Letters from our readers

1 August 2003

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

I just finished reading your book Desert Slaughter about the 1991 Gulf War, and it was well worth my time. I noted many parallels between 1991 and 2003. One of the most striking was the case of General Dugan, who was fired for being too honest with the media. His crime was to blurt out to a crowd of reporters, "That's a nice list of targets [airfields, communications centers, etc.], and I might be able to accept those, but that's not enough. I want to know what is unique about Iraq. What is unique about Iraqi culture that they put very high value on? What is it that psychologically would make an impact on the population and the regime in Iraq?"

Anyone who reads these words will immediately think of the destruction of the Iraq National Museum, and with it much of Iraq's heritage. The Pentagon certainly didn't forget Dugan's words: they might have replaced the General, but not the policies he espoused.

The parallels continue much further. I found it notable that the Syrian regime had contributed 20,000 troops to the war effort in 1991, whereas that country is now being placed under pressure for allegedly hiding WMD. The governments that signed on to the current "coalition of the willing" should take note. When it comes to WMD, I also learned that in 1991 there were calls within the US establishment for the use of nuclear weapons and neutron bombs. Even when limited to conventional weapons the death toll turned out to be about 100 to 10,000 dead, revealing that the desired result, as with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would only have been to intimidate Washington's rivals.

The Bush I administration backed off criticizing Gorbachev for his crackdown in the Baltic States, just as the Bush II administration backed off criticizing Russian repression in Chechnya in return for support in the "war on terror." Human rights are consistently used as nothing more than a bargaining chip. Lastly, planning for the 1991 war had begun well before the public was made aware of any "crisis," just as the plans for a war against Afghanistan were sitting on Bush's desk waiting to be signed in the days before the September 11 attacks. Nothing in politics happens by accident.

It's too bad this book can't be promoted as relentlessly as Ann Coulter's latest screed, although the corporate controlled press would never do the public the favor. Apologists claim that they are simply giving people what they want, even if it only amounts to scandals, but if that were truly the case then I am confident that your book would find a broad audience. The only scandals that the "free press" has any interest in involve bizarre capers such as those about a President's sex life, while fundamental questions of democracy and executive abuse of power are never addressed, much less are their underpinnings analyzed. Thankfully, the WSWS is filling the void.

RG

31 July 2003

Enjoyed your article "U.S. launched air war against Iraq in 2002". This does not surprise me although this is the first time I have been aware of this. I don't believe we will have an independent commission to look into the war with Iraq. I don't believe the White House will allow it. The lies the White House told are an unprecedented deception.

President Lyndon Johnson's distortions of the Vietnam War forced him to stand down from re-election. Also, President Nixon's false statements about Watergate forced his resignation. Now we have a president who really started the war in 2002 and everything was based on a lie.

I am 70 years old and he has taken this great nation of mine into a preemptive war—with no thought about the broader consequences: all the innocent civilians killed and our troops and the Iraqi troops killed; the harsh judgment of history; our diplomacy that has long served our country; our trashing of our allies; telling the UN it didn't matter. We have such great history with France and Germany and all of Old Europe. Now it's all gone. My only hope is that the moral integrity of the British government will stay the course with Blair and ask him to stand down. Bush is handcuffed to Blair, so if Blair falls so goes Bush.

I am sad to say our press and our media will never keep Bush's feet to the fire, and this must happen. No president of the United States can twist the truth, and he cannot stand above the law. If this happens, it will be felt for generations to come.

Thank you for your paper. I read it online and it's wonderful. Please keep writing.

VJ

Gainesville, Florida

24 July 2003

Keep up the good work—it is so hard to find anyone reporting anything about Iraq other than the usual western diet of bullshit in the press and TV.

After reading "America's maimed come home from Iraq" it makes me so sad that the working class youth of the USA are still joining the military and dying for what they believe is a just cause when we all know that it is about evil men and their evil agenda—how do they sleep at night?

Hopefully, with people like yourselves and the Internet we can make a difference over the next few years.

Regards,

SC

30 July 2003

On "Iraqi Communist Party joins Washington's puppet administration in Baghdad"

I read a communiqué from the ICP posted on net on July 22nd, in which they announced they were joining the governing council, and was left wondering how anyone could think they were a communist organization in anything but name. It starts out by stressing that the urgent tasks of the moment are: "ensuring security and stability, normalizing the situation, securing public and municipal services, employment and means of living for millions of citizens, as well as preparing a draft constitution and providing the prerequisites for a free and fair elections under UN supervision, and for entering into negotiations with the occupying powers about the presence of their troops in our country, and putting an end to it."

These are the urgent tasks of the ICP. Ensuring security is all fine and good, but whose security do they want to ensure? The Iraqi masses or is it the transnational corporations, US military forces and the new Iraqi ruling class? They want to normalize the situation. Which situation is that? The colonial situation? They want to secure public and municipal services, an admirable goal, but why do they not address the fact that they should

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already be secured, or the reason they are lacking in the first place? Employment and means of living for millions of citizens...hmmmm...millions of citizens who are unemployed and have no means of living...this sounds like a revolutionary crisis to me, but, no, wait, they want to prepare a draft constitution, and provide the prerequisites of free and fair elections, while millions are unemployed and starving without basic public services, like clean water. And, who is to supervise these free and fair elections? Why, the UN of course, that irrelevant body that failed to rein in the colonization of Iraq, that provided cover for US spying missions in Iraq in the past, etc., etc. And, the final "urgent task" is to enter into negotiations with the US about their military presence in Iraq. Yes, I see now...if we sit down at the table with the representatives of the ruling classes, we can do away with all this passé class struggle nonsense and learn to be friends.

As the opportunistic social democratic parties of the last century promulgated the idea of communism through reformist stages, so the ICP believes that they can rid themselves of the imperialist yoke through: "a developing process aiming to widen the authorities of the Council, so as to bring it closer to accomplishing the process of transition and establishing the independent Iraqi national government, that will emerge from legitimate general elections."

First of all, the authority of the Council will only widen if the US allows it, and it will only do so if it finds that to be in its own interests, and those interests are diametrically opposed to the interests of the Iraqi working class. Secondly, by merely perusing the historical record of past US interventions/invasions, we see that the US ruling class ensures that their candidate is put in charge, no matter the outcome of any election. To propagate the belief that anything resembling a legitimate or fair election will take place in Iraq in the next few years is the worst kind of betrayal of the working class.

Speaking of which, there is—other than the phrase about providing employment—no mention of the working class or their role in putting pressure on the new Governing Council, or the US colonial power in Iraq.

At the end of the communiqué, they leave no doubt as to their true aims: "our Party does not mean at all a retreat from its call for and striving to speed up the formation of the sovereign Iraqi national government, and establishing a unified democratic and federal Iraq."

Yes, now that the state machine has been smashed, the call is not to the working class to throw out the imperialists and rebuild a socialist society, but, rather, to obsequiously scrape before the might of the US military and the transnational corporations which they represent, in the hopes that the ICP may, one day, be a minor partner of the new Iraqi bourgeoisie. This kind of rank opportunistic pandering at this crucial juncture in Iraq is sickening, especially considering the level of misery the Iraqi working classes are suffering at the present time.

HR

30 July 2003

I found your site only this year but have read it daily since. It provides analysis of world events from the view of their effects on workers worldwide, which I feel is most important. The past 23 years in America have felt like a descent into fascism. Since 9-11-01, I often feel like I'm in Germany in the 1930s. I must admit that given the power of current media technology in the hands of capitalists, the degradation of political discourse and the erosion of education in the US, I feel pessimistic about the future. I see only more barbarism, greed and war for raw materials. I've thought for years now that what is needed is not a US labor movement, but an international labor movement. Sadly, the capitalists have proven over and over again that they are willing to slaughter whole populations to maintain their advantage. Discussing politics in Florida can prove detrimental to one's social, employment and even physical health. I feel very afraid in my own home country and I don't like it.

Thanks for being there.

SP

22 July 2003

On "Pentagon scheme for a futures market in terror"

My wife visits your web site every day and prints out the stories that will be of interest to me. She asked me to write about the story that came out yesterday that an office in the Pentagon had proposed to establish and operate a betting service—where people could wager on the probability of selected terrorist and/or military events.

This is not the standard grim Infantry humor—"...if you die first, the rest of us have decided how to split up your gear..."

It was not believable to me that the military itself would propose to take bets on the lives of other soldiers and also civilians! I told my wife I think you may have misunderstood—maybe they are monitoring the odds posted by some sick Las Vegas bookmaker.

This is a new low in depravity. But maybe the Bush regime figures they'll sucker in a large number of bets—and then simply issue the orders to make it come out they way want....

What's next?? Have the government take over the drug trade so they add that to the budget and then give the rich even bigger tax breaks?

WL

30 July 2003

On "Recall election for California governor set for October 7" *and* "California Republicans propose drastic cuts in social spending"

The California budget cut that ends payments to blind people to provide food for their guide dogs is particularly insidious.

I have a friend who, midway through high school, gradually lost her eyesight. After unsuccessful surgeries to try and preserve her vision, she was told to start learning Braille. Instead of completing high school, she focused on adapting to her blindness. She needed to learn how to dress herself appropriately, cross streets safely, and utilize public transportation. To become an independent young woman, she needed to learn to cook for herself, shop for necessities, and protect herself from harm.

Socially, she encountered people ranging from overly helpful to entirely insensitive. The emotional impact of losing your eyesight leads some individuals into depression, denial, or anger. Others see this as a welcome challenge, special gift, or minor inconvenience. My friend, always the optimist, employed humor generously. She made many friends.

Her closest animal friend and family member was her guide dog.

Today, she and her guide dog live in a Section 8 apartment in Southern California. She receives federal Social Security disability income (SSI).

Far from being the lazy half-wit reactionary ideologues would paint her to be, she spends time studying for the GED (high school equivalency), attending an adult school for the blind, and researching junior colleges. She also spends a good deal of time waiting for and riding buses, relying on often unreliable public or private transit services, or calling on family and friends to get her places. Under such conditions, it's virtually impossible for her to work even a part-time job.

I shudder to think of how many tax-deductible meals the big business political parties get. Meanwhile, this lady's guide dog must beg for some kibbles.

CK

28 July 2003

On "Australian unions grovel before rightwing media campaign"

Sir or Madam,

My, my, my, how things have changed? Yea right. It is funny how it took me 50 years of working life to work out that most unions are just another extension of workplace management (just like the Labor Party). I have seen most of them turn to jelly over the years. The men that originally organized the labor movement are turning over in their graves. At least the right wing admit they are there to screw you over.

A case in point: I have been on a disability pension for some time and work a few hours a week so that I can afford luxuries like food and

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clothes. The firm I work for makes Tony Abbot and John Howard look like social workers. I rang up the Perth Branch of the A.W.U. and explained the situation (I might add this was not for me but the guys who work there full time and are getting screwed to the max). The union took all of my details and promised me we could get together and try and sort it out without risking the jobs of the men. This was four months ago, and I have not heard a word. So what's new?

Some time ago, the Maritime Union was being screwed over by the then Reith government. I felt so incensed I joined the picket lines at the wharves of Fremantle and was like many others prepared to be arrested or heaven forbid possibly bashed by the police for what I believed in. I asked the local organizer if I could join the union to give myself some protection in the above scenario. After spending a total of approximately five nights of picketing I was more or less told to go and get stuffed. The union was only for the old boys' club.

The left in this country is finished—we will all have to suffer the conservatives for many years to come, and I will back that up with a bet with anyone. All of this is because of the individuals who are running the current Labor Party and union movement. It was really confirmed for me some months ago when I attended a wedding. A well-known Labor senator, now retired from Perth, was there. He said, "The Greens and the lefties are the ones keeping us out of power." How strange coming from a man who is supposed to represent the working class. Need I say more: the union movement and the Labor Party can kiss off.

Regards,
PS
30 July 2003

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