

# Letters from our readers

4 October 2003

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

*On "Peter Camejo and the Greens bid for 'respectability' in California recall campaign"*

Dear Sir,

Thank you for producing such an insightful piece on the Greens and Camejo. After foundering as a socialist within the Green party, I left this year and am seeking to develop a Marxist-based community-labor alliance in my region. You may have seen a letter I emailed earlier regarding Camejo's red-baiting me in a public forum of almost 100 people. He is a shadow of his former political self. Thanks again and best wishes in your work on the WSW.

Solidarity,

DM

1 October 2003

We should never have invaded Iraq in the first place, and what money is needed should be out of the Bushes' pockets, as well as Cheney and the others who got us into this mess, for the want of power, money, and the control of the oil. Bring our troops home and let the Iraqis control their own oil and country. If there were no oil in the world, we would find another way to produce fuel.

ME

30 September 2003

*On "CIA recruiting Saddam's secret police"*

The US did the same thing in Korea, which already had a socialist type government ready to be put in place following the defeat of the Japanese at the end of WW II. The Japanese, as you may or may not know, occupied Korea from 1905 to 1945, in a brutal fashion that would make the US actions pale by comparison.

When the war was over, the US obtained law and order by employing the Japanese secret police and having them hunt down anyone who wasn't with the US agenda. The result was the deaths of thousands of socialists and others of that bent.

Actually, if one looks at US foreign actions we have a pattern of this kind of thing, shamefully.

Regards,

RC

26 September 2003

*On "US: Millions still without power a week after Hurricane Isabel"*

No power, no patience.... Thank you for covering the

hardships that we have experienced due to lack of socialist policies in the wake of Hurricane Isabel. We are appalled by the lack of response on the state and federal level. I am more convinced after this experience that the policies that you promote are the last hope for this planet and pledge to monetarily support more than I have in the past.

Thanks so much to the hardworking folks at WSW!

P

25 September 2003

Hello,

I live in Richmond, Virginia in a neighborhood known as Oregon Hill. We are Dominion Power's closest neighbor. I can walk a few blocks and see Dominion Power's headquarters on the James River. We are a mostly working class neighborhood. As a neighborhood we fought against Dominion Power when they decided to move next to us. They put their headquarters in a floodplain and built offices that block our view of the river. Almost all of the homes in Oregon Hill still have no power. I appreciate your article. I forwarded it to the neighborhood email list. We have previously discussed the possibility of getting together as a neighborhood and to try to figure out a way to set up independent renewable energy power in order to be independent from our rude neighbor.

TB

25 September 2003

*On "Friedman of the Times declares war on France"*

Dear Editor,

Can someone please explain how in the world Mr. Friedman has achieved *three* Pulitzer prizes? I have a lot of newfound respect for Bill Vann's concise and accurate beatings of Mr. Friedman's "lies."

In my mind, Mr. Friedman's real failure as a journalist is not only based on clear evidence that the apparent sole purpose of his columns is to push his own narrow-minded, pro-conservative, anti-Muslim agenda, but also expose his extremely weak and continual attempts to rationalize the Bush administration's actions waging the war in Iraq as being beneficial to Americans, which it was not.

Without UN approval, the war in Iraq was a failure from the start, and blaming France is merely Friedman's immature way of expressing his innermost childish frustrations at the current situation. Grow up, Mr. Friedman! Not only does Mr. Friedman come across in his column as a muddled thinker, but his writings are clearly demonstrative of his undeserving self-

importance as well.

EHW

25 September 2003

Dear WWS,

In light of the corporate media's current demonstration of its ability to manufacture the public's perception of reality, Leni Riefenstahl's appearance in the press could not be more timely. For instance, a recent poll produced the deplorable result that nearly 70 percent of the American public thinks Iraq had a role in the September 11 attacks, despite there being no evidence to this effect. The corporate news outlets have made no serious effort to correct this misconception, indicating that it is deliberate.

Stefan Steinberg's article, "Leni Riefenstahl—propagandist for the Third Reich," was tremendously informative in comparison to nearly all commentary in the English-speaking corporate press. Although such pieces acknowledged Riefenstahl's wrongdoing, most pulled their punches and shied away from directly confronting the issues raised by her figure. I didn't get the impression that many of these articles were sufficiently critical of the Third Reich's accomplice, a seemingly easy target. The *New York Times* gave her as much leeway as to write: "Whether out of vanity or naïveté, Ms. Riefenstahl may well have believed that her artistic independence was never compromised, that she did not 'sell' her talents to the Nazis who financed *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*."

In most of these articles her biographical details were provided along with her preposterous defenses of herself. Perhaps nothing more needs to be said about Riefenstahl's obvious wrongdoing, but I still sense an incongruity. A few months ago media pundits and even politicians were labeling journalists such as Peter Arnette, and all people who opposed the Iraq war, as "traitors" (under the possible penalty of death). CNN's Christine Amanpour has been recently labeled a "spokeswoman for Al Qaida" on account of her meek attempts at damage control, despite her own cooperation in promoting the Iraq war.

Death or imprisonment to the "traitors," but not to naive Leni? A Nazi accessory receives relatively benign treatment from the spin doctors for the reason that they themselves are fully complicit in the crimes of the Bush administration (i.e., waging an aggressive war, just as the Nazis did). When discussing Riefenstahl, the constant charges of media "bias" and "ideology" suddenly lay quiet, as if they were no longer factors. Otherwise, the public might get a hint that rather than "liberal bias," there is even the possibility that the media could be skewed to the right.

Every effort seems to have been made to keep media consumers from drawing any kind of a connection between the propaganda of the Nazi regime, and that of the United States' "free press." The *Washington Post* made an interesting distinction in its article about Riefenstahl, when Frank Capra's film series, "Why We Fight," was referred to as "the

inspirational films he made for the U.S. armed forces [during World War II]." Such films are not "propaganda." Rather, they are "inspirational."

Yet anyone can watch these films on DVD and see them for what they actually are. In "The Battle of Russia" the viewer cannot even recognize the "evil empire" from Capra's sympathetic treatment of it. The Allied intervention during the Russian Revolution 25 years earlier seems never to have happened, nor are Stalin's purges mentioned. Stalin was "our kind of guy" when he directly served the interests of American capital, which is hardly "inspiring."

A final and telling piece of fluff came from Roger Ebert, who wrote that "Nazism was not only a political movement but an exercise in mass hypnotism drawing on fetishistic imagery." Presumably, another "exercise" could be conducted in which another villain simply "hypnotizes" everybody. But of course the world consists now, as it did in Riefenstahl's day, of objective as well as subjective factors. In the current balance the Bush administration's objective military strength, and its desire to use it in order to counteract the economy's objective weaknesses, is still dependent upon the subjective factor of the American public being misinformed enough in order to let this happen. It is here that the complicity of the modern media propagandists comes into play, and it also here that the efforts of the WWS will hopefully make a decisive difference.

I also noted that as far as the European media establishment goes both German media tycoon Leo Kirch and the president of the German Film Industry Association, Steffen Kuchenreuther, paid their respects at Riefenstahl's funeral. It's no wonder that German military spending increases so sharply (20 percent per year, at times) while most of the German public remains unaware. Meanwhile, the European press delights in exposing the crude lies of the Bush administration, to a certain extent. They mock the claim that the war in Iraq was not about oil, but in the same space report that German troops were recently deployed to the Congo for "humanitarian" purposes, as if no strategic or economic interests existed in that country. In doing this, they are obviously holding a double-edged sword.

RG

16 September 2003



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