

Letters to the WSWS

7 July 2000

Dear editor,

I generally agree with your analysis of the situation in Zimbabwe. The explosive growth of MDC represented a reaction of large urban masses to the bankrupt policies of the Mugabe regime, its corruption and the general economic stagnation, unemployment and other social ills. In the absence of a socialist alternative the MDC became a battering ram promoting the interests of international capitalism against the national capitalism of ZANU-PF.

However, there is another factor, which the article does not address. Mugabe talks about land distribution as the answer to all problems. The masses of ZANU supporters who attacked the large white-owned farms and demanded land division have illusions in the viability of small-scale family agriculture.

Contemporary capitalist agriculture is both capital intensive and demanding of technical skills, large specialized agribusinesses and infrastructure investments. Farming areas need road and communications networks, farmers need supplies of carefully selected seeds, machinery, irrigation, chemical fertilizers. Farmers themselves must have high-level technical training, business and scientific skills.

With respect to Zimbabwe, I read an article in the *New York Times*, which cited expert calculations that the value of the land of the white-owned farms represented only about a quarter of the total investments needed for export oriented agriculture like tobacco production. Three quarters of the investment must go into the infrastructure: road building, dam construction, machinery and fuel to run it, seed purchases, etc.

Even if the Mugabe regime confiscates these white farms and distributes the fertile land to tens of thousands of peasant families, the end result would be a reversion to primitive Stone Age conditions: one-crop production, exhaustion of the land, hand to mouth existence. We need only to look at the conditions prevailing in the rest of Africa, India, Bangladesh, and so on to see the future of "populist" land distribution programs in a system dominated by world capitalism.

FJK

Boston

29 June 2000

I thoroughly enjoyed the readings that the WSWS had published on your web site. I have always been strictly opposed to American policy in how it deals with other countries. I was unaware of the economic destruction that the IMF had caused during the 1980s in Yugoslavia. NATO's bombing campaign against Milosevic will forever hinder that country's economic recovery and the IMF's stranglehold on the Balkans set the tone for western lending institutions to control the economies of those countries for years to come. I am currently a student in Albany, New York. If you can, please email me back with other web addresses on how the IMF affects economies of developing nations. Once again, thank you for opening my eyes in this matter.

CB

30 June 2000

Yours is one of the very few papers that put people first before the governments or any powerful organisation. Your reporter, Dianne Sturgess, rightly gives importance to the sufferings of civilians in her report. The Tamil doctor describes suffering in war torn Jaffna in the north of Sri Lanka. The doctor's account is the true picture of hopelessness, anger and the sadness of civilians who have no access to anybody except those gun-carrying occupying soldiers as I, myself, witnessed and heard on my two trips to the peninsula in the summers of 1997 and 1999. Their so-called MPs who contested the parliamentary elections from Colombo are not to be seen anywhere in the constituencies they are supposed to represent.

The other two reporters, G. Senaratna and R.M. Dayaratne, on 16 December 1999 also described the feelings and sufferings of Sinhalese civilians who were forcibly settled in the Padaviya and Welioya (formally a Tamil village—Manal Aru) by the previous governments in order to ethnically cleanse Tamils.

The chauvinists use civilians of both communities as pawns in their war to dominate the minorities. Only the children of poor masses are dying in the battlefield while those of the ruling class are in universities and foreign countries. Not a child of any of the 225 MPs, their relatives or Her Excellency the President are in the battlefield.

Unless the international media by following your lead give importance to the atrocities committed in the north and east of Sri Lanka more weapons will be bought with foreign loans to destroy more lives, properties, hospitals, temples and churches. The ethnic problem will never be solved with justice and equal rights to minorities.

Yours sincerely,

SS

Coventry University, UK

30 June 2000

I read your story not long ago about the crumbling infrastructure and the blackout of Detroit. Something similar is happening now in San Bruno/So. San Francisco (just south of San Francisco). Construction crews working on the new BART extension were melting metal, or something like that, and it started a cable fire, now all phones are completely dead to 25,000-30,000 people, including elderly people and hospitals. That's no 911 for any kind of health emergency, or police services. I myself have used 911 to save my life a few years ago from a peanut allergy, hope I don't make any mistakes from now until July 18 (that means the phones are out from June 26 to July 18), when they expect to have service restored. How could this happen? Weren't the lines clearly marked? How could they be that fragile?

Who cares about international/narco terrorists, when one construction accident can take out the phone lines of 30,000 people?

Thanks,

BA

30 June 2000

Dear Editors:

Kudos on Patrick Martin's piece on the *NY Times*'s disgraceful editorial concerning the candidacy of Ralph Nader. This is just the kind of incisive sophisticated analysis that keeps me coming to your essential site day after day.

Thanks!

AN

3 July 2000

Dear Editors,

I would like to make some comments on your article about the young Iranian film director Samira Makhmalbaf concerning "The Digital Revolution and the Future of Cinema" [28/6/00].

I think the fact that Ms. Makhmalbaf is only 20 years old (but very talented and very confident) has to be considered when studying her speech. However the issues she raises are the issues of a serious and mature thinker and so deserve to be treated in a mature way.

She points to external political, financial, and technological controls as having historically stifled the

creative process for the filmmaker. Certainly, Stalinism, Fascism and religious fanaticism and terror, would be examples of such stifling. I think the overall health or otherwise, of the art of filmmaking, or art in general is determined by wider issues than the ones she cites, and therefore technological advance or innovation cannot alone, lead to its ultimate salvation.

Further on in her address, Ms. Makhmalbaf suggests that the technique of current filmmaking and the involvement of so many technicians tends to place the creative skills and the creative freedom of the filmmaker into a subordinate position to the technology. "We still lack the presence of artists, philosophers, sociologists or poets among the filmmakers. Cinema is still in the hands of the technicians," she explains.

Again her own achievements in filmmaking tend to suggest that this may not be a major issue. Judging from the subjects of her films, I am left with the impression that Ms. Makhmalbaf's success as a filmmaker and her current award are the result of her artistic gifts and her ability to reflect and depict real life issues that her audience can warm to.

The recent history of the Internet, e.g., the threat of censorship, the threat to privacy, all documented on the *WSWS*, points not to new technology automatically enhancing democracy, but to a possibility of an opposite tendency developing.

To speak about—political power—financial capital—the concentration of means of production—is to describe parts of the anatomy of a particular type of civil society—capitalist society.

Historically, capitalism knows only one way in which to deal with the increasing disequilibrium of its global markets. That is through the destruction of its own productive forces, i.e., mass closures, mass unemployment and mass poverty and ultimately leading to global conflicts.

If this were allowed to happen art would suffer, along with its latest technology, and its most talented exponents. Let's hope that talented young filmmakers as serious and mature as Ms. Makhmalbaf are able to find their way to the *WSWS*, and hopefully, display the same interest in Marxism, as the *WSWS* justifiably shows is their art.

Yours Sincerely,

AEC

4 July 2000



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