

Letters on the tsunami disaster

6 January 2005

The following is a selection of letters to the World Socialist Web Site on the South Asia tsunami disaster.

On “South Asia disaster appeal: White House tries to cover up Bush’s moment of truth”

As you have pointed out, it is not necessary to prod the American people for donations. This is just a publicity gimmick meant to help boost the image of the powerful but callous ignoramus in the White House. That Bush Sr. rushed to the rescue of Bush Jr. is to be expected. However, it is odd that Clinton came on board.

This is just another example of the collusion of those at the top of the Democratic Party, particularly the Democratic Leadership Counsel, with the Republicans. However, Clinton is no stranger to covering sand over manure stirred up by this Bush Jr. During the last part of the last presidential campaign, he got up out of his sickbed to help John Kerry. However, if you look at what he really did, it was to keep Kerry campaigning on the economy and other issues, and not the Iraq war, the issue that mattered most to most Democratic voters.

Clinton himself could be very callous. An article in today’s Altnet exposes that he knew a long time before it was public that what was happening in Rwanda was genocide, and he kept quiet.

So, Slick Willie has no qualms about helping the financial elite to grease the skids for Bush Jr., to the detriment of the lower rungs of society where his base of support is. Who does he really represent? It is now very obvious.

TR

4 January 2005

Garland, Texas

On “The Asian tsunami: why there were no warnings”

With regard to prior warning by Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, you have reported: “...the centre revised its initial estimate of the size of the tremor from 8 to 8.5, and issued a second alert, warning of a

possible tsunami in the Indian Ocean. Frantic phone calls were made to issue warnings. But without procedures in place for the Indian Ocean, it was hit and miss. ‘We started thinking about who we could call. We talked to the State Department Operations Centre and to the military. We called embassies. We talked to the navy in Sri Lanka, any local government official we could get hold of,’ geophysicist Barry Hirshorn told the *Honolulu Advertiser*.”

But there is a contradicting report about this prior warning. According to a report in a web site (I do not remember whether it was Rediff or Guardian Online), the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Los Angeles had detected the quake that caused these killer waves, at least an hour before they hit Thailand and Malaysia. The report also said that they issued an alert for the Pacific countries, their mandated area of concern.

The report adds further that Mr. Charles McCreery, director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Honolulu, when asked about the possibility of warning the other countries in the region, said, “We tried to do what we could, but we don’t have contacts in our address book for anybody in that part of the world.” In the present modern age, it is ludicrous and impossible to believe that such vital information could not be conveyed for want of contact details in their address book. A directory enquiry or a web search would have provided them the required details of contact addresses of consulates, embassies, offices, agencies through whom the necessary warning could have been given well in advance.

This contradiction in the reporting gives room for suspicion. Whatever be the truth, in either way one thing is proved beyond doubt. In their eyes, human lives, especially of the poor, are only secondary when compared to business.

CTSK

4 January 2005

Chennai, India

Thought you might find this weirdly abstracted, double-thinking article (“Disaster’s Damage to Economies may be minor”) from today’s *New York Times*—which begins by describing the tsunami devastation in Sri Lanka as a “tableau of battered boats, smashed hotels and residents scooping mud from what is left of their homes”—of interest. Notice how the economy of each of these countries is taken to mean only the part of their economic activity that is westernized, and that makes up their export base. The “livelihood of millions of families” somehow doesn’t enter into the calculus of “the economy” of the affected nations.

The article actually implies that there is a danger of giving too much aid because it “could push prices up.”

Best wishes to the concerned, hard-working folks at WSWS for the New Year, despite its inauspicious start.

LM

3 January 2005

Jersey City, New Jersey

You guys always do an excellent job of cutting through a sea of propaganda and letting folks *really* know what the deal is. Why have we sent aircraft carriers and *armed* helicopters to the disaster zone? I heard about it on the radio, and I thought it was strange. I smell a huge rat. I don’t know if you saw this before you wrote your piece: <http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2004/12/307042.shtml>. As with the World Trade Center attacks, things are not as they seem.

DP

3 January 2005

You wrote a very interesting article. You said that the Australians knew of the probability of a tsunami developing. The Indian Air Force actually experienced it. A simple first step would be to designate contact points in the relevant countries around the Indian Ocean. Expensive high-tech early warning systems could follow. I feel that the use of the telephone and radio would have been enough technology to alert key people and avert or diminish disaster. TV channels and radio stations would have reached a lot of people instructing them to alert others near the beaches.

LL

3 January 2005

Edinburgh, Scotland

Thank you for the absolutely clear and precise

information. I hope I was not dreaming, but I am sure that the BBC broadcaster stated in the first reports that a few months ago there was meeting in the region at which the matter of warning systems were discussed and dismissed as being too expensive. Again, thank you for your insightful, clear and accurate comments.

MP

3 January 2005

Jamaica

On “Bush’s response to South Asia disaster: indifference compounded by political incompetence”

Global military spending in 2003 was \$950 billion according to the prestigious Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SPIRI). One percent would be \$9,500 million. The administration of President George W. Bush is requesting \$420.7 billion for the military in fiscal year 2005. One percent would be \$4,207 million. The top one percent of US taxpayers will get \$57.6 billion a year in tax cuts. One percent would be \$576 million.

What would the effect be if these groups simply gave 1 percent to aid the tsunami victims?

JO

30 December 2004

Aurora, Ontario, Canada

On “Sri Lankan president issues appeal for ‘unity’”

Finally, I am hearing some true stories from your article. It’s still the same old government in Sri Lanka for the last so many years. Rich people are rich. Poor people are poor. That’s all. I thought people in the north and east were not getting any help from the government, but it looks like no one is getting help from these ministers. Same old Sri Lankan politics.

BS

30 December 2004

Scarborough, Ontario, Canada



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