

Letters on US war in Afghanistan

2 November 2001

Below we post a selection of recent letters to the WSW.

Re: Patrick Martin's excellent article "Political war rages over Bush military strategy". It has become apparent that Mr. Powell is once again being set up as the "fall guy." Just like the Gulf War, the Hard Right will have a convenient scapegoat if their agenda of a full-scale regional war fails to develop. You have to hand it to Mr. Powell, he knows his role.

RBH

Calgary

1 November 2001

Interesting how Blair yesterday came across as the fanatic—whose zeal for war needed to be restrained and held in check by the Syrian leader, Assad, who was mature, calm and sober in his reasoning, appeared to have a much better grasp of the world situation, a stronger appreciation of the political complexities involved in the use of the word terrorism, and much greater sensitivity towards the global instability that is being thrust onto the world by the current UK/US military adventure...

SR

1 November 2001

Dear Author!

Thank you for a great article. I have just finished reading Ahmed Rashid's very insightful book on the Taliban, oil and Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian Republics, and find it extremely chilling to find out that the CIA along with its buddies: the Saudi Intelligence and the ISI of Pakistan, helped put them there in the first place.

My ex-husband (an American citizen, living here in Norway) is presently married to a woman whose father lived and worked in the Pashtun area around the '70s-'80s. He spoke the language of the area, as well as being familiar with the countryside, having traveled extensively in that area. He also held a doctorate in Islamic studies. Towards the end of the '70s he was approached by "representatives" of the CIA, who were trying to get as much information about the people of the area, etc. (Already by that time the CIA was thinking of setting up military training camps in the area.) He advised them at all costs not to give any such instructions to radical Islamists, because that would surely end in a catastrophe for the whole area sooner or later. This advice was ignored, and now we see the result.

I believe that it is high time the American people are allowed to know how big a part their own government, along with the oil companies and the various secret service organizations of allied countries, has played in setting up "the terrorist networks" they are now setting out to destroy.

One of USA's closest allies, or buddies in crime, for the past 30 years is Saudi Arabia. That country has been practicing apartheid on women for the last two centuries, and it doesn't look as if it has any qualms about its doings, on the contrary. Saudi Arabia is systematically trying to export Wahabbi (a fairly extreme form of Islam by almost anybody's standards), even to the USA itself. And it's going on unchecked. Unchecked by individuals, by the international community, and even by the UN itself. Maybe the reason is that the economic community is largely run by men, even in western societies, and that these selfsame men would actually prefer a form of Wahabbism in their own countries.

I would really like to know. Anyway, thanks again for your brilliant

article.

AG

Norway

31 October 2001

To the Editors;

If terrorism is the attempt to "coerce or intimidate a civilian population," or use coercion or intimidation to affect the policies of a government, as the Patriot Act implies, then the United States government and its big business backers remain the foremost proponents of terrorism in the world today.

The domestic economy terrorizes people into submission, and thereby enforces a set of social relations we wouldn't otherwise endure. The national security state bombs and boycotts the rest of the world into confusion, and crows about its splendor and human dignity.

The really fascinating part to me is that when the Soviet Union entertained similar policies decades ago, it was called an evil empire. But what would we call the state that refuses an open discussion of its own actions? Evil compounded? No, let's call the owners of this country what they are. Terrorists. And let's call them out before they take us out.

MP

31 October 2001

US public opinion, unfortunately, appears to be afflicted by tunnel vision. Flags are flying and everyone is wearing a red, white and blue lapel pin. Please God, let this not mean that these folks are so misled that they expect the bombing of Afghanistan to erase the condition that brought down the twin towers. Ask the wounded and orphaned children of Afghanistan to define "terror."

Is this all a smokescreen for the November meetings of the WTO in Qatar? America's economy was faltering before September 11. Did the WTO expect protest in Washington DC? Is protest even possible in Qatar? How many American and British warships are within striking distance of Qatar?

Anti-terrorism? How will it affect the average American? What happened to the "free press"?

Sincerely,

VS

31 October 2001

As a left-leaning democratic socialist I often turn to your site for a clear and usually unbiased account of world news. While most of the time I agree with your opinions, I feel you are in error regarding the war in Afghanistan.

Yes, Mr. Bush may not be handling it as well as possible, and yes, maybe we did not exhaust all diplomatic measures before military action. But on September 11 I witnessed over 5,000 of my countrymen die for no good reason. Yes, I disagree with the vast amount of US policy. Yes, I feel we exploit other countries in an imperialistic fashion. But these people did nothing to deserve this. American and foreign intellectuals have indirectly been trying to justify these acts. Their reasoning and ignorant opinions make me sick. Are we supposed to let people get away with mass murder just because we have gone too far in our pursuit for oil?

I think it would help if we all gained some perspective. This act of war (and yes, that is what it is) cannot go unpunished. It's not revenge if you

are seeking justice. Justice may be a fine line and a hard thing to define, but it must always be sought out; for our sake and that of future generations.

NL
30 October 2001

I'd like to commend you for being a reliable source of what is happening in Afghanistan. I must admit, though, that you may not be perfectly without some element of bias, but you give a reader something to think about. It sickens me to listen to blatantly biased reporting.

Keep it that way,

MS
Africa
30 October 2001

Greetings from Boston. I just wanted to say I appreciate your articles and insights. I check quite a few news sites each week trying to keep up on this conflagration and yours provides information others do not.

This Central Asia mess is difficult to put out of one's mind. It could so easily expand to a global war of East vs. West. Anyhow, one angle I have not read much coverage on for the Bush administration is the blatant confusion of church and state that was going on well before 9-11-01. "God Bless America" stench fills the airwaves and is pasted everywhere like an advertisement. Something tells me the Taliban aren't the only fundamentalists involved in this "battle of good versus evil."

Bush has been in a Bible study since the late 1970s. Apparently he saw how well it worked for "born again" Jimmy Carter. Ashcroft is a devout Pentecostal. Almost immediately after GW's installation by the court the military brass threw a "prayer breakfast," apparently to celebrate America's return to God or some such gibberish.

I grew up a minister's son in the Bible belt and attended a "Christian college" in the northeast. Few people up here in the land of the Boston Brahmins or elsewhere seem to grasp the dangerous beliefs of this 80,000,000-strong subculture. Conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists believe that at any moment Jesus will return to wage war against the wicked, i.e., all non-Christians, especially "liberals." But before this happens a period of great turmoil, the Tribulation, will envelop the entire planet. Wars, earthquakes, environmental devastation—it's all part of God's wonderful plan and they are key players in that plan.

When I consider that many individuals in the current administration share similar beliefs—belief in the imminent return of Christ is a pillar of their subculture—it makes me a little uneasy. If George W. Bush truly does believe his own pious rhetoric about "fighting the evildoers," then is he significantly different than those who call for jihad against America?

I would offer up the possibility that there could be more than just capitalist motivations at work in the Central Asia mess. It might not simply be about oil. The evangelical church in America has taught for decades that Israel will be a battleground between the American/Christian pro-Israel forces of goodness and the east Asian nations. Check out the best-selling nonfiction book of the entire 1970s—the *Late Great Planet Earth*, by Hal Lindsey. A primer on their apocalyptic yearnings.

Who knows, maybe God will do us all a favor and Rapture people like them off this planet. That's what they want anyway.

Cordially,
BB
30 October 2001
Hi,

Great site! I love reading the news and I am concerned about the media control of the war in Australia, and in regard to [boxer Anthony] Mundine—it seems my own theory is right (unfortunately) that much of western media has fallen into censorship for patriotism, and that we now have a new McCarthyism!

Regards,
PC

Western Australia
20 October 2001

Re: "Media witch hunt against Australian boxer for opposing US war," I applaud your journalistic integrity in researching and printing this informative piece. I encourage you to continue to show such courage. I am e-mailing it to friends.

JS
Canada
29 October 2001

Are we living in the American "Fatherland" or what? No wonder I don't hear the "other side" on talk radio very often. And when you do, they get berated, by and large. It's odd considering a larger percentage of people I know do not want to send their sons because the real questions about oil aren't being answered.

CM
29 October 2001

As an African American living in the United States, I am especially concerned with the methods used by the national media to make it appear that all African Americans favor the current US "war" in Afghanistan. I am an African American. I do not support the Bush administration.

Putting aside those black functionaries who represent the Republican establishment, and who—based on appearances—march to the drumbeat of America's reactionaries, my concerns are directed towards public events such as football, and baseball games where African-American participants and spectators appear on our home TV sets, but who may not know the sinister purposes of those behind the cameras, or may not even know they are being photographed for a national audience.

At public events—it seems—techniques are employed to make it appear that African Americans are a united group, and that we support the killing in Afghanistan. True, black Americans are united in our sympathy for those killed at the WTC/Pentagon assault. We are not united in the acceptance of the administration's spin, and/or the resulting attacks on civilians who are—no doubt—totally innocent.

One of the methods the media is using to make it appear that we support Bush is to have a black athlete carry a flag before a national audience. Another method used by sponsors and featured by the media is to employ black entertainers such as Ray Charles. Still another technique is to have cameras, which, by the way, show that every athlete's uniform has the national emblem sewn on it, single out and photograph an African-American spectator, *one of the few who can afford to patronize public games*, as he or she sings "God Bless America."

The specific goal of the media is to demonstrate, incorrectly, that minorities are an integral element united with all Americans in support of this "war." Neither is true. African Americans have not been fully integrated into American society. Americans, in general, are not united behind the Bush administration. But in broader terms, the media seems to want to use African Americans in a way that makes it appear that any white American who questions the administration's policy is somehow unpatriotic. "Look, liberals..." the media seems to be saying, "even Black folks support this war."

I, personally, have not spoken with a single African American who supports the current "war." (We know, for example, that the both Bush and Cheney have more than a passing personal and financial interest in the oil reserves in that region.) Blacks say they fear that Afghanistan will be another Vietnam. It was about 40 years ago, when George W evaded the draft, and joined the Texas National Guard. While Bush was hiding, John Kennedy's secretary of defense, Robert McNamara, deployed underprivileged African-American youth to Vietnam, and there we were wounded and died at a far higher percentage than our white counterparts.

Indeed, African Americans have good reason to question military actions taken by the Bush administration. After all, it was our votes Republicans stole so that he could become the "President of the United

States.”

JG

Scottsdale, Arizona

29 October 2001

Jerry White’s article [“US postal workers denounce government negligence in anthrax attacks”] describes management’s attitude toward its employees as one of “callousness.” With 14 years as a letter carrier for the United States Post Office, I and many of my fellow employees, would unreservedly add arrogance and hostility. In following the news, the discussions with the carriers and clerks in my office and the information (what little) we get from management the feeling I am left with is that what is scarier than anthrax contamination is the attitude of the United States Postal Service toward its employees. I find it very hard to accept that the Post Office and the Centers for Disease Control could not have intervened more aggressively in the Brentwood office to determine whether there was “evidence” for concern. While they point their finger at the CDC for advising them to do nothing, I would not put it past postal management to have done some private arm-twisting in order to produce that advice. Why would the Post Office prefer the advice that there is no danger of anthrax contamination within the mail processing system? Facing a huge deficit and declining revenue, anything that might deter use of the mail has to be avoided. I would have to say that the lives of the two postal workers were sacrificed on the alter of revenue protection.

The CDC is one of the world’s leading scientific medical research institutions. Within that field there are long-standing and scrupulously followed procedures for determining the extent of and containment of any outbreak of illnesses. That a sealed envelope cannot leak anthrax spores, that there is a low probability of transmission or that it is only cutaneous infections which are easily treated are suspect excuses. But the contention that this is an entirely new situation in which the CDC is “learning as it is going” (and the media’s unquestioning acceptance of this excuse) is particularly outrageous. The procedures that the CDC needed to follow to have prevented the deaths of two postal workers were time-honored conventions of containment and testing for extent, the same exact procedure it followed in Tom Daschle’s and Tom Brokaw’s office. That the government, the Post Office, and the CDC refused to follow these procedures for ordinary postal workers makes a mockery of all their well-publicized statements (with a background chorus of all the union presidents) of how seriously they are taking this danger!

HP

Portland, OR

29 October 2001



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact