

# Letters on the US elections, Korea and the Middle East crisis

8 November 2000

Dear WSWS:

You folks rock. That's about all I can say. Your article on Bush and drunk driving was right on the money. It's scary how right you are, because it doesn't seem like most people in this country have the political consciousness (yet?) to realize what you are saying.

Also, your article on Nader and globalization ... sometimes I think WSWS is a bit too harsh on Nader, that Nader actually may be light years better than Gore/Bush (that's not saying much). However, you raise a number of valid and interesting points about him, and his views on nationalism are very backwards.

Once again, you remind your readers of the brilliance and foresight of Marx and Marxist thinking: the forces of globalization are not in themselves bad; it is rather the capitalist control of those forces that is ruining our planet and the people of the world. For the first time in human history, we have the capacity to solve many of humanity's material problems, if not all of them. I read in the *New York Times* (I think) that it would cost \$8 billion to feed and give fresh water to all the people of the world, a mere drop in the bucket of the annual global economy, or even Western economies. But it will never happen with capitalists running the world. They would literally rather starve half the planet than relinquish their wealth.

Thanks again for your work; it is much appreciated.

JB

Princeton University

4 November 2000

To the editor,

I'm a Canadian citizen who has been living in Seoul, Korea since 1997.

I was in a hotel room in Bangkok, Thailand watching CNN when I first heard that President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea had been awarded the Noble Peace Prize. It was something that has been anticipated in Korea

ever since the June meeting between leaders of North and South Korea.

Early the next day I flew from Bangkok back to Seoul. On the airplane, I read the editorial in the *Bangkok Post* congratulating President Kim. The editorial held up President Kim as a model for the growth of democracy in Asia.

Unfortunately, President Kim is a poor model. Since coming to power he has done little to bring about true democracy in Korea.

Nominally the period of military dictatorship ended in 1988; however, many of the official and unofficial structures that maintained that dictatorship are still in place. Corruption and abuse of power are still the norms at the top of the social structure and the average Korean citizen does not even enjoy the low level of protection offered by the courts that is common in most western countries.

In theory South Korea is a democracy. In theory South Koreans have rights, but these rights are not enforced by the courts. In actual fact, South Koreans have no rights and precious little democracy.

President Kim's government has made some reforms, but these reforms are mostly whitewash. For example, the law was changed before the last round of legislative elections to allow labor-based parties to run. In the past, labor unions were barred outright from participating in elections. However, according to Korean election law, political parties are only permitted to campaign and collect funds during the six-week official campaign period that occurs once every four years. It's illegal to engage in any party activity outside this period. However, parties already elected to the National Assembly can do fundraising and campaigning continuously by claiming it's part of their duties as a member of the National Assembly. As a result it's virtually impossible to establish a credible labor-based

party, or a party representing any interest or point of view that already does not exist within the National Assembly. It's hardly a democratic system.

More recent Kim Dae Jung's administration has banned the Dalai Lama of Tibet, also a Nobel Laureate, from South Korea. The Dalai Lama had been invited to Korea by a group of religious and social organizations in his capacity as a spiritual leader. China has pressured South Korea not to allow the Dalai Lama access to that country.

The Dalai Lama is hardly a progressive or democratic figure, but by refusing him an entrance visa, the government of Kim Dae Jung is stamping on one of the most basic democratic rights: the right of free association. In this instance, the Dalai Lama presents no threat to Korea, which is agreed to by all parties, but the government of Noble Laureate Kim Dae Jung feels that not embarrassing the Stalinist leaders of China is more important than the democratic right of free association.

Such a cowardly act is hardly worthy someone who claims to be democratic leader.

AB

Seoul, Korea

4 November 2000

Dear WWS

An excellent article clarifying the reasons why this so-called "peace process" never reaches a conclusion. How can Israel expect any peace while maintaining a regime of apartheid over the Palestinians?

A related article titled "Second cease-fire attempt points to growing divisions within Israeli ruling circles" clearly presents the right background information to understand the reasons for this last month of brutal Israeli military action.

Thanks.

DY

4 November 2000



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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