

Letters from our readers

9 June 2004

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

Dear Sir,

Please find linked below a news release on horrendous Iraq “excess mortality” (= actual deaths MINUS deaths expected with the same demographics and a peaceful society)—5.2 million since 1950 and 1.5 million since 1991 (www.control.com.au). This type of scientific analysis is quite revealing: thus “excess mortality” since the ostensibly “bloodless” Fiji coup of 1987 has been about 4,500; “excess mortality” since 1967 in the Palestinian Occupied Territories has been about 340,000.

The horrendous Iraq “excess mortality” estimates are consonant with UNICEF-derived figures for under-five infant mortality, namely 3.3 million since 1950 and 1.2 million since 1991. According to UNICEF, in 2001 the under-five infant mortality was 109,000 in Iraq (population 24 million), compared with about 1,000 in Australia (population 20 million). Estimated current infant mortality in war-ravaged Iraq is about 100,000 per year (300 per day).

In these difficult times it is vital for people of all kinds who are committed to peace, goodwill and humanity to honestly address the most important global issues.

The Iraq holocaust is NOT being reported by global media; the victims are overwhelmingly CHILDREN. I would be grateful if you would please inform all your readers and associates.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Gideon Polya

Australasian Science magazine

7 June 2004

On “More Pentagon lies about the bombing of an Iraqi wedding party”

Thanks for the great article. I have never been so embarrassed by the actions of our government, as when I heard Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt lying about what had happened. He was being interviewed by Geraldo Rivera, on FOX News. Not exactly a setting for tough questions, but to his credit, Geraldo was trying to get Kimmitt to admit that the overwhelming evidence showed that we had bombed a wedding, we had made a mistake. Kimmitt wouldn’t budge, he kept insisting that there was no evidence of a wedding, the video didn’t prove anything, and the raid was justified. Even Geraldo seemed surprised by his harsh attitude. Why does our military always have to lie, in situations like this? Do they think they can keep the truth from ever coming out?

I would like to force Kimmitt to watch the whole wedding video, point out the people who can be identified at the wedding, then later being buried. And the children being buried. Then ask him if we bombed a wedding, if any children were killed, if we made a mistake. Just to force him to lie about the whole thing again. He should be fired. To me, this is worse than the prisoner abuse scandal.

Sincerely,

KS

31 May 2004

To the Editors:

I read with great interest Shannon Jones’s article, “SEP campaign faced arcane ballot requirements, private property restrictions.” The perseverance of Mr. Jones and his staff in the face of a truly Orwellian labyrinth is commendable. I was surprised, however, that Mr. Jones neglected to discuss one of the most disturbing conclusions to be drawn from his experience: the disappearance of true public space in the United States.

That Mr. Jones and his fellow SEP campaigners—in order to even attempt to reach large numbers of people—had no choice but to assume the Herculean task of canvassing shopping malls and factories is in and of itself a tribute to the absence of true public spaces where the citizens of the US can exercise their constitutionally mandated First Amendment rights without fear of arrest or harassment. Shopping malls in particular—often described by postmodern urban theoreticians as “America’s new public spaces”—are perfect examples of the reorganization of US life around two spaces: the “private” space of the home, and the pseudo-“public” space of consumption and leisure activities.

Retail caverns like Wal-Mart (the deleterious effects of Wal-Marts on local downtowns are by now well known) may be the perfect mass-gathering spaces for the contemporary US population, however, unlike the traditional New England Common, today’s malls and marts in fact represent the “privatization” of public gathering space. These pseudo-public spaces—each with their full complement of pseudo-police as “security”—are indeed private property. The entry of the citizen into these spaces is predicated on the unspoken contract: “One enters the mall in order to consume, and for no other reason.” A shopping mall is not a place where the serious political issues of the day can be raised, as this would defeat the purpose of these entities altogether. Under these circumstances, I am not in the least bit surprised that Mr. Jones was refused permission to canvass at just about every retail institution he encountered. Indeed, one can only marvel at the refusal of Border’s Books (the existence of which depends ultimately upon the First Amendment) to allow Mr. Jones to campaign! So much for the “marketplace of ideas”!

Of course, we live in an age where public dissent itself is being quashed on “security” grounds—just think of the recent refusal of the New York City government to allow a dissenting group to use Central Park for counter-Republican protest, not to mention the establishment of “free-speech zones” in which citizen protesters are herded far away from members of the current Administration as official policy. And we dare to speak of “American Democracy”?

The Kafkaesque exchange cited by Mr. Jones between a Target guard and an SEP campaigner is in my opinion the perfect epitaph for the civilization in which we are currently forced to exist, one in which the true freedoms of Americans are continually sacrificed on the altar

of “security” and stress-free consumption. And this is the “freedom,” “democracy” and “rule of law” which the United States wishes to impose on the rest of the world? The sheer absurdity of the situation he recounts would be very amusing were it not so utterly pathetic. I commend the WWS on its work.

Best,

BT

New York University

New York City

2 June 2004

On “San Francisco gallery owner attacked by right-wing thugs”

Dear WWS,

Richard Phillips’ recent article on the attack of San Francisco gallery owner Lori Haigh is an alarming and distressing episode, yet one not without antecedents in recent American history. Another notorious example that still stands in relief is the anti-democratic behavior of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani over the Brooklyn Museum’s “Sensation” exhibit in 1999. While that was a case of state censorship and the violation of First Amendment rights, Haigh’s scenario, involving the suppression of Guy Colwell’s social realist painting “The Abuse,” is particularly ominous because she and the artist have fallen victim to progressively totalitarian social conditions created and encouraged by the state.

That Haigh can no longer display Colwell’s painting without her private property rights and right to personal safety being placed in jeopardy, that her Capobianco Gallery has been indefinitely closed and the respective web site no longer featuring the said artwork, that any of this should even occur, in fact, exposes the failure of the institutions of American democracy and the valuelessness of bourgeois morality. But how could the sort of death threats, physical assault, and vandalism, which Mr. Phillips describes, arise in reaction to a single painting? I venture the following answer:

Essentially, what Colwell has done, what Haigh seized on, is a work that synthesizes distinctive, but related, well-known images into a singular organic whole that becomes a statement on the Naziesque brutalities perpetrated by the United States Armed Forces in Iraq. In addition, the general monochromatic treatment, minor yet loud traces of red, and crudity of Colwell’s forms are consonant with the content embodied in the menacing and sadistic grins of the American soldiers—armed hands of imperialism—as well as with the pathetic, naked, and hooded detainees who stand wired with electrodes as though they are not people but mannequins or beasts. Where the sole female prisoner is concerned, the unspeakable horrors she has possibly undergone can only be imagined, given the terrifying scene before her.

The painting is frightening because the artist has recreated that which becomes more concentrated and penetrating as an artistic production. The viewer immediately knows something is reprehensible and wrong in the painting; that something is amiss and unfair, imbalanced and unjust, in the situation it captures. Regardless of the stylistic representation of its images and other formal qualities, true art always bears the character of an objective portrayal, and Colwell’s “The Abuse” is such a work because it testifies to the realities of the neocolonial invasion of Iraq and the rampant depravities this unprovoked war of aggression has engendered.

As for those persons who have threatened and assaulted Haigh for displaying “The Abuse,” their violent actions evidently bespeak unresolved confusions and fears, as well as reflect the same species of barbarism depicted in the painting. Here, perhaps, is a case of life imitating art, but in a most backward and reactionary fashion: without

insight, but rage; without empathy, but hate. Nevertheless, this is not the fault of Haigh or Cowell for in a truly democratic society what has now happened to them should not. Rather, the behavior of the aggressive philistines who have lost their way is a consequence of their alienation and the degenerating ideological madness of the ruling class who guides them with an invisible hand.

I am compelled to close on the note that all of the above suddenly brings to mind Plato’s antagonist disposition towards art because he wrongly equated artistic creations with delusions. Yet, he correctly understood that the “dangerous” or revolutionary character of art lies in the fact that it moves people emotionally and intellectually, thereby posing a challenge to official philosophy—or, as we would have it at present, the official lies of the capitalists, their personal government, their corporate media, and their faithful guardians.

Sincerely yours,

AW

4 June 2004

Hello!

Niall Green’s and Steve James’s April 17, 2004 article, “Sweden: Anna Lindh’s killer given life sentence,” is one of the best examples of journalism I’ve ever read (and I read lots of articles from newspapers and magazines, both on the printed page and on the Internet).

As writers, they are willing to show an admirable compassion for the killer. Such concern for the wellbeing of others is a welcome event in a world that seems increasingly indifferent—especially to those members of society who have always been cast aside, neglected, and isolated (if not scorned, detested, and feared), such as the mentally ill.

N. Green and S. James describe not only the case itself, but also its place within the overall context of Swedish society. Most astonishingly, they do it with a use of detail that elegantly balances thoroughness of reportage with an economy of words. I greatly admire their writing style.

In a few paragraphs, they describe: who Anna Lindh was; the attack itself; her injuries; Anna Lindh’s political campaign to adopt the euro as Sweden’s official currency; a comparison of the effects of her death with the effects upon Swedish public opinion of the assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme nearly two decades earlier. In addition they note the relief in the government and the media that the trial was over rather than concern over how well the trial was conducted; problems in the Swedish workforce at a time when the workplace has become more harsh; mention that some voices in the Swedish media criticize the still relatively humane prisons in Sweden for still being relatively humane; Mijailovic’s lawyers filing of an appeal.

Thank you for your example.

JH

Le Sueur, Minnesota

7 June 2004



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact