ago I met Diana Johnstone at a Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) conference where she was the keynote speaker. She is a graduate and former professor of the University of Minnesota, former European editor of the weekly publication *In These Times*, and the author of several books on political issues. Her take on much of the world political scene—insightful and trustworthy—is arrived at after careful analysis and study. She is often most critical of U.S. policy and in this, I think, she reflects the views of many of us in WAMM. Regardless of whether the occupant of the White House is a Democrat or Republican, the mainstream media too often unquestioningly endorses the incumbent president's actions.

In Diana's book *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions*, she dissects the destruction of Yugoslavia to reach conclusions much different from those of the mainstream media. Lately her e-mails have been mostly about Libya and, once again, critical of NATO bombing.

One of the difficulties of decrying the use of force against a country that is a dictatorship, such as Libya, is that most often the dictator is guilty of many crimes—severe human rights abuses, the illegal assumption of power, theft of state funds, corruption, etc.—not the kind of individual that peace proponents want to defend. And they don't. But, at the same time, they don't believe that the United States has a God-given prerogative to use force to implement justice in a country thousands of miles away where it has no jurisdiction.

However, the U.S. supports countries whose leaders are guilty of the kind of crimes listed above. Often the reason the U.S. supports a particular country's government is not revealed—as it is in support of the government of Bahrain, where the U.S. Fifth Fleet is stationed. After all, the U.S. maintains 737 military bases worldwide with 2,500,000 personnel, and in each country where a military base exists there is a government that has to be considered, if not paid off, in some kind of way.

In a series of comments and reports, independent analyst David Rothscum ("David Rothscum Reports," [davidrothscumblogspot.com](http://davidrothscumblogspot.com)) provides his take on Libya. The following is a sample:

Before the current rebellion, Libya had the lowest infant mortality rate in all of Africa and the highest life expectancy in all of Africa. Less than 5 percent of the population was undernourished and in response to the rising food prices worldwide, the government of Libya abolished ALL taxes on food.



Claiming to be bombing Libya to protect civilians, U.S. and NATO air strikes are killing civilians. As proof people hold up items, including an infant's garment, after a bombing.

People in Libya were rich. Libya had the highest gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita of all of Africa and the wealth was distributed equally. Libya had the highest Human Development Index of any country on the continent. A lower percentage of people lived below the poverty line than in the Netherlands. Its wealth is due to oil, the production of which is nationalized.... The same groups that the US has been funding for decades are now trying to gain control over the nation. A group recently arrested in Libya consisted of dozens of foreign nationals that were involved in numerous acts of looting and sabotage. The Libyan government could not rule out links to Israel.

On 7 June 2011, in the UK newspaper *The Independent*, regular contributor Jody McIntyre stated that the media have concluded that the reason behind the demand that Gaddafi has to go is concern for the lives of civilians. Contradicting this view, he writes: "As if Western governments, with their proud histories of human rights abuses across the world, have any moral right to make judgments on the government of Libya... This has nothing to do with protecting civilians, and everything to do with re-establishing a waning military and economic domination in the region. When you consider a list of the few countries in the world that do not have U.S. military bases on their soil—i.e., Libya—it becomes a lot clearer why our 'enemies' are who we are taught they are."

In a 10 June 2011 report from the International Action Center, Sara Flounders says: "Without presenting a shred of military evidence, NATO and International Criminal Court conspirators are charging the Libyan [Gaddafi] with conspiracy to rape—not only rape as the 'collateral damage' of war, but rape as a political weapon." She

reminds us that fabricated lies are spread to justify wars. "In 1991 the first war against Iraq was justified by outrageous charges that the Iraqi army had grabbed Kuwaiti babies from incubators and smashed the babies to the floor." (Months later this was confirmed as a total fabrication.)

Jean Bricmont, professor of theoretical physics at the University of Louvain, Belgium, whose work has appeared in many political as well as scientific publications, says: "The purpose of these bombings appears at this stage to be to decapitate the Libyan government in Tripoli in order to facilitate installation of the Western-recognized rebel leaders in Benghazi as the new government of Libya. They are clearly not military targets. They are mostly targets to demonstrate to the inhabitants of Tripoli that they are defenseless and that there is no authority that can protect them. The objective is not to kill civilians in general, but rather to terrorize them, demoralize them, drive them to surrender to an obviously superior force."

We have only to look at Iraq to see the results of a U.S. policy that some might still define as our wish to bring freedom and democracy to that country: Today, its water supply, public utilities, schools, museums, hospitals, and housing have been decimated. As for the war in Afghanistan: Polls show that the majority of Americans want our military to leave and leave now. However, our projected stay there has even been extended.

In Libya, the outlook for any kind of negotiated settlement looks dim. On June 10, Gaddafi sent a message to the Congress asking it to investigate the military actions of NATO and its allies in actions he said had killed over 700 Libyan civilians. "Such unauthorized intervention is inappropriate and illegal interference in what is essentially a Libyan civil war." Gaddafi said his government, which has been plagued by defections under the escalating NATO assault, was ready to sit down with opposition figures in peace talks led by the U.S. in order to "stop the destruction."

Reaction of both Democratic and Republican Congress members has been negative. It seems that Washington wants war with Libya. A recent poll indicated that 55 percent of Americans believe Congress and not the President should make the decision about the military mission in Libya. And, according to a recent CBS News poll, six out of 10 American Democrats, Republicans, and independents think the U.S. should not be involved in a war on Libya; the poll found that while 60 percent of the people opposed the Libyan war, only 30 percent of Americans feel their country is heading in the right direction with its military involvement in the North African country. But what the people of this country want is not under consideration. So what difference does it make whether the President or the Congress sends us to war?\* It's to war we go. I am reminded of the old song, "Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets." Whatever Washington wants, Washington gets. Case closed.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of WAMM and continues to be active with the organization. Her column appears regularly in this newsletter.

Editor's Update: Twin Cities congressional representatives have given the green light to the U.S./NATO war on Libya. Since this was written, Congress voted 238-180 against cutting off funding (HR 2278), thereby giving the president's war legitimacy, which the War Powers Act had not given him. All of Minnesota's delegation voted against cutting off funding, except for Cravaack, and Kline who (uncharacteristically) voted in favor of cutting funding.

In addition, the Libya War Authorization (HJ Res 68), a nonbinding resolution which included loopholes and was couched in terms of protecting Libyan civilians, would have provided approval for military action on Libya for one year. Representatives McCollum, Ellison and Walz voted in favor of the resolution; the remainder of the Minnesota delegation voted against it. Its defeat in the House 295-123 was said to be a rebuke to the executive branch for going to war without Congressional approval. However, the fact that funding the war was approved in HR 2278 undermines any overall rebuke. The Senate is yet to take up a vote as of this update, but its Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by John Kerry, voted 14 to 5 in favor of authorizing the president to continue operations over Libya by U.S. warplanes and unmanned drones, though not ground troops.



The shell of a once beautiful civilian government administration building after it was bombed by NATO in Tripoli.

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