

Letters from our readers

10 January 2004

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

On “Britain: Government steps up attacks on asylum seekers”

I have worked with asylum seekers and refugees for several years, in Britain and in Germany. I find David Blunkett’s idea that adopting and promoting the policies of the neo-fascist right will somehow serve to defeat them both banal and bizarre. I do not really expect sophisticated political analysis from this government, particularly on asylum or immigration issues, but this really takes the biscuit. In Germany neo-Nazis actively organised and campaigned on immigration issues, and led attacks on asylum seekers, but I thought that opposition to this was more clearly articulated by left groups without allowing the fascists to dictate the terms of the argument. It seems pathetic that this government has no alternative view to offer, but simply takes on board the extreme-right agenda and reproduces it in legislation. I do not know if this represents a failure of nerve or just a lack of principle. The far right need not bother to get local councilors or MPs elected if the government is simply going to implement its racist policies for it.

It is reassuring to know that Mr. Blunkett can sleep well at night, safe in the knowledge of a job well done. Sadly this is not the case for many of the asylum seekers we see at the counseling service where I work. They cannot sleep because they are still haunted by memories of the torture they suffered or the murders they witnessed in the countries to which David Blunkett and Beverley Hughes seem so keen to return them.

I really wonder if any Home Office ministers have ever met or got to know any asylum seekers: the terms in which they invariably refer to asylum seekers are so far removed from the resourceful, resilient, and basically decent people I have known over the years whose “crime” seems to be their desire for a basic standard of living we take completely for granted, and to raise their families in safety and freedom. To Mr. Blunkett this seems to represent the end of civilisation as we know it and an

unprecedented threat to national security. Between the government and the asylum seekers I certainly know which is more likely to keep me awake at night.

Sincerely,

JA

7 January 2004

On January 8 it will be a year since the government introduced Section 55 by which asylum seekers who were deemed to have an unsatisfactory claim but couldn’t be returned to unsafe countries were deprived of the right to work or benefits. One Iranian asylum seeker in Manchester was thrown out of his council flat and burned himself at the Refugee Action offices, dying as a result.

Because this government shows so little care for the human rights of asylum seekers, several individuals and groups will be fasting in protest on January 8 to raise awareness about the behavior of the government.

The government gives asylum seekers no option—they can return to a dangerous country or they can stay here, but not work legally or receive minimal benefits.

JL

5 January 2004

On “Guantanamo Bay, habeas corpus and the Texan who would be king: Some legal observations”

Dear Editor of WSWs,

The commentary by Richard Hoffman addresses the alarming changes in thought and behavior we are witnessing today in a most powerful and effective manner. His emphasis on the history of the evolution of the law around unlawful detention points out the weight of the issues at hand. His clarity is unusual in writings on these issues.

I agree that the increasingly authoritarian actions of governing persons around the world are largely an attempt to control and suppress the growing energies of revolt against unjust appropriations of the wealth created by all of us.

Thank you for making a sensible and humane view of our currently chaotic world available to all who are willing to read.

CJ

Falmouth, Massachusetts

5 January 2004

Gentlemen, another tremendous article. While I do not personally go back to the Magna Carta, I do recall that Adolph Hitler and presumably Stalin were able to imprison and kill anyone who disagreed with official doctrine. In twentieth century terms, Bush is instituting a fascist rule; the domination of the state over the individual citizen, a national state based on the military and national security.

RB

Fuengirola, Spain

5 January 2004

On "Iran earthquake death toll tops 30,000"

Dear Kate Randall,

So, instead of redirecting government resources to ensuring the stability of the cities in the north of Iran in case of an earthquake, the Iranian bourgeoisie plan on moving the capital to a safer environment. Do they plan on moving the entire population, or just themselves, and their possessions? What is to become of the working class and poor who remain in the northern cities? Are they just going to be told to either live in tents or risk death every night? Or will something really be done to prevent another catastrophe?

The reasoning of the Iranian government should be a loud wake-up call to not only the Iranian working class, but to all who live in areas prone to catastrophic natural or man-made disasters: from mudslides, fires, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, blizzards, etc., to acts of terrorism, war, environmental disasters, nuclear meltdowns, etc. Under the capitalist system, real prevention, safety and relief are only available if it is profitable, or poses a direct threat to capitalism itself. If it does not, people are essentially left to fend for themselves.

When looking at the actions of the leading groups on the scene—religious, humanitarian and political—we see that they all share the same reactionary character, both in perspective as well as constituency. We see that the disaster in Bam could have been prevented, but wasn't, because of the lack of a profit incentive, and the underlying capitalist system as a whole. Once the disaster struck, we see the shoddy, or rather, the almost total lack of advance planning in providing relief, as well as a total disregard for the humanity of those suffering unbelievable hardships and loss.

We see the differing groups tossing blame about without stopping to consider how they themselves could have

been better prepared, as well as other inane responses to the current and future situation. Then, we get a glimpse of how some of these self-same groups try to profit off of the disaster themselves.

What we don't see, however, is an organization of the Iranian working classes responding to the situation. There is a reaction by the working class and poor, but it is not organized. The only way to ensure that these kinds of disasters do not wreak this level of havoc tomorrow is for the working class to prepare today.

HR

Las Vegas, Nevada

6 January 2004

On "Nine months after US invasion: Fuel shortages, blackouts heighten Iraqi opposition to American occupation"

Thank you for such an incisive and thoughtful analysis of the situation in Iraq. It is the highest folly to believe that the US government had any intent to "liberate" Iraq or improve the catastrophes they created. The problems with the school are worth noting and clearly put Bush's claim that all primary and secondary schools are open in the proper perspective. One has to assume that most of these schools too face the same problems the author highlighted in this article. The horrible situation in Iraq is not surprising when one considers that the real purpose of this so-called US reconstruction is to steal Iraq's oil and resources. The occupation is producing a nightmare in Iraq and must be ended ASAP.

This all brings to mind the position of Karl Liebknecht as to the true function of war. The true function of war was to "subordinate the mass of the population to exploitation at the hands of the dominant class." Hence we see who had the motive to mass murder unsuspecting Americans. Who has so far profited other than the criminal cabal of war profiteers and other upstanding members of the merchant murder class surrounding this administration and this criminally dangerous bunch of mad idiots?

PS

4 January 2004



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