

Stop the Killing! Save Aleppo!

On the fall of Aleppo

"It was necessary to destroy the town in order to save it." This was said in 1968 by a major in the US armed forces about the provincial capital of Ben Tre in Vietnam. Such was the nature of the savage imperialist war waged by US imperialism against Vietnam. Today we see that the Assad dictatorship has destroyed one Syrian city and neighborhood after another in order to subdue the uprising against it. The regime's slogan has been "surrender or starve", but the meaning is the same.

This month it was the turn of the liberated section of Aleppo to be annihilated. It had held out for four years against barrel bombs, gas attacks, heavily-armed troops, and blockade. It succumbed to the savage butchery of the Russian air force, the foreign militias, and Assad's forces. Civilians and medical personnel were especial targets for the Assad regime and its allies, so that by the end not a single hospital was left standing in East Aleppo. They had all suffered multiple attacks until utterly destroyed.

What has been done to Aleppo has been done, one after another, to all the urban areas and towns that have stood up for freedom. In many of these areas, people had for the first time in their lives carried out elections, formed independent committees, published their own papers, formed truly active women's centers, and so forth. Different trends had contested among them, but for once it was the people who were having their say. This was intolerable to the Assad regime.

If it had just been left to the Syrian people,

the Assad regime would have toppled. But the Syrian uprising has faced the opposition of one reactionary force after another: troops from the theocratic Iranian regime; sectarian militias from Iraq; the Russian air force and military personnel; the sectarian Hezbollah from Lebanon; even Egyptian troops from the al-Sisi dictatorship; and so forth. They have also faced the protracted efforts of the US government to prevent them from getting the weapons needed to fight aircraft.

The fall of Aleppo probably won't be the end of the struggle against the Assad regime, but it is a major setback. The uprising, having lost its major urban areas, will have to change its tactics. Meanwhile the forces unleashed against Aleppo will be turned against Idlib and other areas. Civilians and rebels who manage to move from East Aleppo to other areas will come under attack there. The Assad regime and its major allies now hope for total victory.

Meanwhile the foreign powers that seek a "negotiated solution" will pay less attention than ever to the Syrian people. None of them wanted to see a victory of the Syrian uprising. Instead they want to preserve the institutions of the dictatorship, which they regard as essential for stability, not allow the people to remove them. They might haggle over whether it would be advisable to remove some top officials, and how many years it would take to even do that, but they want to keep intact the institutions that have stomped on the Syrian people.

Today the Syrian uprising needs solidarity more than ever. This solidarity will only come

from the people of other countries, not from the governments. This solidarity must aim to help stop the atrocities being committed against the people and fighters of East Aleppo. This is a crucial thing to do. But it also needs to support the goal of eliminating the Assad dictatorship. We must support the Syrian struggle for rights when the situation looks worse; indeed, it is most important to continue solidarity at that time.

Unfortunately much of the world left-wing movement has played a sorry role. A huge section of the left has no faith in the masses of people in Syria. It lectures over and over that what exists is simply a US imperialist plot to overthrow the Assad government or a "US war on Syria". It claims to stand for "Hands Off Syria", but it actually stands for "Hands Off Dictatorship". As far as it is concerned, any outside power can bomb Syria to its heart's content, so long as it is done in coordination with the Assad regime. So it doesn't protest the atrocities committed by the regime in Aleppo, but denies they have taken place. It doesn't even sympathize with the White Helmets, the civilian volunteers who provide medical help to casualties in Syria, but slanders them as agents of imperialism. Assad and the Russians bomb medical personnel, and this section of

the left denounces those personnel.

This shows the extent of the crisis in the left, and the Detroit Workers' Voice list will continue to carry articles on how this crisis developed and what to do about it. The betrayal of the democratic struggle by much of the left has paralyzed mass solidarity with the Syrian people. Nevertheless, many people around the world have been disgusted by the massacres taking place in Aleppo and throughout Syria. Syrians and supporters in various countries have demonstrated outside Russian consulates and embassies. And some other actions have taken place too, including a minute of silence at a Bolivian workers' meeting.

Aleppo may have fallen, but it won't be forgotten. For years to come, progressive people around the world will draw lessons from what has happened in Aleppo and throughout Syria.

More material about the Syrian uprising and why it deserves support can be found at <http://www.comunistvoice.org/00Syria.html>

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