

Letters to the WSWS

23 May 2001

Dear Editors,

Terry Cook's article [15/5/01] about the outright reactionary role being played by the union bureaucracy, and the effect it has had on declining union membership, especially among younger workers, was excellent. It follows on from his article [21/2/01] about the ETU leadership demanding an annual service fee for non-union members.

I can recall listening to these developments [service fees for non-union members] on the radio in early February this year and thinking: this is a good idea because it means that those who benefit from other workers' battles should at least have to contribute financially to any benefits won by union members.

However, there is nothing like a Marxist analysis to reveal the difference between appearance and essence. So, as the article traced the historical reasons for the desertion of so many thousands of workers from the unions it was apparent that this latest push by the bureaucracy had nothing in common with the old "closed shop policy" that was used with great effect by many workers in a previous era. This latest article adds to the understanding of these reactionary trends within the union bureaucracy.

While I am on the subject of recent articles appearing on the WSWS web site, Noel Holt's article [14/5/01] "Australian call centres—sweatshops of the electronic age" was also full of detail and compelling analysis.

Yours sincerely,

AC

16 May 2001

You did it again! Your article clearly indicated why Bush is so actively engaged in selling arms to Taiwan, and selling the National Missile Defense star wars to the warlords—he stands to profit handsomely...

WY

16 May 2001

Sirs:

I am a diplomat working in Israel. This link presents

the facts and the reality as they are. Congratulations.

Dr. E

9 May 2001

Thank you! I found your site and study it. I hate neo-liberalism and Stalinism equally, so I was very disoriented in modern Russia. Sometimes I was close to complete disappointment in everything. Only my writing (I am a writer, although have not published yet) saved me. Now I am happy that I could read your articles and your site. Especially I would like to say thanks to David Walsh, whose articles about art and socialism are brilliant!

Best regards,

A

14 May 2001

About your reports on the May 1 protests, I would like to make some corrections. The statement that "Some 1.5 million people took part in May Day activities in Sao Paulo, Brazil, under banners condemning the free trade agreement for the Americas. The events paralyzed the northern sections of the city" is not right.

In fact, the rally was organized by Força Sindical (FS), a right-wing union organization, which has been supporting our reactionary governments for the last 10 years. However, people didn't go there to support their policies. The FS transformed the May 1 celebration into a big show with country music and a raffle of flats and cars. While the left-wing CUT made a political demonstration, it only managed to get 20,000 people. It's not surprising that the FS had a greater success in a country in which poverty and inequality are so high.

AF

Belo Horizonte, Brazil

3 May 2001

Dear Mr. Walsh,

I very much appreciated your review of the film *Pollock*, by Ed Harris.

The film's decision to leave out any reference to or

indication of Jackson Pollock's political involvement with the socialist movement in the United States prior to the point when the film opens in 1941, and its strict focus on the painter's tormented psyche, as you say, might not have been strictly intended to conceal these political views, however it does a great disservice to the film's viewers. I myself left the film wondering, "What is wrong with this picture? Is it just that artists are tormented? And do we really need to have this cliché served up yet again, in 1940s Greenwich Village tenements this time, instead of in garrets in Paris?" As a painter myself, I found this especially annoying. Is an artist's messy personal torment really the most interesting thing about him or her? The answer can only be yes, if one's view of an artist is of a being who operates only in the personal realm of his or her subjective unconscious without any reference to the world in which he/she lives. Why is it so inconceivable to us that an artist might be tortured by the victory of Stalinism and the seeming impossibility of communism in any other form, and that *this* might lead him to despair and disillusionment? Why must those feelings instead have to be the result of some unspecified but obviously fraught relationship with the artist's mother who makes several dour and disapproving appearances in the film as if to "explain" Pollock's bad behavior, his upsetting of Thanksgiving dinner tables, his abusive treatment of his wife, and his need to ruin family events with his "egotism?" (That's right, all artists are egotists too, don't forget.) In fact the film goes out of its way to advance this theory that Pollock's problem was an unhappy childhood, compounded by too many brothers, or perhaps some chemical problem (he is also shown needing "medication").

Ed Harris's rendition of Pollock does capture something of the spirit of Jackson Pollock's painting, the rhythm and energy of it. Apparently he studied the film which Pollock is shown having such a hard time making within Harris's own film. But his Pollock is only mood, mostly a bad mood. The film has confounded a man's personal problems with an artist's creative struggles while divorcing both from their historical context. Without knowing of Pollock's socialism (the film could have had flashback scenes of Pollock Senior discussing Eugene Debs with little Jackson on his knee instead of that sourpuss of a mother!), and of the place of American abstract

expressionism within Cold War politics and of the similar self-destructive fates of other key abstract expressionist painters, the film makes no sense.

After your review, however, I am no longer am left wondering "what is wrong with this picture." I understand what has been left out.

Sincerely,

ALP

New York City

30 April 2001



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