

Military Resistance 9B25



[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

QUOTATION OF THE DAY: Sec Def On The Topic: Dying In Vain

[Thanks to Clancy Sigal, who sent this in.]

“In my opinion, any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should ‘have his head examined,’ as General MacArthur so delicately put it.”

-- ROBERT M. GATES, Secretary of Defense, at West Point Feb. 25, 2010 [New York Times]

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

“It Looks That Iraq Moved From The Dictatorship Of One Party To The Dictatorship Of A Group Of Parties” “The Fragile Iraq Government Has No Chance To Stand One Real Big Demonstration”

February 26, 2011 Posted by Laith, Inside Iraq [Baghdad]

Confusion is the most suitable word by which I can describe my feelings about the situation in Iraq. It became so difficult to reach acceptable explanations for the simplest issues in Iraq.

The Iraqi governments been spending billions of dollars for about seven years and yet, no real changes happened.

We heard and read all the kind of excuses like the unstable security situation, Baathists and followers of the former regime, enemies of democracy and new Iraq and many other ones.

These excuses are not acceptable anymore by Iraqis and they showed that clearly in Friday demonstration.

The main purpose of the demonstrations that took place in many Iraqi cities in Feb 25 was to give the Iraqi officials an idea about the bad reality that we live eight years after what was called liberation.

After the collapse of the former regime in 2003, Iraqis were so optimistic about future. We thought that collapsing Saddam's regime was the end of suffering, deprivation but it looks that Iraq moved from the dictatorship of one party to the dictatorship of a group of parties.

Both Baath Party and the current Iraqi parties care only about their interests neglecting Iraqis completely.

During Saddam's regime, high positions were only for the regime's supporters and now the same thing happen.

If you are not a member of the ruling parties or a friend of one of the officials, you can forget about having a decent job even if you have the highest level of education. Professionalism is not the basic criterion in Iraq. It had been ignored more than three decades ago. The basic criterion now days is (which party are you from?) or sometimes (how much money you can pay to get the position?)

With the spread of anger in more than one Arabic country against their governments and the collapse of the strong Arabic regimes, the fragile Iraq government has no chance to stand one real big demonstration. It would be better for the government to resign if it doesn't work hard to provide better life for Iraqis,

If the news about plans to misuse the demonstration worked this time, it will not be helpful the next one.

Strikes In Occupied Iraq: “Because Of The New Wave Of Workers’ Struggle In The Middle East As A Whole And Especially In Egypt, More Workers In Iraq Are Encouraged To Take Part In Demonstrations And Protests”

February 21, 2011 By Falah Alwan, Socialist Worker

Falah Alwan is president of the Federation of Workers Councils and Unions in Iraq.

There have been many strikes and protests happening in the last few weeks.

There have been strikes in the leather industry in Baghdad, in a textile factory in Kut, protests by workers in the Northern Oil Company in Kirkuk, electricity workers' protests in Basra, and preparations for another demonstration by politically dismissed workers.

The strikes in the (state-owned) leather industries were held on February 1. The workers called for safety benefits and remunerations. They wanted to expose the lies of the administration about the bankruptcy of their company. They have more than one contract with the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Trade and other ministries to provide them with leather goods. The third demand was against “self-financing”, which is a kind of privatization.

The strike continued for two weeks, until February 14. The administration promised to answer the workers' demands, except the demand for safety.

In Kut, there was a strike in a textile factory. This factory employs more than 7,000 workers. They struck because of the intention of the administration to reduce their retirement benefit. They shut down all parts of the factory.

Because of the situation in that factory, U.S. troops came directly to the factory and surrounded it.

The administration has promised to answer the workers' demands, but there are no official or written documents, only a "promise."

Oil workers employed by the Northern Oil Company in Kirkuk have also been protesting.

They have a particular system of contracts; they want to be full-time employees and have full contracts with the company. They have been working on the current system of temporary contracts for more than 10 years, but the administration has refused their demands.

They threatened to hold a strike and stop oil production. There was a lot of support for them from the oil unions in Basra and other provinces. Their committees, especially those which affiliate to the FWCUI, threatened to hold a support strike in Basra. They are preparing for a strike in the event that the Ministry of Oil refuses to answer the demands of the Northern Oil Company.

Two or three of the main workers' committees in the south, at the pipelines and refineries in Basra, met last on 11 February.

I attended the meeting, and they said they are prepared to take strike action in solidarity with the Northern Oil Company workers. There has been no action yet, but I think the workers are very supportive.

There is also an issue around workers working for foreign companies earning more than workers working for Iraqi companies; the oil workers' committees in the south is calling for the lower-paid group of workers to be brought up to the same levels of pay and benefits. They are also prepared to strike over this issue.

The main committee organizing workers at the Northern Oil Company is affiliated to the GFIW. I have spoken with the president of this committee, and he is resolved to continue his struggle against the administration at the company and against the Ministry of Oil.

In Basra itself, electricity workers demonstrated for two days.

Workers who work in high towers to connect electricity to other stations get extra benefits for this risky and dangerous work, but the Ministry of Electricity is refusing to pay this benefit.

The workers held their first day of demonstrations inside the electricity station, and the second day was in front of the government buildings in Basra.

There are preparations underway for a big demonstration by the politically dismissed workers alongside industrial workers.

It was planned for February 28, but because of the situation in Iraq and the series of strikes and demonstrations, we discussed and decided to hold it on February 25, when there is another big demonstration planned.

The Ministry of Industry plans to answer three or four of the politically dismissed workers. One was to delay the cut in salaries, and the second was to cancel the punitive measure of making the workers pay back what they were paid before the cut in salaries. These decrees were cancelled.

Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, have not done so, but the workers are planning to impose pressure to force them to do so.

Unemployed workers and students have also been demonstrating in Kut, Baghdad, Basra and Nasiriyah. There were mass demonstrations in Baghdad and in the south of Iraq to call for services and jobs. They are also calling for freedom of expression and for an end to the repression of demonstrations and other kinds of protest.

OVER THE last two weeks, we have been in contact with workers in Egypt, including the leaders of the new independent unions.

Our attitude is that we want the workers in Iraq to follow the same model and hold vast demonstrations and protests.

We are also in contact with workers' organization in Tunisia and Algeria.

The participation and influence of workers and their unions in the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt is very clear. They were the leaders of the demonstrations. In Iraq, we have had a series of workers' protests since 2005 and especially since the ending of most sectarian warfare in 2007-2008.

A new layer of workers' leaders has emerged and has been leading demonstrations.

Now, because of the new wave of workers' struggle in the Middle East as a whole and especially in Egypt, more workers in Iraq are encouraged to take part in demonstrations and protests. We are building for new strategies for the workers' movement in Iraq, to be part of the changing political situation.

There are mass demands calling for change in Iraq; most demonstrators are calling for an end to the existing parliament and to elect a new one.

It is a wave of change in Iraq, and I think the workers are ready to take part in this because we have experience of more than five years of protests, demonstrations and strikes.

To build support, activists worldwide can make sure these reports are spread as widely as possible to inform people of the realities inside Iraq.

The governments want to show another image to confuse the masses from the reality of demonstrations and their demands.

For example, the Iraqi authorities have been talking about the role of Baathists in the demonstrations in an attempt to frighten people and prevent them taking part.

They have been saying the demonstration on February 25 will be bloody and that the Baathists will be armed and that they will attack peaceful gatherings.

We need to tell people that the workers themselves want to hold the demonstrations.

It is the workers, the unemployed, students, young people, the freedom lovers who want to change things, not the Baathists and fascist parties in Iraq. We need to widely distribute the reports of the workers in Iraq.

We will take part in the demonstration on 25 February; it could be a very big step forward for workers' struggle and the independent workers' movement.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Foreign Occupation “Servicemember” Killed Somewhere Or Other In Afghanistan: Nationality Not Announced

February 27, 2010 Reuters

A foreign servicemember died following an improvised explosive device attack in southern Afghanistan today.

Resistance Action



26/02/2011 AFP& February 27, 2011 CNN

Three rockets were fired into the heart of Kabul, with one landing close to the presidential palace, a spokesman said.

The attacks came before the rush-hour on Saturday morning when the city was almost empty and caused no casualties, interior ministry spokesman Zemarai Bashary told AFP.

One of the rockets landed near the river a few hundred metres (yards) from the presidential compound and other ministries, and two rockets hit a mixed residential and market area.

The rockets were launched from the eastern edge of the city, he said.

Two police officers were killed when two mines planted in a playground went off Sunday in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, officials said. The blasts in Arghandab district wounded five police officers, the country's interior ministry said. The explosions took place during a picnic hosted by the former police chief of Arghandab district in the province, said the province's district governor.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW



U.S. Marines from the First Battalion Eighth Marines Alpha Company patrol near the town of Nabuk in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province, February 24, 2011.
REUTERS/Finbarr O'Reilly

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATIONS**

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

**Hope for change doesn't cut it when you're still losing buddies.
-- J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

Never Tip The Army In Egypt “We Do Not Need Obama To Help Us End The Injustice” “Yesterday It Was Tunisia, Today Egypt, And Tomorrow Libya And The Rest Of The Corrupted Regimes”



An Egyptian soldier relaxes on his tank in Sinai. Credit: Mohammed Omer

Feb 25, 2011 By Mohammed Omer, IPS

Abu Mustafa Al Matriah and Abu Ahmed Abu Amrah, both Bedouins in Northern Sinai are thankful to the army that they can complete their daily deliveries without having “to pay so much baksheesh” (gratuity).

Now that the Mubarak regime is gone both friends can sit in a café, sip coffee and “discuss politics” critically, for the first time in decades - something which was a dangerous pastime in the Northern Sinai before. They can discuss corruption and “who’s blackmailing the population by asking for a cut of money for everything, including getting official documents” from government buildings faster.

“If you don’t pay, things don’t get done” says Al Matriah, a father of seven who has worked transporting sand from the desert to construction sites for the last 30 years. He remembers when he had to tip a police officer 50 Egyptian pounds to ignore a simple mistake he made driving a sand truck in Sinai. “He wouldn’t issue me a ticket, he just kept me waiting, as blackmail, until I paid him cash,” says Al Matriah.

Now, there is a noticeable absence of police. “They are not here anymore, they’ve gone,” Al Matriah laughs says.

There is no state security or police presence across Sinai - Egyptian troops are the only ones in control.

IPS counted all the checkpoints from Rafah to Cairo - 19 Army roadblocks check cars and identity of individuals, over the 400 kilometers. An Egyptian security official told IPS that the number of checkpoints had been reduced from 40 to 19.

Bedouin, who used to quarrel with police, cooperate now - opening their cars, allowing the Army to do their job.

Sipping coffee and thinking about Egypt's future, Abu Matriah says, "we need economic security - similar to the days of [former Egyptian president] Abdel Nasser when a cup of coffee was a quarter of an Egyptian pound instead of 2 Egyptian pounds it is today. Or when you could buy 1 kilo of sugar for 1.5 EP's, instead of 5 EP's."

"Without connections and tips," we had no way to get our son employed, said Abu Amrah. Unemployment is a big problem for Egyptian graduates, but for Bedouin youth, this is how the system discriminated against them.

After President Mubarak stepped down, vice president Omar Suleiman announced that the higher council of Armed Forces would take charge of Egypt's affairs during the transition period.

That decision seems to have been a good one, especially for the Bedouins, who respect the army for being more honest and less prone to corruption and harassment.

Everyone seems to agree that the security situation is much better in Sinai today, and Bedouins are able to express their views without fear of being arrested. Previously, many of the Bedouin youth and online activists were wary of using online blogging to exchange views about their political, economic, educational problems, fearing harassment and arrest by the Egyptian government.

Sinai novelist Mos'ad Abu Fagar experienced harassment while running a blog called Wedna N'ish (We Want to Live), on which he describes the life and hardships of the Bedouins in Sinai - including the citizenship rights they often seek. In 2007, he was arrested at El-Arish police station for his blog.

Amnesty International and The Committee to Protect Journalists condemned the 30-month imprisonment of Fagar - he was released in July 2010. The torture Fagar had to endure while detained made other online-activists very cautious about using their real identities.

Fagar says, "the regime did not treat the Bedouins well and did not have enough wisdom, or experience, to contain the Bedouins either."

Abdelhadi Abu Hujazzi looks to the Egyptian Army as the best model in the world. "There is no way they will blackmail people," Abu Hujazzi says. "They are good nationals of this land and very sincere - no tips after today."

The same respect doesn't apply to the Egyptian Air Force according to Abdelhadi, whose friend Mohammed Al Hamidah had to ask his father to pay 40,000 Egyptian pounds just to enroll in aviation school. "These are not fees; this is corruption. The way the old regime works," says Abu Hujazzi.

The population here is aware that the Army presence may be short-lived and they fear the old corruption returning. Abu Hujazzi says, "It's an old era - and its over, even inside us."

Abu Hujazzi knows that the Army cannot continue to administrate the country for long. He says that their fairness is "a great success for the revolution." But the idea of fair elections remains a strange one, for him and many more. "Living for 30 years with one regime, makes me feel uncertain of what elections are really all about. We need new faces to draw a new map of the new way forward for Egypt and all Egyptians," Abu Hujazzi says.

"Whatever comes in the coming months will not be worse than Mubarak," Abu Hujazzi says.

"At least, Abdel Nasser died without billions of dollars of Egypt's money in his account," says Matariah.

"We do not need Obama to help us end the injustice; the Arab States will learn democracy their own way," says Abu Hujazzi. "Yesterday it was Tunisia, today Egypt, and tomorrow Libya and the rest of the corrupted regimes."

Abu Hujazzi hopes that sometime next year Arab leaders "which will come by our votes" will have the opportunity to meet to get "to know each other."

“What’s Striking About The Relationship Is How Israel Used Verbal Condemnation For Racial Apartheid As A Cover For Its Ongoing Dealings With South Africa”

“The Military Alliance With Apartheid South Africa Should Come As No Surprise To Objective Scholars Of Israeli History”

“The Early Anti-Arab Terrorist Gangs, Irgun And Stern, Met With Nazi Officials In Berlin During The War, Seeing Common Cause In Hitler’s Attempts To Cleanse Germany Of Its Jews”

From review of *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel’s Secret Relationship With Apartheid South Africa*; Sasha Polakow-Suransky; Pantheon Books, 2010; 242 pages, \$28

Review by Sherry Wolf, *International Socialist Review*, Jan. – Feb. 2011

In June 1976, thousands of Black South African school children in Johannesburg’s township of Soweto protested against the apartheid regime’s mandatory law that they study in the language of their oppressors, Afrikaans. The brutal regime of the tiny white minority government, whose power rested on racial segregation and the dispossession of Blacks, sent dogs to attack the students and fired randomly into the crowd, ultimately killing 500 mostly Black school children over the weeks of upheaval.

Meanwhile, Israeli Labor Party government officials, under the direction of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, coordinated secret arms deals and military training with the South African state.

Private communiqués from Rabin marked these lucrative deals as “highest priority” along with the secrecy that marked this decades-long brotherhood of armed-to-the-teeth, state-sponsored racism.

In 1994, Rabin went on to collect the Nobel Peace Prize—along with Shimon Peres, under whose administration Israel escalated its collaboration with the apartheid state.

This is among dozens of stories brought to light in Sasha Polakow-Suransky’s well-researched and written *Unspoken Alliance*.

Like any John le Carré spy novel, this work resonates with intrigue, stealth meetings in international cities, and lies repeated so often and with such confidence by the perpetrators of the collaboration that it is left to the evidence in this book and few others to bear witness to the bond between these two apartheid states.

The historical facts Polakow-Suransky lays out and the sources he draws from strike the ultimate blow to any further denials of Israel’s multibillion-dollar, pro-apartheid business.

Israeli leaders, from Golda Meir in the 1940s through Rabin in 1994, at the fall of South African apartheid, were willing to look past the anti-Semitism of apartheid rulers—some with Nazi pasts—to “make agreements with the devil,” as one Israeli Holocaust survivor approvingly put it.

South Africa's 100,000 Jews were used as scapegoats for domestic nationalists during the Second World War and deemed "unassimilable" by its foreign minister. Nonetheless, Israel's backroom dealings with the racist state were codified in a security and secrecy agreement in 1975.

Peres and South African prime minister P.W. Botha signed an arms agreement, known as SECMENT, that stated, "It is hereby expressly agreed that the very existence of this Agreement...shall be secret and shall not be disclosed by either party."

What's striking about the relationship is how Israel used verbal condemnation for racial apartheid as a cover for its ongoing dealings with South Africa.

In 1963, Golda Meir, echoed contemporary anti-racist sympathies by pledging that Israel had "taken all necessary steps" to stop any arms trading between the two states. Prime Minister Peres's denunciations were even more categorical a few years later when he told the president of Cameroon, "A Jew who accepts apartheid ceases to be a Jew. A Jew and racism do not go together."

All rhetoric aside, after Israel proved its military metal in the Six-Day War of 1967, arms exports to South Africa skyrocketed to \$1 billion by 1981.

Israel's close relationships with African anti-colonialists such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and the fact that ten African states received military training from Israel in the sixties made it the soft alternative, at least on the surface, for newly independent African states seeking to chart a course beyond the Cold War tensions between the United States and Soviet Union. However, arms from Israel were often funneled through Pretoria to anti-Soviet paramilitary forces in order to halt the Soviet Union from gaining a foothold in nearby Angola. In the early eighties, Israeli Defense minister and war criminal, Ariel Sharon, called for the arming of Angolan anti-Soviet forces in the pages of the New York Times.

Israel has often publicized quotes from major Black American civil rights figures as armor in its defense against claims of its own racism and apartheid. Martin Luther King once argued, "When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews. You're talking anti-Semitism." Or Israelis cite Adam Clayton Powell's role in raising \$150,000 for the Zionist Irgun in the 1940s.

These men's words and actions in the midst of the Holocaust in one case and at the height of the civil rights struggles when Israel's brutality was mostly hidden and denied don't cleanse Israel of its crimes then or now.

Once Israel's brutality could no longer be hidden or denied, Black American activists from the Panthers to Jesse Jackson denounced the state and allied themselves with the Palestinians fighting their own dispossession and occupation.

The military alliance with apartheid South Africa should come as no surprise to objective scholars of Israeli history. Even at the birth of the state of Israel, "political alliances were strictly utilitarian." As Polakow-Suransky describes, "Any allies were welcomed, no matter how unsavory."

The early anti-Arab terrorist gangs, Irgun and Stern, met with Nazi officials in Berlin during the war, seeing common cause in Hitler's attempts to cleanse Germany of its Jews.

Militant Zionists, whose publications claimed Jews as the master race and Arabs as inferior, met and worked with the anti-Semitic architects of the Holocaust because they were willing even then to do business with the devil as a means to achieve Jewish emigration from Europe to Palestine.

The one weakness of this work is its failure to discuss the imperialist uses of Israel, allowing Polakow-Suransky to echo the old illusion that Israel was once a progressive, even somewhat socialist state that has fallen from grace. That aside, *The Unspoken Alliance* provides the pro-Palestine movement with a valuable historical record.

It unearths the twisted political entanglements between the two states through documents and conversations with many of the generals and politicians who were once at the helm of either South Africa or Israel.

The author draws the ideological parallels between the two ruling classes, both despised and challenged by their ethnic majorities.

Whether Israel's apartheid will one day come to the same fate as South Africa's, from internal and external pressure, remains unknown. But there is no question that the longtime racist collusion between apartheid Israel and apartheid South Africa is a fact.

MORE:

“Zionism Has Become An Ally Of Anti-Semitism”

From review of *Live Working or Die Fighting: How the Working Class Went Global*; Paul Mason; Haymarket Books, 2010; 320 pages, \$17

Review by Helen Scott, *International Socialist Review*, Jan. – Feb. 2011 [Excerpt]

Another chapter begins in El Alto, Bolivia, and then switches to Brzeziny, Poland, a town that was obliterated, and its Jewish population brutally murdered, by the Nazis in 1942.

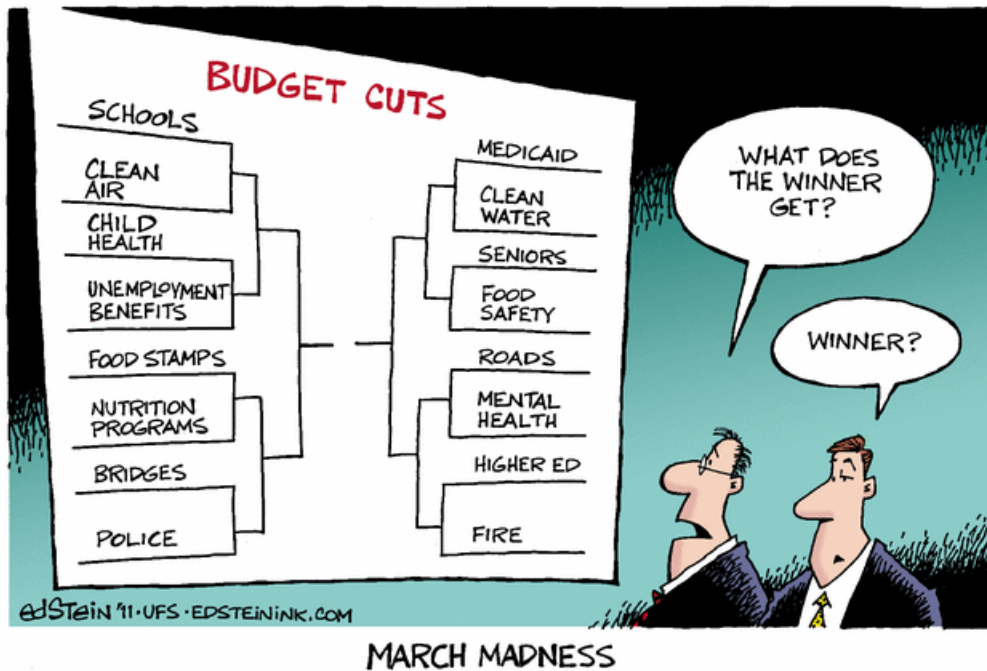
The history of the town was recorded in a memorial book in 1961, and includes the remarkable growth of the Bund, the General Union of Jewish Workers that offered an alternative to Zionism and that went on to play a leading role in the heroic Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Following an election victory in 1938, Bund leader Henryk Erlich gave this speech:

“Jewish unity cannot involve cooperation with reactionaries.... Zionism has become an ally of anti-Semitism. The worsening situation of Jews throughout the world is exploited by the Zionists.

“The Zionists regard themselves as second-class citizens in Poland. Their aim is to be first-class citizens in Palestine and make the Arabs second-class citizens.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

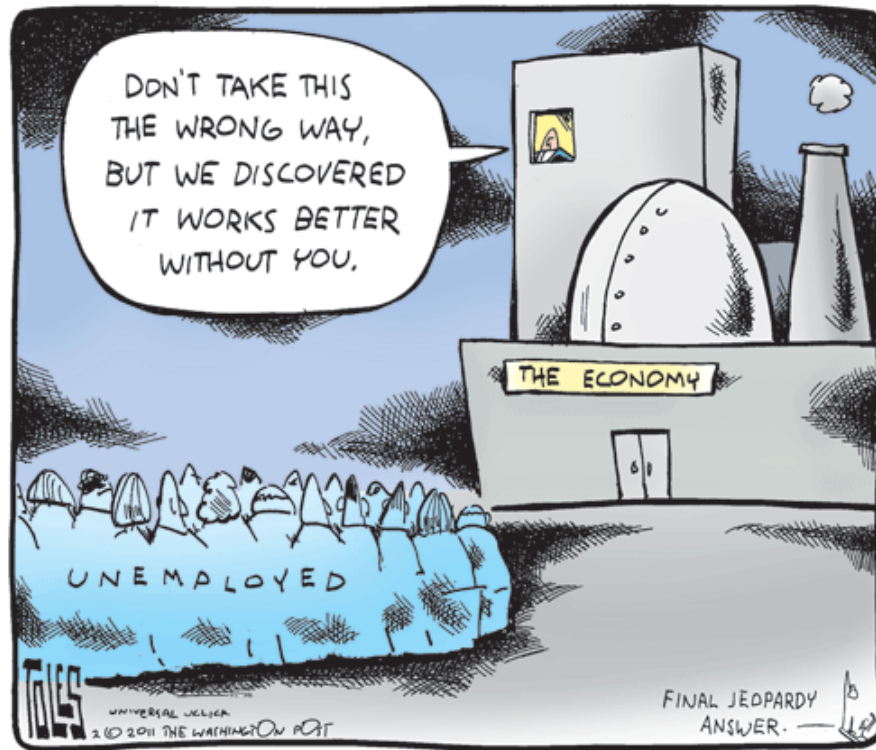
Traveling Soldier is the publication of the Military Resistance Organization.

Telling the truth - about the occupations or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance to Imperial wars inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

CLASS WAR REPORTS



Poll Finds “Americans Strongly Oppose Laws Taking Away The Collective Bargaining Power Of Public Employee Unions”

2.24.11 By Dennis Cauchon, USA TODAY [Excerpts]

MADISON, Wis. — Americans strongly oppose laws taking away the collective bargaining power of public employee unions, according to a new USA TODAY/Gallup Poll. The poll found 61% would oppose a law in their state similar to such a proposal in Wisconsin, compared with 33% who would favor such a law.

Republican Gov. Scott Walker and Republican legislators in Wisconsin have proposed cutting union rights for most state government workers and making them pay more for benefits. Ohio, New Jersey, Indiana, Iowa and other states with Republican governors are considering similar laws.

Wisconsin's South Central Federation Of Labor Delegates Vote "To Endorse A National General Strike In The Event That Walker Signs The Bill"

February 22, 2011 By Robin Gee, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

FOLLOWING A weekend that included one of the largest protests in Wisconsin history, labor activists and the Madison-area labor council are organizing to oppose all provisions of Gov. Scott Walker's union-busting "budget repair bill."

That same sentiment was shared by delegates to Wisconsin's South Central Federation of Labor (SCFL), the umbrella organization for unions representing 45,000 workers in the six-county area around Madison. When I announced of the formation of the Kill the Whole Bill Coalition, the news was welcomed with cheers.

SCFL delegates voted to endorse a national general strike in the event that Walker signs the bill, and designated a committee to educate and prepare our members for such an action.

There was virtually no debate on whether we should endorse a general strike--only how to prepare for one.

No one argued for accepting concessions.

We have already made concessions for many years, and we've gotten to the point where we've got nothing left to give. For example, members of AFSCME Local 171 are preparing video interviews with their members who work full time and yet receive food stamps.

MORE:

"Walker No Doubt Envisioned Conflict When He Rolled Out His Plan To Roll Over The Workers Of Wisconsin"

“But I Don’t Think He Foresaw Having To Go Toe-To-Toe With The Green Bay Packers” “As We Learned In Egypt, Envisioning Unforeseen Consequences Is Never An Autocrat’s Strong Suit”

February 16, 2011 By Dave Zirin, The Nation

Less than two weeks ago, the Green Bay Packers—the only fan-owned, non-profit franchise in major American sports — won the Super Bowl, bringing the Lombardi trophy back to Wisconsin.

But now, past and present members of the “People’s Team” are girding up for one more fight and this time, it’s against their own Governor, Scott Walker.

Walker, after the Super Bowl victory, bathed himself sensuously in the team’s triumph, declaring at a public ceremony that February was now Packers Month. He oozed praise for the franchise named in honor of the state’s packing workers.

But just days later, the Governor offered cutbacks, contempt, and even the threat of violence for actual state workers.

Walker has unveiled plans to strip all public workers of collective bargaining rights and dramatically slash the wages and health benefits of every nurse, teacher and state employee.

Then, Walker proclaimed that resistance to these moves would be met with a response from the Wisconsin National Guard.

Seriously.

Yes, in advance of any debate over his proposal, Governor Walker put the National Guard on alert by saying that the guard is “prepared” for “whatever the governor, their commander-in-chief, might call for.”

Considering that the state of Wisconsin hasn’t called in the National Guard since 1886, these bizarre threats did more than raise eyebrows.

They provoked rage.

Robin Eckstein, a former Wisconsin National Guard member, told the Huffington Post, “Maybe the new governor doesn’t understand yet — but the National Guard is not his own personal intimidation force to be mobilized to quash political dissent.

“The Guard is to be used in case of true emergencies and disasters, to help the people of Wisconsin, not to bully political opponents.”

Already this week, as many as 100,000 people have marched at various protests around the state with signs that reflect the current moment like “If Egypt Can Have Democracy, Why Can’t Wisconsin?” “We Want Governors Not Dictators,” and the pithy “Hosni Walker.”

But also intriguing is the intervention from past and present members of the Super Bowl Champs.

Current players Brady Poppinga and Jason Spitz and former Packers Curtis Fuller, Chris Jacke, Charles Jordan, Bob Long and Steve Okoniewski issued the following statement:

“We know that it is teamwork on and off the field that makes the Packers and Wisconsin great. As a publicly owned team we wouldn’t have been able to win the Super Bowl without the support of our fans. It is the same dedication of our public workers every day that makes Wisconsin run. They are the teachers, nurses and child care workers who take care of us and our families.

“But now in an unprecedented political attack Governor Walker is trying to take away their right to have a voice and bargain at work. The right to negotiate wages and benefits is a fundamental underpinning of our middle class. When workers join together it serves as a check on corporate power and helps ALL workers by raising community standards.

“Wisconsin’s long standing tradition of allowing public sector workers to have a voice on the job has worked for the state since the 1930s. It has created greater consistency in the relationship between labor and management and a shared approach to public work. These public workers are Wisconsin’s champions every single day and we urge the Governor and the State Legislature to not take away their rights.”

The players who signed on don’t have quite as high a profile as Super Bowl MVP Aaron Rodgers, but give it time.

Rodgers is the Packers’ union representative in negotiations with the NFL, and on Tuesday the players union issued their own statement in support of state workers, writing:

“The NFL Players Association will always support efforts protecting a worker’s right to join a union and collectively bargain. Today, the NFLPA stands in solidarity with its organized labor brothers and sisters in Wisconsin.”

The support of the Packers players hasn’t been lost on those marching in the streets.

Aisha Robertson, a public school teacher from Madison, told me, “It’s great to see Packers join the fight against Walker. Their statement of support shows they stand with us. It gives us inspiration and courage to go and fight peacefully for our most basic rights.”

Walker no doubt envisioned conflict when he rolled out his plan to roll over the workers of Wisconsin.

But I don't think he foresaw having to go toe-to-toe with the Green Bay Packers.

As we learned in Egypt, envisioning unforeseen consequences is never an autocrat's strong suit.

As we're learning in Wisconsin, fighting austerity is not an Egyptian issue or a Middle Eastern issue — it's a political reality of the twenty-first-century world.

And as Scott Walker is learning, messing with cheeseheads can be hazardous to your political health.

Five Killed By Government As “A Groundswell Of New Unrest” Forces Tunisia’s Prime Minister To Quit: He Had Served As Dictator’s Puppet For 11 Years

02/27/11 By BOUAZZA BEN BOUAZZA, TheHuffingtonPost.com

TUNIS, Tunisia — Tunisia's embattled prime minister said Sunday that he will resign, bowing to a key demand of protesters after at least five people died in a groundswell of new unrest in this North African country.

Mohamed Ghannouchi, 69, has been a major irritant to Tunisians behind the so-called “Jasmine Revolution” that toppled autocratic President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali last month and sparked a wave of upheaval in the Arab world.

He didn't say when the resignation would take effect.

Even though Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia on Jan. 14, Ghannouchi – who served for 11 years as his prime minister – had promised to stay on to guide the country until elections expected no later than mid-July.

Ghannouchi's announcement came against the backdrop of renewed street protests like those that brought Ben Ali down.

On Sunday, officials said that at least five people have died during violent street protests since Friday.

On Saturday, police and troops backed by tanks used tear gas to disperse hundreds of youths protesting against the caretaker government. Officers were seen chasing some youths through town after the rally ended.

Authorities then ordered a temporarily ban on vehicle and pedestrian traffic on the capital's central Bourguiba Avenue until midnight Sunday – the first of its kind since Ben Ali's downfall.

On Friday, police fired tear gas and warning shots as violence erupted alongside a sit-in that drew tens of thousands of protesters near the seat of the interim government.

Officials said nearly 200 people were arrested over the last two days.

Egyptian Military Dictators Say Beating And Arresting Protesters Friday Night Was “Unintentional” “They Are Playing A Dirty Role Now” “They Are Trying To Absorb Our Revolution. And Afterward, They Will Do What They Want”

27/02/2011 By Christophe de Roquefeuil, AFP & February 26, 2011 By Bob Drogin, Los Angeles Times [Excerpts]

Some 2,000 protesters marched onto Cairo's Tahrir Square on Saturday to call for a new government, denouncing violence by authorities after military police beat and arrested demonstrators.

Protesters demanded the replacement of the government of Prime Minister Ahmad Shafiq, which includes several ministers from toppled President Hosni Mubarak's regime.

“The revolution will continue until all our demands are met,” read one banner.

Many protesters walked around with a sticker on their clothes that read “Shafiq = old regime.”

Late on Friday, military police had surrounded protesters, hitting them with batons and using tasers to disperse a crowd of several hundred that had gathered to push for reforms, according to witnesses and a security official.

The clash occurred after thousands of people blocked the square all day Friday to demand the dismissal of several officials from the old regime, including Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik, who still hold positions of power.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces said that “what happened late Friday was the result of unintentional confrontations between the military police and the youth of the revolution.”

It stressed that it “did not and will not issue orders to attack the youth, and all measures will be taken to ensure this will not happen again.”

In a second statement, the armed forces said they would “immediately release all the youth of the January 25 revolution that were detained in Tahrir Square (on Friday]”, but did not say how many there were.

A security official said about 20 people were detained.

Activists launched a Facebook call for fresh protests on Saturday to denounce the army’s use of force.

“Peaceful protesters in Tahrir are being chased away by the military police with tasers, sticks and whips. Masked men with machine guns trying to shut down the strike by force. Many beaten, assaulted and arrested,” the statement said.

“We cannot stand for this; we must stand strong against violence towards peaceful protesters.”

On Friday, thousands of Egyptians rallied in the square -- the focal point of anti-government protests that toppled Mubarak -- to celebrate the success of their revolution and call for a new government purged of old guard remnants.

They demanded the replacement of Shafiq’s government. Even after a reshuffle on Wednesday, a number of key portfolios, including foreign affairs and defense, are still in the hands of Mubarak regime veterans.

“Shafiq’s government is subservient to the corrupt regime,” read one banner carried by demonstrators.

Protesters also called for the abolition of the much-feared state security services.

Mubarak, who resigned on February 11, handed power to the army.

Abdul Hamid, 47, an accountant, said that he was hit in the head and that his wife was hit, fell to the ground, and then hit again. He still seemed stunned.

Another protester, Ahmad Mahmoud, 62, a retired businessman, said the use of force made him doubt whether the army would support or allow democratic reforms.

“They are playing a dirty role now,” he said. “They are trying to absorb our revolution. And afterward, they will do what they want.”

Troops Invited:

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 send email to contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

Bahrain -- Abandon Ship: “Joining The Protest Was A Small Group Of Army And Police Officers”

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

2.22.11 Euronews

The centre of the Bahraini capital Manama has been filled with thousands of demonstrators calling for the government's downfall – and to remember the victims of the past week's violence.

Many majority Shi'ite Muslims claim they are the victims of long-term discrimination by the ruling Sunni elite.

Joining the protest was a small group of army and police officers, conscious that the military firing on protesters had contributed to the death toll of seven.

“We decided that our job is to protect people and not to beat them up,” said policeman Abu Noah.

“The weapons that have been used against the people are weapons of shame, these weapons should be used to protect the people, and not be used against them. That's why we've decided to be with the people.”

“At Least 100,000 Trade Unionists Marched Through The Indian Capital On Wednesday In A Protest Against High Food Prices And Unemployment”

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

Feb 23, 2011 By Kritivas Mukherjee, Reuters [Excerpts]

NEW DELHI - At least 100,000 trade unionists marched through the Indian capital on Wednesday in a protest against high food prices and unemployment, piling pressure on an administration under fire over corruption scandals.

The demonstration was the biggest in New Delhi in years and included members of a trade union linked to the ruling Congress party, reflecting disquiet within the party over food inflation which hit a high of over 18 percent last December.

It was also the latest in a wave of protests that have swept the world, ignited by a worldwide spike in food prices.

But unlike the protests that have toppled autocratic leaders, there have been no calls to overthrow India's democratic government. **[Famous last words. In India, like the USA, politicians and political parties are bought and sold to the highest bidders in the famous free market. T]**

"We have come here so that our voices reverberate inside the house (parliament) and they can see what pain the common man is going through," said Akhil Samantray who had come from the eastern Orissa state to take part in the march.

India, Asia's third-largest economy and home to more than a billion people, has been grappling with double-digit food inflation for much of last year. The country's hundreds of millions of poor have been hit the hardest.

The government has looked increasingly helpless as it tries to introduce policies to rein in food prices which have risen mainly on the back of soaring global prices which the government cannot control.

"Prices will kill the common man," read a banner carried by one of the protesters, one of many in a sea of red flags.

"We get paid 100-125 Rupees (1.36-1.70 pounds) a day. How are we going to survive on this if prices are so high?" said Kailash Sain, who had travelled to the capital from the western state of Rajasthan.

The protest was a show of strength from the trade unions looking to gain support amid economic pains of Indians who have not benefited from near double-digit growth.

India has more than 9 million trade union members, but their influence has waned after 1991 when the government ushered in economic reforms and began privatising state-run firms.

"The unions have been very weak in the post-reform era, but on this issue they will get widespread sympathy and support. The unions are filling a vacuum not taken up by a political party at the moment," said Mahesh Ranagarajan, political columnist and Delhi University professor.

P.J. Raju, secretary of the Congress' trade union, told Reuters around 100,000 people from his party alone would be joining the protest.

The grassroots protests may also pile pressure on the government ahead of state elections this year and play into the leftist roots of the Congress Party, which often vies for influence against reformers like Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the government.

The protests also come only a day after Singh relented to months of opposition demands for a parliamentary probe into a multi-billion dollar scandal over sales of telecoms licences for kickbacks.

The scandals have piled enormous pressure on the reformist 78-year-old prime minister, seen as a lame duck who plays second fiddle to Congress party head Sonia Gandhi. Some believe further revelations could force him from power early and lead to an interim leader before a 2014 general election.

Mauritanian Anti-Government Protestors Rally Again After Dispersed By Police



Up to 300 young anti-government protesters rallied in the Mauritanian capital Saturday, hours after they were dispersed by the police following a late night demonstration, an AFP journalists saw. (AFP/Graphic/File)

Workers At Egypt's Largest Factory On Strike In Defiance Of Warnings By The Ruling Military Junta



A tank is stationed outside the Misr Spinning and Weaving factory in Mahallah, north of Cairo, on Thursday. Workers at Egypt's largest factory will remain on strike, an independent labour group said on Saturday, in defiance of warnings by the ruling military junta that it will no longer tolerate protests.

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

19 February 2011 AFP

Workers at Egypt's largest factory will remain on strike, an independent labour group said on Saturday, in defiance of warnings by the ruling military junta that it will no longer tolerate protests.

Around 15,000 workers from the Misr Spinning and Weaving -- which employs 24,000 people in the Nile Delta city of Al-Mahalla al-Kubra -- "are holding a sit-in for a fourth day in front of the administration building," the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services (CTUWS) said in a statement.

"The workers have refused to end their protest until their principal demand is met, and that is to remove the head of the company Fuad Abdel Alim," who is accused of corruption," it said.

On Friday, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which took power after president Hosni Mubarak stepped down on February 11 -- said the strikes are harming national security and will no longer be tolerated, after two initial milder warnings.

Some groups "organise protests that obstruct production and create critical economic conditions that can lead to a worsening of the country's economy," the military council said in a statement.

"The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces will not allow the continuation of these illegal acts which pose a danger to the nation, and they will confront them and take legal measures to protect the nation's security," it said.

The roughly 24,000 employees at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company walked out on February 10 in support of demonstrations against Mubarak, who was ousted the next day after more than two weeks of mass protests across Egypt.

The strike was briefly suspended after Mubarak's resignation but kicked off again on Wednesday, with higher wages and new management in the workers' sights.

Misr Spinning and Weaving is the largest plant in the Egyptian textile industry, which employs 48 percent of the country's total labour force, according to the CTUWS.

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“Gabonese Protesters Have Been Facing Death And Imprisonment In A Series Of Anti-Repression Demonstrations”

Gabon “Has Been Run For 34 Years By The Bongo Family -- First By Omar Bongo, And Then By His Son, Ali”

“The Family Has Channeled At Least \$100 Million Of State Money Into US Banks Alone”

A year ago, Ali Bongo met privately in New York with Clinton who called him a “valued partner.” After the meeting she said “I want to recognize President Bongo’s efforts to improve government efficiency, eliminate waste and fight corruption.”

February 22, 2011 By Carl Bloice, Foreign Policy In Focus [Excerpts]

Shortly after this year got underway, two military leaders from Gabon visited air bases in Germany for a three day sojourn with some of their U.S. counterparts.

Military forces in Gabon count less than 5,000. About 1,000 are in the country’s air force and they have at their disposal 5 attack helicopters and 13 ground attack planes. Gabon is also said to have a 1,800-member guard that provides security for country’s president.

Just as the Egyptian military delegation in Washington at the end of January cut short its stay and returned to a country in open rebellion, the Gabonese Air Force commanders returned home to a land seething in anger that exploded in a bloody fashion a few weeks later.

Protesters soon took to the streets with a litany of complaints much like those heard across North Africa and elsewhere in recent weeks.

In a demonstration in Meyo-Kyé, a small city in northern Gabon, a banner read: “In Tunisia, Ben Ali left. In Gabon, Ali Ben [Ali Bongo Ondimba] out.”

“Thousands of opposition supporters took to the streets of the nation’s capital, Libreville, on January 29th, and faced violent suppression from Ali Bongo’s troops,” Ethan Zuckerman wrote on his blog February 9.

“Protests have spread to other cities, and the crackdown against them has become increasingly fierce. Protests planned for February 5th and 8th were both suppressed with tear gas.

At this point, it’s unclear whether protesters will be able to continue pressuring the government, or whether the crackdown has driven dissent underground.”

Since the uprising began in Tunisia the outpouring of rage has almost always been described as something happening in “the Arab world.”

However, in the weeks that followed rebellious manifestations showed up in other parts of Africa as well as in non-Arab Iran and Central Asia.

Actually, one might say the most common link in the events has been the oil related wealth of the nations involved.

Oil accounts for nearly half of Gabon’s government budget, 43 percent of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP), and 81 percent of its exports. Some experts say Gabon will run out of oil in a couple of decades. Central Africa has acquired significant strategic importance because of its richness in petroleum and other natural resources.

The insurgents who took to the streets in Gabon were protesting a 2009 election they said was stolen by Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba.

Interestingly enough, the election was prompted by the death of Ali Bongo's father Omar Bongo, who had run the country for nearly 50 years.

A major complaint that had drawn masses into the streets of Egypt was the intent of President Hosni Mubarak to be succeeded by the younger of his two sons, Gamal Sayed Mubarak.

A large banner carried aloft by the Gabon demonstrators read: "Le Gabon n'est pas une monarchie." [Gabon is not a monarchy]

In one of the few major media reports on the situation in Gabon, Christian Science Monitor correspondent, Drew Hinshaw, wrote February 12, "The protests that are reshaping the Arab world weren't supposed to spread south to sub-Saharan Africa. But for weeks, while scenes of Egyptians overtaking their capital have mesmerized global TV audiences -- and brought the world's most recognized names in TV news to Cairo -- Gabonese protesters have been facing death and imprisonment in a series of anti-repression demonstrations consciously modeled off the Tunisian example.

"The former French colony has been run for 34 years, with open support from France, by the Bongo family -- first by Omar Bongo, and then by his son, Ali. In the family's first act, Bongo Sr. ran up a rap sheet with Amnesty International that includes political murders and tortures of opposition leaders.

"The family managed to survive the winds of democratization that swept Africa in the early 1990s, before Bongo Sr. died in 2009, passing power to his son, Ali."

"In the meantime, the family has channeled at least \$100 million of state money into US banks alone, according to an investigation by the US senate," Hinshaw wrote.

"To make a point, Bongo Jr.'s wife was at one point renting a \$25,000 a month house from the rapper then known as Puff Daddy.

"Critics say the Bongos got away with these sort of antics, which have cost so many autocrats their Western backing because of one thing only: Oil. The country used to pump 370,000 barrels a day of the stuff, but finds its reserves running drier by the week. No matter. The damage has already been done. Petrol has made this corner of the continent an African banana republic -- except that commercial farmers no longer bother to grow bananas in what would be great soil for the crop, thanks the limits of an oil-inflated currency..."

Ali-Ben Bongo Ondimba is said to have spent \$136 million on a 48,000 square foot, 14-bedroom mansion with seven parking spaces, a tennis court and a heated swimming pool on an acre of land in the heart of Paris.

Although it is one of Africa's more prosperous countries the richest 20 percent of the population receive over 90 percent of the income while about a third of all Gabonese live in poverty. Average income is \$2 a day. The jobless rate stands at 21 percent.

A year ago, Ali Bongo met privately in New York with Clinton who called him a “valued partner.” After the meeting she, said “I want to recognize President Bongo’s efforts to improve government efficiency, eliminate waste and fight corruption.”

According to Global Voices, two press releases issued by the Gabonese opposition accused the U.S. ambassador in Gabon Eric D. Benjaminson of keeping a guilty silence on violations by Ali Bongo and his regime against civil liberties.

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