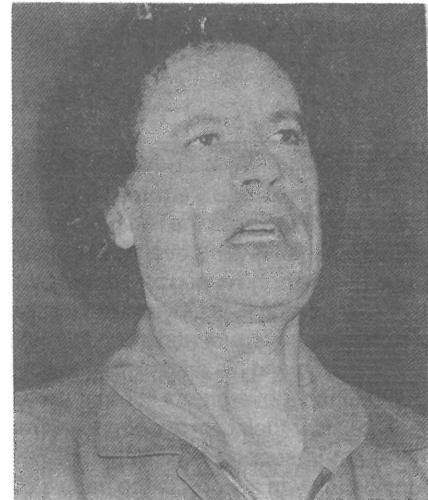


Gulf of Tonkin Revisited

*This article addresses
the questions of why the US has
singled out Libya as a target for aggression, and
why the US was cornered into doing its own dirty work.*



Due to his choice of allies and his daring, plus finances to back his principled positions, Qaddafi has constituted a real threat to imperialist interests in the region. His ambitious plans and achievements in the social and economic fields have earned him a popularity not easily eradicated by mudslinging or beefed-up CIA plots. Libya's US-backed neighbors have problems of their own, which would only be aggravated by any attack on Qaddafi. Western Europe has too much to lose economically to risk an all-out strike. Libyan opposition groups have proved impotent despite the millions of dollars showered on them. Added to this, the prevailing anti-US feeling in the Middle East and other parts of the world, has caused the most reactionary of regimes to hesitate before thinking of leveling a strike at Qaddafi. This is not to mention the unwavering support Libya receives from its socialist allies, particularly the Soviet Union.

So despite the negative lessons of direct military intervention in Vietnam and Lebanon, the US found itself cornered into doing its own dirty work. On April 15th, the Reagan Administration brazenly attacked Libya. Among the eight targets bombed in the air attack were civilian sites, a hospital, a school, and Qaddafi's own home. Cluster bombs were among the murderous weapons used. It would be naive to claim surprise at the attack since the US went out of its way to whip up cheap, psychotic hysteria against Qaddafi, as a pretext for military action against a country steering a course independent of imperialism's military-industrial complex.

However, even after the fatal bombing of Tripoli and Ben-ghazi, Qaddafi's enemies were unable to «lure (the Libyan leader) into some...exploit that would give...opponents in the Libyan military a chance to seize power;» nor were they able to «give one of Qaddafi's neighbors...a justification for responding to Qaddafi militarily» - the aims of the CIA plan as it was expounded in the *Washington Post* on November 3, 1985.

Revolution for the people.

The 1969 bloodless revolution which overthrew King Idris triggered a series of fundamental and far-reaching economic and cultural changes which even Qaddafi's critics have been forced to admit. There is no doubt that the Libyan people have benefitted from the revolution. Average yearly per capita income for Libyans is the highest in Africa, reaching \$ 6000-7000. At the time of independence it was about \$ 50. Before the revolution, illiteracy ran at about 80% and almost 100% among women; medical services were not available to the public except in the two major cities. This resulted in high infant

mortality, malnourishment and a short life expectancy.

Today education is free in Libya, and about 60% of the population are literate. Medical facilities have been made available to all. The gap between rural and urban incomes has been narrowed. Landlords have become a thing of the past after Qaddafi made it illegal to own more than one house. According to a western diplomat: «The people aren't starving; they have a massive building program and a reasonably high standard of living.» Even the World Bank in Washington says: «Libya has become one of the world's best-fed countries.» On a continent full of beggars, there is a striking absence in Libya. The birth rate has risen to 3.9%, one of the world's highest.

Libya has plans for a massive \$ 25 billion water pipeline and farm irrigation system which are going on as scheduled, despite the termination of US companies' involvement in the project. This project known as the Great Man-made River, involves the largest single civil engineering contract ever awarded in the Middle East. It consists of a series of massive pipelines intended to carry six million cubic meters of water a day from beneath the Sahara for consumption. In volume, the water flow would equal the world's entire daily oil production. In a country which is 90% desert, the prospects opened by the completion of such a project are fantastic. Undaunted by many an intervention and impediment, especially from the US, Qaddafi is pursuing plans for gaining access to nuclear projects. In 1982, the Tajura Centre was built and supplied with a small TMA-4 Tokamak Nuclear Fusion Facility. The plant is run by several hundred Libyans. Qaddafi has been bent on implementing radical changes in the society. Military training for high school girls is mandatory. Qaddafi, discerning the importance of women's participation, is bent on integrating them as active elements of society on all levels. The most prominent symbol of the drive to make women and men equal is the military academy which has trained 7000 women since it was opened in 1978. Qaddafi has made considerable strides in improving the status of women, challenging many a law and tradition in doing so. There has been a five-fold increase in the number of women enrolled in universities. Girls and boys attend primary and secondary schools in approximately equal numbers. Child marriage has been banned, and the minimum legal age for marriage has been set at 18.

Libya depends on oil for 99% of its revenues, and many would wish to claim that Qaddafi has been able to realize such achievements because of the oil wealth rather than because of political, social and economic policies. It would be instructive, however, to compare what Libya has done for its 3.5 million