

U.N. sanctions Libya, says might makes right

by Joseph Brewda

The United Nations Security Council began imposing international sanctions against Libya on April 15, setting the stage for a new round of Anglo-American/French attacks on Third World sovereignty, and on international law.

The pretext for the sanctions is Libya's alleged refusal, as demanded by U.N. Resolution 731, to cooperate with the U.N. concerning the terrorist downing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988, and the downing of a French UTA jet over Niger in 1989. Britain, France, and the United States have claimed, without offering any evidence, that Libyan government officials were responsible, and have demanded that these officials be extradited to face trial. U.N. Resolution 748 bans international flights of Libyan planes, and bans any nation from flying planes into Libya. It requires all states to end the shipment of arms to Libya, and to reduce the number of Libyan diplomatic personnel in their nations.

One of the most significant aspects of the Security Council actions against Libya is that they are in brazen violation of international law, including the U.N. Charter and the 1971 Montreal Convention on airline terrorism which governs such disputes. Libya currently has a case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, petitioning the court to explain how the Security Council demand for extradition of the two Libyans conforms to international law. Although the court in The Hague turned down Libya's request to issue a temporary restraining order against the Security Council, the court still has Libya's suit—that the Security Council is acting in violation of the Montreal convention and related international statutes—under consideration. An accompanying interview with international law expert Prof. Francis A. Boyle, who is an adviser to the Libyan government, shows the lawlessness of the Anglo-American/French-dictated Security Council measures (see page 43).

Significantly, the British and Americans have flaunted this lawlessness, in an attempt to set a new precedent for the old notion that "might makes right." Speaking of the measures, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Thomas Pickering bragged that they "make clear that neither Libya nor any other state can seek to hide support for international terrorism behind traditional principles of international law." An unidentified U.N. diplomat proclaimed to the British press, "A Security Council resolution is international law."

A concocted case

The only apparent basis for the claim that Libya downed Pan Am Flight 103 is a political consideration. Until the Persian Gulf war, the British, U.S., Israeli, and French media often claimed, as did retired intelligence officials from those nations, that Syria and Iran were responsible for the incident. It was almost standard to claim that the Syrian-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command was responsible. However, these claims were quietly dropped in the summer of 1990, during the period when the United States and Britain lobbied Syria and Iran to join their anti-Iraq coalition, which they did.

In the summer of 1991, the *Wall Street Journal* revived the story, but this time claiming that Libya, not Syria or Iran, was responsible. A media campaign in the Anglo-American and French press was followed by the indictment of Libyan officials in British and U.S. courts. But what was the evidence? Vague claims of alleged reports by two Libyan airline employees in Malta that they saw unidentified, unaccompanied baggage put on board a plane, which was later transferred to Pan Am 103. The reports have been disputed by a Maltese government investigation. Claims of a similar quality out of Senegal were the pretext for the French indictment at the same time.

Naval exercise set

On April 15, the same day that sanctions were put into effect, NATO announced that it would be holding a 10-nation naval exercise in the central Mediterranean, in the waters between Italy and Libya. The exercises, called "Dragon Hammer," will last May 6-20 and include amphibious landing exercises in Italy. There already is a large deployment of NATO troops in Sicily, supposedly to protect a town threatened by the eruption of Mount Etna.

Whether or not Libya is hit with a military strike in the near term, the British are already pushing for an embargo against Libyan oil sales. British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd told BBC on April 15 that continued Libyan "intransigence" could prompt the United States, Britain, and France to consider an oil embargo. Britain's North Sea oil fields are Libya's main competitor in the production of low-sulfur "sweet oil." Libya is the major oil producer for Italy and Germany—two of the Anglo-Americans' economic and political targets.

In a further indication that not merely Libya is targeted, the Security Council has formed a special committee to monitor the implementation of the sanctions by other states. "The council means business," British Ambassador to the U.N. David Hanney threatened, in reference to any state that might consider not complying.

The monitoring committee already has sent out demands to all the world's nations requiring them to submit a report by May 15 detailing their compliance with the sanctions.