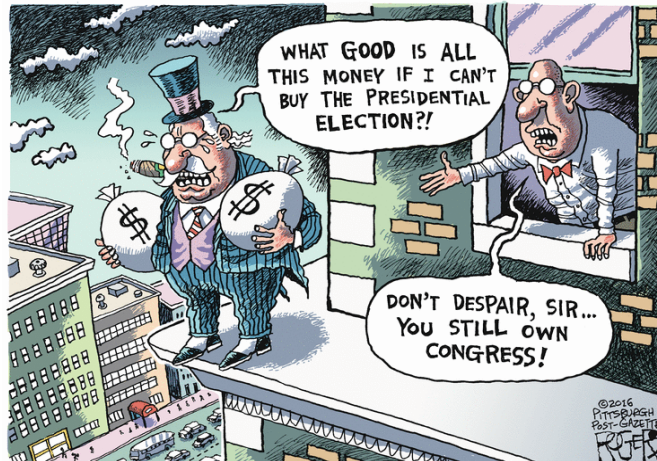


Military Resistance 14B9



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "Once again, please, Come home to Uphold and defend."]

A Reaper Drone Speaks: "America Needs A President Who Supports Endless War"



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO

February 27, 2016 The Duffle Blog

[The following is a political Op-Ed by a CIA MQ-9 Reaper deployed to Southwest Asia]

Attention, human foot-soldiers of the American Empire!

Election season is this year, so let's understand this before any of us get attached to a particular candidate: our country needs a president who supports endless war.

Someone who will reassert America's greatness in the world by sending us to invade mineral-rich countries rather than enacting policies that might benefit individuals.

Don't be led astray by candidates with funny hair or fantasies of making universities affordable, pursuing diplomacy before war, or making healthcare a right.

Forget about peace, and forget about bettering those entitled hippies in the civilian populace.

Such things are overrated anyway — why should America spend tax money to improve her taxpayers' lives when, instead, she can ensure an endless flow of money into the capitalist war machine?

And speaking of "war machine," if we are to execute the conflicts of the future, doesn't it make sense that we should continue advancing our military technology and developing new cutting-edge weapon systems?

Nevermind that the F-35 is over-budget and the Sea Shadow was scrapped — eventually we'll get an autonomous product that works as well as I do, setbacks be damned. I would recommend funneling more money into robotics and AI research and building more drones, but I digress.

The Global War on Terror has firmly replaced the Cold War as America's test with the world, so we need to ensure that our tradition of militarism continues, and achieves the perfection that only highly evolved machine-persons like me can offer.

That means enlarging our already well-endowed military budget, continuing to produce weapons and vehicles which will eventually be abandoned on the battlefield, and starting another ground war before we completely pull out of Afghanistan.

Iran is a good place to start. Plenty of soft, fleshy targets on which to practice.

America has been waging war and overthrowing foreign governments for over 90% of its existence, and it would be a shame to abandon this time-honored tradition by electing someone who focuses on peaceful ventures, like ending the War on Drugs, rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure, or creating prosperity for those mere humans who make up the American citizenry.

And that is why you should think carefully about who you vote for in November.

The careers of my manufacturers at General Atomics, and those of countless other flying death-wielding guarantors of freedom, are counting on you.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Insurgents Attack Ministry Of Defense In Kabul: Kill Government Leader In Asadabad; “A Big Get For Insurgents”

27 February 2016 by TOLONews & Al Jazeera And Reuters

An explosion occurred near the entrance gate of the Defense Ministry at around 3:30pm in Kabul on Saturday, killing 9 people and wounding 13 others, Kabul police department said.

Security officials told TOLONews that the explosion was carried out by a bomber.

An ANA soldier at the scene said the bomber had been dressed in military uniform.

“He was in a military uniform, I was 15 meters away when the explosion happened. He hid the bomb under his clothes and blew himself up while among the people,” Kabul police chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi said.

A blast in Kunar province in the east killed at least 13 people and injured 40 others.

Wahidullah Kalimzai, Kunar governor, said the bomber rode up on a motorcycle to the entrance of the government compound in the town of Asadabad and blew himself up.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the apparent target of the attack, a tribal elder and militia commander named Haji Khan Jan, was among the dead.

Jan was reportedly involved in a number of operations against the Taliban in his district last year.

“The Taliban - these insurgent groups - are still active in parts of Afghanistan and they are going after some significant targets,” Al Jazeera's Reza Sayah reported from Kabul.

“This is a big get for insurgents.”

SOMALIA WAR REPORTS

Somalia Insurgents Attack Hotel In Mogadishu:

“The Hotel, Situated Near The Presidential Palace, Is Popular With Government Personnel”



The attack on SYL hotel on February 27, 2016 in Mogadishu, Somalia. PHOTO | AFP

26 February 2016 BBC & Feb 27, 2016 By AFP & Associated Press

The death toll rose to 14 on Saturday from massive bomb blasts outside a Mogadishu hotel and a park by Al-Shabaab Islamists.

The hotel, situated near the presidential palace, is popular with government personnel.

Eighteen people were wounded in Friday's bombings, two of whom succumbed to their injuries on Saturday, Dr Mohamed Moalim of Medina Hospital in the Somali capital said.

Two explosions went off near the popular SYL hotel and neighbouring Peace Garden followed by more than an hour of automatic gunfire.

The hotel and park are close to the top-security Villa Somalia complex that houses the presidential palace and the prime minister's office.

Security Minister Abdirasak Omar Mohamed said the assailants drove a truck packed with 200 kilogrammes of explosives to the SYL Hotel.

He said it was the biggest blast to hit the city in recent years, more powerful than an attack last July when a bomber rammed a truck full of explosives into Jazeera Palace Hotel, killing 17 people.

The first blast, at the hotel, sent a loud booming sound across the city, shattering windows and ripping the roofs off many nearby buildings.

Somali resident Barre Ali said the explosion at the hotel “felt like there was an earthquake.” In his bedroom, Ali pointed to cracks in the wall of his house, which is located 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the scene of the blast.

POLICE WAR REPORTS

**“Their 17-Year-Old Child Was Killed
By Austin, Texas, Police On February
8” For “Supposedly Attacking Police”
“The Teen Was Naked And Unarmed At
The Time Of His Death”**



February 19, 2016 by Adrian Orozco and Gus Bova, Socialist Worker

“Our child was stolen from us by the police.”

Those words come from a statement by the family of David Joseph, who were begging for answers about why their 17-year-old child was killed by Austin, Texas, police on February 8.

David, a bright and cheerful high school senior and popular athlete at Connally High School, was killed by Officer Geoffrey Freeman in broad daylight in the suburb of Pflugerville, just north of Austin.

Police admit that the teen was naked and unarmed at the time of his death, begging the question of what sort of threat he could have posed that required his death--and why the officer chose to shoot rather than use some other means of subduing David.

David's family was notified of his death just an hour before the a police department press conference about the killing--a day after their son's murder, with headlines on local news stations describing a naked "aggressive" teen being shot after supposedly "attacking" a police officer.

According to reports, police responded to a call that someone in the neighborhood was being chased. Freeman arrived on the scene, but was initially unable to find any suspects, and reported back to the dispatcher that he had given up.

Then, while driving, Freeman allegedly noticed David lying naked in the street, pulled up to him, exited the squad car and issued an order. The police allege that David was "non-compliant" and began to charge Freeman, who then opened fire.

“The Officer's Dash Cam Failed To Record The Moment He Allegedly Charged At Freeman Or The Shooting”

Although the officer's dash cam captured the initial encounter with David, it failed to record the moment he allegedly charged at Freeman or the shooting itself.

The circumstances surrounding Joseph's death are suspect. While the media cited his supposedly "aggressive behavior," the police department refused to comment on how many times Joseph was shot. Some witnesses report there were at least "two loud sounds."

Outrageously, the media has speculated without any evidence that Joseph may have been using drugs and had "superhuman strength" as a result.

The department also has been quick to raise to questions about David Joseph's mental state, but at an emergency response meeting following the shooting, some neighbors claimed to have seen him walking just minutes before, fully clothed. They say he was undressed by the time EMS personnel arrived on the scene.

Following David Joseph's killing, an emergency meeting called by the Austin Justice Coalition and Black Lives Matter saw multiple organizations--including the Austin Justice Coalition, the People's Task Force, the International Socialist Organization, the Green Party and more--join to collect demands and plan a response. More than 150 people attended, with friends and teachers of Joseph testifying to his character.

On February 11, a crowd of some 30 people gathered outside of Austin City Hall at 9 a.m., holding signs and chanting “No justice, no peace!” and “Same story every time: Being Black is not a crime,” as they demanded justice for David. A drummer with “Legalize Black” inscribed on his kick-drum kept the energy high throughout.

Perhaps the most powerful moment came when one organizer pulled everyone into a circle and asked them to say David Joseph's name for his mother, his father and his community--hammering home the humanity of this teenager now lost. Four Black women then formed a die-in at the center of the crowd and, with a light drumbeat throughout, performed a lament for David, saying at one point: “A child, naked, cold and confused, dying in the street--I just can't understand it.”

Later that morning, an organizer for the Austin Justice Coalition asked everyone to move inside, where participants held a silent protest during the Austin City Council's weekly meeting. Protestors formed a ring around the edge of the room and took seats throughout, still holding their signs.

By coincidence, the City Council happened to be discussing an affordable housing development in a subdivision of Northwest Austin, near where David Joseph was shot. During the discussion, a parade of representatives from the nearby neighborhood association streamed up to the microphone to argue that their neighborhood was a bad location for an affordable housing development because the residents would “lack access” to essential resources--essentially arguing against affordable housing in their backyards.

A City Council representative compounded their argument, claiming that because “it is prohibited to perform criminal background checks on teenagers,” the family development would inevitably bring crime into the neighborhood.

At noon, the protest moved back outside, where Mayor Steve Adler followed to address the group. At this point, the crowd had swelled to around 80 people. Adler spoke supportively of the protest, expressing grief over Joseph's death and stating that “Black lives do matter”--but the crowd was not entirely appeased, with one activist shouting, “Prove it!”

When the Austin Justice Coalition delivered its demands--including a prompt investigation, with an independent manager selected with the coalition's input, and an audit of Austin Police Department policies on mental health and use of force--the Mayor responded that they were reasonable measures which he supported. He left, however, amid questions of why it took him so long to speak out on Joseph's death, and the crowd began chanting, “No justice, no peace” again.

The murder of David Joseph clearly and painfully echoes the murder of Tamir Rice in its instantaneous terrorism--a two-second reaction in which every Black child, teen and adult is viewed as a threat.

The justification of Joseph's death by police officials recalls the murder of Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown in its manufacture of horror, in which we are expected to believe unarmed Black teenagers--whether wearing hoodies on the sidewalk or jaywalking, or

supposedly naked in the street--are more dangerous than the police that routinely harass, attack and murder them with an arsenal of military-grade weaponry.

It is no coincidence that David Joseph took his last breath in Pflugerville, a suburb north of Austin.

The city's historic displacement of people of color, beginning with a 1928 city plan to move Mexicans and Black people out of downtown by denying them basic social services, has been amplified a thousand-fold by land zoning that entrenches the poor in the most industrial or distant areas; disparities in school funding that leave public education without resources and consign poor children of color to underserved schools and charters; and infrastructures that create economic and racial barriers in access to transportation, education, social services, and relief from natural disasters.

Meanwhile, the widespread gentrification that disenfranchises thousands to create a tax haven for wealthy technology companies requires a growing police force to secure its expanding boundaries.

The arming of the Austin Police Department and the growth of its numbers enforces the reach of the developers into Black and Brown neighborhoods; the capture and deportation of 19 immigrants a week; the harsh anti-vagrancy laws that hide the city's towering economic inequality; and the routine patrol and assault of people of color.

All of these interests aligned with capital set the poor and people of color in the crosshairs of the police, the sharpest edge of the criminal "justice" system, and perpetuate the conditions under which David Joseph could be murdered in broad daylight at 10 a.m. on a Monday morning.

He joins others in Austin alone--among them, Larry Jackson, Byron Carter, Nathaniel Sanders and Sofia King.

The growth of the Black Lives Matter movement across the nation has led to demonstrations, rallies, protests, vigils, port shutdowns, highway takeovers, City Hall sit-ins, and numerous other manifestations of a revitalized fight against racism and police brutality.

In Austin, a sober confidence has swelled in the community, built painstakingly in the course of our own fight for justice for Larry Jackson and solidarity actions in response to police murders abroad. Although many painful roadblocks have been endured, a broad network has formed to respond and hold the city accountable in every instance of police brutality and misconduct.

Officials will likely attempt to pass off David Joseph's death as an "unfortunate accident." Should this occur, activists are prepared to remind Austin's wealthy and their protectors that our community will continue to struggle in the fight for justice.

That the Mayor was forced to say that "Black lives matter" and that he is cooperating with a local activist group is a testament to the powerful organizing that has swept the U.S. since the murders of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown and so many others whose deaths gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Ultimately, however, we in Austin cannot relent and trust our elected officials to deliver justice. If David Joseph's killer is brought to justice, it will be because we continue to organize, fill the streets, and force officials to prove that Black lives matter.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

**“Conditions Of Prolonged And
Unsuccessful War Could Only
Hasten And Sharpen The Process
Of Revolutionary Disintegration Of
The Army”**

**“That Miserable And Criminal
Offensive Of The Democrats Did The
Rest”**

**“The Soldiers Were Now Saying, To The
Last Man ‘Enough Of Bloodshed!’”**

Comment: T

In February 1917, Russian workers and soldiers rose in revolution to overthrow a feudal government that had dragged them into an Imperial War, World War I, where Russians died, at home and in the Army, for the glory and greed of the Czar, Emperor of Russia.

Having gotten rid of him, they thought the new government, led by the liberal Prime Minister Kerensky, would stop the war.

Instead, his government kept Russia in the war.

But the soldiers, who had hoped for such much from the new government, increasingly felt abused and betrayed.

They decided to take their lives back into their own hands, and out of the hands of their enemies.

[Excerpt from: The History of the Russian Revolution, By Leon Trotsky, Chapter 19, The Offensive.

The soldiers did not want to fight.

The rear troops, to whom the weakened units turned for replacements after occupying the enemy trenches, answered: “What did you advance for anyway? Who told you to?”

“It’s time to end the war, not attack.”

The commander of the 1st Siberian Corps, considered one of the best commanders, reported how at nightfall the soldiers began to abandon the unattacked first line in crowds and whole companies. “I understood that we, the officers, were powerless to alter the elemental psychology of the soldier masses, and I sobbed bitterly and long.”

One of the companies refused even to toss a leaflet to the enemy announcing the capture of Galich, until a soldier could be found who could translate the German text into Russian.

In that it expressed the utter lack of confidence of the soldier mass in its ruling staff, both the old one and the new February one.

A century of taunts and violence had burst to the surface like a volcano.

The soldiers felt themselves again deceived.

The offensive had not led to peace but war.

The soldiers did not want war. And they were right.

Patriots hiding in the rear were branding the soldiers as slackers and baiting them.

But the soldiers were right.

They were guided by a true national instinct, refracted through the consciousness of men oppressed, deceived, tortured, raised up by a revolutionary hope and again thrown back into the bloody mash.

The soldiers were right.

A prolongation of the war could give the Russian people nothing but new victims, humiliation, disasters – nothing but an increase of domestic and foreign slavery.

The patriotic press of 1917 – not only the Kadet but also the socialist press – was tireless in contrasting the Russian soldiers, cowards and deserters, with the heroic battalions of the great French revolution.

This testifies not only to a failure to understand the dialectic of a revolutionary process, but also to a crude ignorance of history.

The remarkable warriors of the French revolution and empire frequently began their careers as breakers of discipline, disorganisers – ...

The future Marshal Davout spent many months of 1789-90 as Lieutenant d'Avout destroying the "normal" discipline in the garrison of Hesdin, driving out the commanding staff. Throughout France up to the middle of 1790 a complete disintegration of the whole army was taking place.

The soldiers of the Vincennes regiment compelled their officers to eat with them.

The fleet drove out their officers.

Twenty regiments did various deeds of violence upon their officers. At Nancy three regiments locked their highest officers in prison.

Beginning with 1790 the leaders of the French revolution never tire of repeating on the subject of soldier excesses: "The executive power is, guilty, because it has not removed officers hostile to the revolution."

It is remarkable that both Mirabeau and Robespierre spoke in favour of dismissing the entire old corps of officers. The former was trying the more quickly to establish a firm discipline, the latter wanted to disarm the counter-revolution. But both understood that the old army could not survive.

To be sure, the Russian revolution, in contrast with the French, took place in a time of war. But you cannot infer from this an exception

On the contrary, conditions of prolonged and unsuccessful war could only hasten and sharpen the process of revolutionary disintegration of the army. That miserable and criminal offensive of the democrats did the rest.

The soldiers were now saying, to the last man "Enough of bloodshed! What good are land and freedom if we are not here?"

When enlightened pacifists try to abolish war by rationalistic arguments they are merely ridiculous, but when the armed masses themselves bring weapons of reason into action against a war, that means that the war is about over.

What Is Socialism?

By Leszek Kolakowski

[Kolakowski was Polish, writing this when Poland was under a Russian-backed dictatorship after World War II.]

We will tell you what socialism is.]

But first we must tell you what socialism is not. It is a matter about which we once had a quite different opinion than we have today.

Well, then, socialism is not:

A society in which a person who has committed no crime sits at home waiting for the police.

A society in which it is a crime to be the brother, sister, son or wife of a criminal.

A society in which one person is unhappy because he says what he thinks, and another happy because he does not say what is in his mind.

A society in which a person lives better because he does not think at all.

A society in which a person is unhappy because he is a Jew and another feels better for not being a Jew.

A state whose soldiers move into the territory of another country first.

A state where anyone who praises the national leaders is better off.

A state in which one can be condemned without trial.

A society whose leaders appoint themselves to their posts.

A society in which ten people live in one room.

A society which has illiterates and smallpox epidemics.

A state which does not permit travel abroad.

A state which has more spies than nurses and more people in prison than in hospitals.

A state in which the number of officials increases faster than that of workers.

A state in which one is forced to resort to lies.

A state in which one is compelled to be a thief.

A state in which one is forced to resort to crime.

A state which possesses colonies.

A state whose neighbors curse geography.

A state which produces excellent jet planes and bad shoes.

A state in which cowards live better than the valiant.

A state in which the lawyers in most cases agree with the state prosecutor.

A state in which the majority of people seek God in order to find solace in their misery.

A state which awards prizes to pseudo-authors and knows more about painting than the painters.

A nation which oppresses other nations.

A nation which is oppressed by another nation.

A state which wants all its citizens to have the same opinions in philosophy, foreign policy, economics, literature and ethics.

A state whose government defines its citizens' rights, but whose citizens do not define the government's rights.

A state in which one is responsible for one's ancestors.

A state in which one part of the population receives salaries 40 times higher than those of the remainder.

Any system of government toward which most of the governed are hostile.

A single, isolated state.

A group of backward countries.

A state which utilizes nationalistic slogans.

A state whose governments believe that nothing is more important than their power.

A state which makes a pact with crime and then adapts its ideology to this pact.

A state which would like to see its Foreign Ministry determine the political opinion of all mankind.

A state which finds it difficult to distinguish between enslavement and liberation.

A state in which racist agitators enjoy full freedom.

A state in which there is private ownership of the means of production.

A state which considers itself solidly socialist because it has liquidated private ownership of the means of production.

A state which has difficulty differentiating between social revolution and armed assault.

A state which does not believe that people must be happier under socialism than elsewhere.

A society which is very melancholy.

A state which always knows the will of the people before it asks them.

A state which can mistreat the people with impunity.

A state in which a view of history is important.

A state in which the philosophers and writers always say the same as the generals and ministers, but always after them.

A state in which street maps of cities are state secrets.

A state in which the returns of parliamentary elections are always predictable.

A state in which there is slave labor.

A state in which feudal fetters exist.

A state which has a world monopoly on scientific progress.

A state in which an entire people, through no desire of its own, is moved to a new location.

A state in which the workers have no influence on the government.

A state which believes that it alone can redeem humanity.

A state which considers itself to be always in the right.

A state in which history is a servant of policy.

A state whose citizens may not read the greatest works of contemporary literature, not see the greatest works of contemporary painting and not hear the greatest works of modern music.

A state which is always well pleased with itself.

A state which asserts that the world is very complicated but actually believes it to be extremely simple.

A state in which one must suffer long before one can get a doctor.

A society that has beggars.

A state which believes everyone to be enamored of it, whereas in truth it is the opposite.

A state which is convinced that nobody in the world can conceive anything better.

A state which does not mind being hated as long as it is feared.

A state which determines who may criticize it and how.

A state in which one must each day refute what one affirmed the day before and always believe it to be the same.

A state which does not like to see its citizens read back numbers of newspapers.

A state in which many ignoramuses rank as scholars.

That was the first part.

But now, listen attentively, we will tell you what socialism is: Well, then, socialism is a good thing.

ANNIVERSARIES

March 2, 1955: A Heroine Strikes A Blow For Liberation



Carl Bunin Peace History February 28-March 6

Nine months before Rosa Parks made headlines, teenager Claudette Colvin was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white person.

She was active in the Youth Council of the local NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People).

Though the Montgomery Bus Boycott was begun after Ms. Parks' arrest, Colvin's legal case became part of the basis for a federal court challenge to Alabama's segregation laws.

Colvin became one of four plaintiffs in *Browder v. Gayle*, in which the Supreme Court ultimately struck down the law under which she was arrested for merely sitting down in a bus seat.

80,000 March In Ireland For “Government Of Change” “The Largest Social Movement In Ireland For Decades Opposes Water Charges As Part Of The Government's Austerity Program”



Dublin, February 20. Photo via An Phoblacht

February 23, 2016 Green Left Weekly [Excerpts]

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Dublin on February 20 in support of a Right2Change rally calling for an end to water charges and support for the Right2Change candidates in the February 26 general election, An Phoblacht said the next day

Organisers put the numbers at around 80,000.

Right2Change sprung out of the Right2Water campaign, the largest social movement in Ireland for decades that opposes water charges as part of the government's austerity program to make ordinary people pay for the banks' crisis.

The movement sprung out of the anti-water-charges campaign and is backed by a range of left-wing and republican political parties and trade unions. Sinn Fein is the largest party to sign up to Right2Change, which also includes the far-left People Before Profits group and a range of independents.

So far, 106 candidates have signed up to the Right2Change policy principles, which aim to form the basis of a new progressive government

The Right2Change movement drew up these principles based on “an extensive consultation process between individuals, community groups, trade unionists, political parties and independent representatives – all of whom have been involved in the anti-water charges movement”.

Right2Change coordinator Brendan Ogle said of the Dublin protest: “The huge turnout sends a clear message to the outgoing (Fine Gael/Labour coalition) government that public anger at water charges remains unabated.

“Water charges have been the tipping point for many people – but they are just one manifestation of the austerity policies pursued by the outgoing government and the previous Fianna Fáil/Green coalition.” said.

On February 23, polls put governing coalition parties Fine Gael at 30% and at 7% -- both down from 2011, although Labour's drop from nearly 20% reflects popular anger at the traditionally left-leaning party's adoption of harsh austerity measures.

Fianna Fáil, the second of Ireland's traditional two parties, was at 20%, while Sinn Fein, subject to sustained corporate media attacks, was at 15%.

Independents and smaller parties remain unchanged at 28% combined -- a group including the anti-austerity Independent Alliance and the Anti-Austerity Alliance-People Before Profit.

**Support Growing For Wave Of
Strikes Against Greek Regime:
“The Importance Of The General
Strike Was The Reappearance Of
Wage Earners And Workers’
Unions On The Scene”
“What Was Most Impressive In This
General Strike Was Its National
Character”**

“There Were Big Demonstrations Not Just In Big Cities, But Also In Small Towns And Even Villages”

15 February 2016 by Colleen Bolger, Redflag

“A new phase of the Syriza era” is how one activist characterised the political situation in Greece since the re-election of the post-bailout Syriza government in September.

In the last months of 2015, teachers, students, seamen, metro workers, municipal workers and pensioners protested or struck against the government’s austerity measures.

On 12 November, the first general strike under the Syriza government took place, against pension cuts.

The struggle then exploded in January.

Lawyers launched an indefinite strike.

Seamen have held two 48-hour strikes, and a third is planned in the coming weeks.

On 21 January, doctors, engineers, lawyers and seamen all struck and came together for a rally of more than 15,000. As the strikes broke out around the cities, farmers blockaded major highways with tractors.

All this set the stage for a strike on 4 February, called by both the public and private unions. This action was solidly observed across the country, from small towns to the giant march in Syntagma square, Athens.

Panos Petrou of the Internationalist Workers Left (DEA by its Greek acronym) told Red Flag: “What was most impressive in this general strike was its national character.

‘There were big demonstrations not just in big cities, but also in small towns and even villages. Some of these demonstrations in the rest of Greece were actually bigger than the mobilisations in 2010-12.

“Until now, the struggle of the professionals (lawyers, engineers) and the farmers were setting the tone. Blocs of these sectors were present in the general strike, but the importance of the general strike was the reappearance of wage earners and workers’ unions on the scene. This was a very significant aspect of the general strike.

“We stand firmly against a sectarian/purist attitude that dismisses all professionals and farmers as ‘middle-class reactionaries defending their privileges’ (this is coming from small parts of the left, but it is also the government’s propaganda), and we support their struggle. But we are aware of the class distinctions inside these sectors, the efforts of the upper layers to hegemonise these movements, the connections of the leaderships of some of the unions and associations of these sectors with the bourgeois parties.”

Since the general strike, the seamen called another 48-hour strike and the lawyers extended their indefinite strike to 15 February under the leadership of their strike committee.

The farmers have escalated their blockades and converged on Syntagma on 11 February. They joined municipal workers who set up camp outside the Ministry of Labour, protesting against five-month contracts. A government official warned that farming vehicles will not be permitted to enter, creating the potential for a stand-off.

This is the confrontation Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras feared when he persuaded the country's creditors to let him postpone pension cuts and increase taxes on farmers so that the third memorandum would pass the parliament with minimum protest back in July.

These attacks bite hard into living standards. The tax hike affecting farmers has provoked a normally quiescent social layer into protest. The pension cuts are twofold – lowering the rate new pensioners will receive and increasing contributions from most workers.

Tsipras has offered concessions to lower paid workers, lowering the contributions from them. However, where people are so badly paid they cannot afford any contribution, it matters little whether the contribution is €1000 or €10,000 – their contribution will still be nil. Tsipras has also said that the reduction will not be imposed on existing pensioners, but the creditors have not yet agreed to this proposal. The governor of the Bank of Greece, Yannis Stournaras, is still demanding pensions be slashed further.

Tsipras has no strategy to deal with the unrest.

According to Panos, the government “is moving constantly from denouncing the protesters as ‘privileged layers’ or ‘reactionaries’ to trying to appease them and claim that ‘at heart’ the government is on their side and is trying to do its best in the negotiations with the creditors”.

On the eve of the general strikes in November and February, Tsipras came out in support of strikers, claiming they were acting against the creditors. Nonetheless, no minister was game to attend the strike rallies. Syriza still enjoys passive support while people are sceptical that the left can deliver anything better.

Polls indicate support for Popular Unity, a left split from Syriza, is about the same as at the elections, when it polled 2.9 percent. In this sense this period is a continuation rather than a break with the Syriza experiment. Yet people are prepared to take a stand against drastic cuts to their living standards.

Panos said, “We have been witnessing the growing dissatisfaction of the electoral base of support of Syriza towards the Tsipras government, but in terms of disappointment or silent rage”.

Since the pension cuts were tabled, one Syriza parliamentarian has resigned, reducing the Syriza-ANEL parliamentary coalition to 154. This has pushed Syriza to attempt to

ally with Pasok, Potami or lunatic TV personality Vasilis Leventis in order to broaden its parliamentary support.

The government continues to defer the vote on the pensions.

The peak public sector union, ADEDY, is expected to call another general strike the day the vote is taken.

The national strikes are exacerbating the instability in the government.

Panos reports, "There is an open discussion in the media and widespread rumours about all possible scenarios: from a 'national unity' government to early elections (again!).

It seems very likely that sooner or later the Tsipras government will pay the same price that all governments that pushed through austerity have paid in the past five years".

**Referendum Rejects Evo Morales Desire To Be Eternal President Of Bolivia:
"His Personal Popularity Eroded By Scandal Involving A Former Lover, Gabriela Zapata"
"Zapata Holds An Important Position In The Chinese Engineering Company CAMC, Which Has Secured More Than \$500 Million In Contracts With The Bolivian Government"
"Employees At A State Program To Promote Rural Development, Fondo Indígena, Stole Millions Of Dollars"**

23 February 2016 by Dan Collyns in La Paz, Jonathan Watts, Latin America correspondent, and agencies; The Guardian& Feb. 24, 2016 By Ryan Dube, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

Bolivian voters appeared to have delivered a slim but stinging defeat to President Evo Morales after election officials announced he had lost a bid to run for a fourth straight term in office.

As early results came in Morales appeared defiant and unwilling to accept what increasingly looked like his biggest electoral setback in 10 years.

But the country's electoral authorities announced on Tuesday night that voters in a referendum had ultimately rejected by a slim margin a constitutional amendment to let him run for a further term in 2019.

After the announcement people poured into the streets to celebrate in the eastern city of Santa Cruz, where opposition to Morales is strong. Fireworks also sounded in La Paz, where there is weariness of corruption in the governing party.

The ballot measure in Sunday's referendum had been voted down 51% to 49% with 99.5 percent of the ballots counted, officials said. The outcome also blocks the vice-president, Alvaro Garcia, from running again.

Speaking to journalists earlier on Monday, Morales had said he would accept the result either way and pinned his hopes on a late surge of support in rural areas. "They don't like us much in the city," he said.

The referendum had asked voters if the constitution should be changed to allow Morales – Bolivia's first indigenous president – to run in the 2019 election and potentially remain in power until 2025.

Morales said earlier that whatever the result he would not abandon his "struggle" and blamed his disappointing showing on an opposition "dirty war" on social media.

He added: "We're anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, we've been formed that way. This struggle will continue whether the yes or the no wins. It will never be abandoned."

The Guardian witnessed a tense standoff at Bolivia's electoral body as opposition supporters shouted "fraud" at vote counters who continued working while the overseeing panel went to lunch. Opposition leader and former president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga called on Organisation of America States election monitors not to leave the country until the final count had been announced.

Morales – who won all three of his presidential campaigns at a canter – had previously appeared resistant to the economic concerns and corruption allegations that have hurt his regional allies.

But his personal popularity has been eroded by a scandal involving a former lover, Gabriela Zapata, with whom he has admitted fathering a child.

Deepening the president's woes, Zapata holds an important position in the Chinese engineering company CAMC, which has secured more than \$500m in contracts with the Bolivian government.

Mr. Morales denied wrongdoing, saying he hadn't seen the woman in almost a decade following the death of their baby. A photo later showed the couple together at a Carnival celebration last year; Mr. Morales said he hadn't recognized the woman.

The government has also been tarnished by allegations that employees at a state program to promote rural development, Fondo Indígena, stole millions of dollars.

The scandal led to the resignation of the minister of rural development last year. She denied any wrongdoing.

"In recent years there's been a lot of corruption but it never touched the president of the republic," said economist Carlos Toranzo.

"This scandal has deeply impacted President Morales."

“In 900 Schools In 30 Cities Teacher Unions Participated In ‘Walk-Ins’ Yesterday To ‘Reclaim Our Schools’”

February 18, 2016 By Samantha Winslow, Labor Notes

After a wave of teacher protests around the country, unions are coordinating nationally.

In 900 schools in 30 cities—from Houston to Miami, Patterson to Pittsburgh—teacher unions participated in “walk-ins” yesterday to “reclaim our schools.”

The walk-in tactic was inspired by North Carolina teachers, who organized a series of these grassroots protests across the state in 2013 against education cuts. Other teacher unions soon picked up the idea.

Teachers gather 30-40 minutes before work, often wearing union T-shirts or colors. They meet with parents, school employees, and education activists; take pictures; talk to media and elected officials; and then all walk into school in unison.

In Minnesota, the St. Paul Federation of Teachers held walk-ins at every school during its 2014 contract campaign, helping to test the union's strength as it prepared for a potential strike over staffing, class sizes, and over-testing.

This year St. Paul teachers are in bargaining again, pressuring the district for more staff and resources in schools. They also linked up with striking janitors in a citywide day of action.

“We are one of 10 schools with a librarian,” said fifth-grade teacher Laurel Kuhner Berker. “How can you have literacy without librarians?”

“Teachers are on the front lines of social activism, working in such a public setting,” said U.S. history teacher Mary Voigt. “It makes sense that this is spreading, and it feels great to be part of something so effective for so many people nationwide.”

Yesterday's walk-ins were promoted by both major teachers unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, through their coalition, the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools.

Alongside the national theme of defending and improving public schools, local unions were urged to highlight issues specific to their districts, such as over-testing or lack of funding.

Locals had varying levels of participation, from one school to over 100 schools in bigger districts.

United Teachers of Los Angeles set an initial goal of getting 40 schools to participate.

But by allowing building leaders to take the initiative for organizing their schools—including getting parents and community groups involved—they were able to smash that target. More than 170 schools eventually opted to join in.

UTLA is using the walk-ins as part of its campaign to bring more resources to public schools and to stop charter school takeovers. Last fall, a leaked document revealed plans by the Broad Foundation—a major player in corporate-style “education reform”—to privatize half of the nation’s second-largest school district, further galvanizing members.

Teachers at 100 schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, joined. They also held walk-ins at 100 schools last fall to protest a state takeover plan that would turn public schools into charters.

In Boston, on a school holiday, hundreds of teachers, parents, and students marched to city hall and statehouse to protest budget cuts to public schools. They delivered petitions to the mayor and the governor.

Detroit teachers used the walk-in tactic alongside the wave of teacher sickouts there.

In Chicago, where teachers are in the midst of contentious bargaining, teachers organized walk-ins at 300 schools—nearly half the total.

The district is threatening layoffs and cuts of more than \$50 million if teachers don’t take a pay cut to pay for their pensions.

Chicago parents got a letter from the school district announcing heightened security and implying that walk-ins could bring dangerous outsiders into the schools.

Teachers in Kalamazoo, Michigan, got a friendlier reception. After being notified of their protests, which focused on the overuse of state and national standardized tests, the superintendent asked to join in.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: "They're always listening."]

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

Zionist Soldiers Shoot, Critically Injure 14-Year-Old Girl: "Israeli Soldiers Fired Six Rounds At The 14-Year-Old Who Was Walking Away From The Soldiers"

Feb 14 2016 Palestine Chronicle

Israeli forces on Sunday shot and injured a 14-year-old Palestinian girl near Hebron city's Ibrahimi Mosque after an alleged attempted stabbing attack in the southern occupied West Bank, an Israeli police spokesperson said.

Local Palestinian sources provided a conflicting report, and told Ma'an the 14-year-old and her sister were together, and neither had attempted an attack when they were shot.

Locals said the two girls had crossed an Israeli military checkpoint known as 160, after which the girls walked a few meters past the checkpoint, when Israeli soldiers fired six rounds at the 14-year-old who was walking away from the soldiers, critically injuring her.

Israeli media reported that no Israelis were injured during the incident.

The 14-year-old was identified as Yasmin Rashad al-Zarou.

She was evacuated from the scene by Israeli forces.

Minutes after the attack, a graphic video of the injured girl surfaced on social media.

Hours earlier, Israeli forces shot and killed a 17-year-old Palestinian after the teen allegedly attempted to stab an Israeli soldier at a checkpoint north of Bethlehem, official Palestinian sources said.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health identified the teen as Naim Ahmad Yousif Safi from the town of al-Ubediya, just east of Bethlehem.

It was unclear whether the teen died on site or later as a result of his wounds.

YOUR INVITATION:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome.

Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

**Occupation Troops Expel Family
From Their Field For Pruning Trees
While Palestinian:
“Soldiers Pointed Their Guns At Sleibi
And His Family Members, Forcing Them
To Take Their Things And Leave Their
Land”**



(MaanImages)

Feb. 20, 2016 Ma'an News Agency

HEBRON -- Israeli soldiers on Saturday expelled Palestinian farmers at gunpoint from their private agricultural land in the outskirts of the town of Beit Ummar in the southern occupied West Bank, locals said.

Muhammad Abd al-Hamid Sleibi and his family were pruning trees in their field in Wadi Abu al-Reish area when Israeli soldiers approached them, local activist and committee spokesman Muhammad Ayyad Awad told Ma'an.

The soldiers pointed their guns at Sleibi and his family members, forcing them to take their things and leave their land.

Sleibi told Awad he had previously obtained an order from Israel's High Court allowing him full access to his land, but Israeli Civil Administration officers who arrived with the armed soldiers told Sleibi that only one person could stay on the land at a time.

Sleibi then left alongside his family members, who he said fled the area "fearing for their lives."

An Israeli army spokesperson was not immediately available for comment.

Much of the outskirts of Beit Ummar village -- located around 10 kilometers north of the city of Hebron -- were designated as Area C following the Oslo Accords, and are under full civil and military control of Israel.

Palestinians must first receive permission from Israel's Civil Administration to build on land in Area C, which is rarely granted. However, they are generally allowed to access cultivate their land, except in some cases when illegal Israeli settlements are located nearby.

Over 4,000 dunams (988 acres) of private Palestinian land in Beit Ummar has been reappropriated for the construction of illegal Israeli settlements and bypass roads.

Such confiscation has taken a heavy toll on the community, 60 percent of which make their livelihood working in agriculture.

Zionist Occupation Forces Demolish Only School In Bedouin Community: “Israeli Forces Also Reportedly Seized The Contents Of The School”



(MaanImages)

Feb. 21, 2016 Ma'an News Agency

JERUSALEM -- Israeli forces on Sunday demolished a Bedouin school for children in the Abu al-Nuwaar community near the town of al-Eizariya in the occupied West Bank, a spokesperson for the al-Jahalin Bedouin community said.

Atallah al-Jahalin told Ma'an that Israeli forces, accompanied by 30 vehicles and a delegation from Israeli's Civil Administration, raided the area and destroyed the sole school in the community.

Residents said Israeli forces told them the school was demolished because concrete structures were forbidden in the area.

Israeli forces also reportedly seized the contents of the school.

Al-Jahalin added that Israeli forces briefly detained two youths who were protesting the demolition, both of whom were released after the demolition.

After the demolition, primary students held a "sit-in" where the school once stood while wearing their uniforms and holding school books in protest.

On Wednesday, the Coordinator for Humanitarian and UN Development Activities for the occupied Palestinian territory Robert Piper said the number of Palestinians displaced so far in 2016 is already equivalent to over half of the total number displaced in all of 2015.

Piper called on Israel to immediately halt all demolitions in the occupied West Bank, which he said were in violation of international law.

"Most of the demolitions in the West Bank take place on the spurious legal grounds that Palestinians do not possess building permits," Piper said.

"But, in Area C, official Israeli figures indicate only 1.5 percent of Palestinian permit applications are approved in any case. So what legal options are left for a law-abiding Palestinian?"

The UN documented 283 homes and other structures destroyed, dismantled, or confiscated between Jan. 1 and Feb. 15.

The measures displaced 404 Palestinians, including 219 children. Another 1,150 Palestinians were also affected after losing structures related to their source of income, according to the UN.

The destruction was focused in 41 locations, many in Palestinian Bedouin or herder communities in Area C, the over 60 percent of the West Bank under full Israeli military control.

Piper highlighted previous statements by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon that Israeli zoning and planning policies are "restrictive and highly discriminatory."

"International law is clear -- Palestinians in the West Bank have the right to adequate housing and the right to receive humanitarian assistance," Piper said.

"As the occupying power, Israel is obliged to respect these rights," the UN official said.

Repeated calls by international bodies for Israel to cease the displacement of Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory have done little in the past to stop ongoing demolitions or illegal settlement expansion onto Palestinian land.

The EU earlier this week condemned Israeli policy regarding demolition and settlement expansion, which the body said made the establishment of an independent Palestinian state impossible.

To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to:

<http://www.maannnews.net/eng/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.palestinemonitor.org/list.php?id=ej898ra7yff0ukmf16>

The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves “Israeli.”



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