

Letters from our readers

11 July 2003

Below we post a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On "The Wall Street Journal and the occupation of Iraq"

Dear Editor,

In a certain sense, the *Wall Street Journal* is correct. The war in Iraq is not over, but has entered a new phase. One of the historical parallels that this suggests is that of the Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the previous century.

Similarly to the US-led aggression against Iraq, the war against the Transvaal and Orange Free State Boer republics was launched on false pretenses, the real aims being cloaked in the loftiest of moral principles. The official rationale, for presentation to the British public, was that of protecting the rights of *uitlanders* (foreigners) in the Republics, but the real reason was the need to lay hands on the recently discovered Transvaal gold. The president of the Transvaal republic, the deeply backward Paul Kruger, was demonised in the British press and subjected to pretty much the same treatment as Saddam Hussein. In France and Germany a lot of sympathy for the Boer cause was generated by their respective presses. Much of this emanated from inter-imperialist rivalry, but there was also a strong feeling of genuine outrage against the British aggression towards the Boer republics. Many ordinary Germans, French, Irish, Americans and other nationals traveled to South Africa to fight alongside the Boers (one of the more notable characters being the brother of Vincent van Gogh).

Despite some early setbacks, the British army, by virtue of numbers and superior firepower, soon came to dominate conventional battles. The Boer army rapidly adapted to the situation and turned to guerrilla tactics. Thus the British occupying forces were in control of the capitals, main towns and transport routes in both republics and had captured several significant Boer leaders but were still at war with an elusive enemy. Again, this situation parallels that in Iraq.

At this point the British military, under Kitchener, began imprisoning women and children. Seen as a vital component of Boer resistance to British occupation, farmsteads were destroyed, livestock slaughtered, crops set ablaze and women, children and black labourers were forced into large concentration camps. Rimmington's Tigers, a force comprised of colonists from Natal and the Cape of Good Hope, were tasked with the clearing of Boer farms. They became notorious for looting, mass rapes and general mayhem. All told, one third of Boer women perished in the concentration camps.

As the WSWs has pointed out, the US is not fighting a handful of fanatics—they are sitting on the cusp of a growing popular resistance to colonial occupation. War against this omnipresent but elusive enemy will inevitably lead the US down the same road as the British in South Africa; namely towards the mass repression and detention of Iraqi civilians.

The *WSJ* does not balk at this thought. Happily unaware of the bitter lessons of history, they urge the US towards the precipice.

Yours,

EG

South Africa

10 July 2003

It is most heartening to see that you are calling the misinformation to which we have been subjected by this administration by the correct label of LIES. We have not been the recipients of an occasional exaggeration as some wish to claim. Countless times top government personnel through prime time TV speeches and newspaper front-page presentations have been conning the public with an abundance of untrue statements, as shown in your summary.

Your list of WMD false claims is certainly comprehensive but another example came to mind in which Colin Powell, addressing the UN, made special mention of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles supposedly capable of spreading chemical or biological weapons from the air. Later, nothing with such capabilities was found in the Iraqi arsenal.

Completely beyond my imagination was the very positive statement made by Bush during his recent visit to Europe, that two truck trailers found were proof that Iraq possessed mobile laboratories capable of producing WMD. With every prior US/UK claim of having found the smoking gun proven wrong, why would anyone be so foolhardy to broadcast such a conclusion to the world when the investigating experts were still undecided? Not only is US credibility in question by these actions, it makes this country the laughing stock of the world when nothing meaningful matches the prior billing.

Some of those major nations that declined to join the coalition must have reviewed their own intelligence data banks and failed to find information supporting the Bush claims. With the wisdom of maturity they declined to provide support. Now the US/UK coalition is faced with the long term positioning of troops and monumental costs in order to restore Iraq to normality, whilst the rest of the world quite naturally is

reluctant to share in the restoration burden which they could see as a prospect from the outset.

Having suffered the ignominy of allowing Osama bin Laden to escape when his capture should have been made top priority at the commencement of the invasion of Afghanistan, how any of the military planners let the same thing happen a second time with Saddam Hussein is beyond my comprehension. Oddly enough, Bush recently said Saddam was no longer a threat, then put out a \$25 million reward for information leading to his capture!

Perhaps the most difficult thing to accept is that Bush claims to be a practicing Christian, yet his venture into Iraq has resulted in the death of at least 3,000 to 4,000 civilians according to conservative survey tallies. That country has a population roughly one-tenth the USA, yet it does not seem to touch the conscience of our leader that proportionally speaking what the States has done to innocent Iraqis is 10 times as devastating as the brutal terrorist attacks here on 9/11. The whole saga you described fills this senior citizen with disgust, plus a reinforced distrust of anything masterminded by the present day administration.

KR

8 July 2003

Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for your analysis of the American "war on terrorism" that was launched on Afghanistan as its first target. There is plenty to say about this war, its real causes, who benefits from it, etc.

As a resident of a Middle Eastern country, I think that some important issues must be raised. Islamic fundamentalism was created by the efforts of US leaders and the CIA. They were used to spearhead the imperialist drive to weaken the leftist forces in Islamic countries. They were allies against the Arab communist movement, which was attacked as groups of "infidels." The residents of the White House supported the Afghan "mujahedin" against the Soviet invasion and the regime they supported. They were presented as "freedom fighters" according to the American media. The propaganda of imperialism portrayed the militants as defending their culture and society against the communist threat.

The false verbal claims of US leaders, calling for democracy in my region, mean only that the masses must embrace American values and way of life. Americans are not interested in making my people choose their leaders or to have the final word about their destiny.

Fundamentalism is also a result of the weak socialist forces and the prevailing Stalinist tactics of the "official" communist parties. Only the workers revolutionary movement can drive reactionary fundamentalism back by offering a real way out the current situation, not an imaginary one.

MM

7 July 2003

On "Bush administration divided over intervention in Liberia"

Don't forget Liberia is a hop and a skip away from the oil rich Gulf of Guinea and the oil producing states that operate there. Toss in the port and basing potentials and the rationale for intervention is clear. You don't seriously think there is anything humanitarian about a US intervention, do you?

IT

7 July 2003

On "US: State budget cuts fuel social crisis"

In despair I wrack my brain to discover what creates creatures like Grover Norquist, whom you quote as saying "I hope a state goes bankrupt." From under what pile of steaming excrement do these beings crawl? They display less evidence of humanity than Colin Powell showed for WMD in Iraq. And what, pray, are the "serious decisions" that, according to this nematode, need to be made? Throwing immigrants into concentration camps? Letting people who can't pay for medical care die? Allowing the population to rediscover the ancient joys of illiteracy? You know the country is in trouble when they can't even support the population of the prison system! I mean, with all of the draconian laws that have enabled that population to experience steady growth (like a good stock portfolio), is this then the bursting bubble of Incarceration.com?

I simply cannot get inside the minds of people like Norquist and find a connection to any quality resembling conscience, compassion, or a sense of shared identity with other humans. It's as though anyone living outside their gated communities and country clubs has only a surface existence: appearing in two-dimensions only, instead of being perceived as a three-dimensional, flesh and blood, living, sentient member of the same species. I know that such callousness and hatred have existed for millennia, so my belief that evolution has become stuck in a feedback loop is only confirmed by the ravings of Norquist and all the other right-wing fanatics (including especially those ideologues in the Bush administration) who seek power for themselves and their ilk though the world burn.

CZ

San Francisco

10 July 2003

Dear Editor,

We can learn more about the true motives of our state legislators by watching what they do not cut than by what they cut. They will not touch prisons, roads, golf courses, water-sports, convention center construction, sky boxes, urban sprawl or anything else that the ruling elite finds important or uses to suppress the poor.

PK

10 July 2003



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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