

A comment on international entertainers' appeal

Does opposition to Starr mean support for Clinton?

Editorial Board
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An international appeal published in Wednesday's edition of the French daily *Le Monde* and signed by 67 artists, actors, writers and intellectuals denounces the political witch-hunt headed up by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr and correctly characterizes his investigation of Clinton's sexual liaison with Monica Lewinsky as an assault on democratic rights.

The signatories include Nobel peace prize winners Desmond Tutu and Jose Ramos Horta, Nobel literature winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel physics laureate Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, film stars Anthony Hopkins, Gerard Depardieu, Emma Thompson, Jeanne Moreau and Vanessa Redgrave, writers William Styron, Guenter Grass and Carlos Fuentes, and violinist Yehudi Menuhin.

The statement, however, equates opposition to the right-wing forces headed up by Starr with political support for Clinton. It goes so far as to denounce Starr for 'seeking to undermine President Clinton's ideas of freedom and his social and liberal program'--which prompts the incredulous response: what ideas of freedom and what social and liberal program?

Clinton is, after all, the leader of world imperialism. He heads a political party that has led the US into virtually every major war this century. Even as the Lewinsky scandal was erupting at the beginning of the year, Clinton was rushing headlong toward a massive air war against Iraq, a military adventure which he called off only with the greatest reluctance. Just a month ago he ordered sneak missile attacks against Afghanistan and Sudan.

His social policy has consisted of the repudiation of the last remnants of social reform, epitomized by the destruction of welfare and massive cuts in food stamps

and other programs for the poor. As for civil liberties, he has championed the death penalty and sponsored sweeping attacks on habeas corpus rights for prisoners and other law-and-order attacks on constitutional protections.

However sincere the motivations of many who signed the statement in *Le Monde*, its characterization of Clinton is false and highly misleading, and its political orientation inimical to the type of struggle that is required to combat the ultra-right elements who have organized the conspiracy against the White House.

The fact that Clinton is the target of the most reactionary elements in the US does not oblige those who oppose these forces to adopt a sentimental attitude toward Clinton, let alone grant him a political amnesty.

Indeed, one cannot understand the current onslaught against Clinton's presidency unless one understands Clinton's own role in the process by which the traditional democratic forms of capitalist rule in America have been eroded to the point that a relatively small number of reactionary zealots can organize a political conspiracy that threatens to topple his administration.

Any notion that Clinton and the Democratic Party somehow represent a bulwark against the Christian fundamentalist forces that largely control the Republican Party is profoundly and dangerously mistaken. Indeed, Clinton's own paralysis and political cowardice in the face of Starr and his political and media allies, and the prostration of the Democratic Party as a whole, underscore what is the central lesson of the political crisis in the US: that the defense of democratic rights cannot be based on the decomposing corpse of liberalism (the bankruptcy of which Clinton

is the foremost representative).

The socialist opposition combats the forces represented by Starr in its own manner and on the basis of its own program. It does not proceed from the personal fate of the incumbent president. Were Clinton the target of a left-wing insurgent movement of the working class, the attitude of the Socialist Equality Party would be far different than its attitude to the present opposition from the right.

The only social force that has a deeply rooted interest in the defense of democratic rights is the working class. The precondition for a struggle against the reactionaries who would carry out a political coup is the complete political independence of the working class from both capitalist parties and all of the political representatives of big business. In the most direct sense, the political crisis in America has shown the necessity for the construction of the Socialist Equality Party as the political means for rallying and uniting the working people in the defense of their social interests and democratic rights.



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