

# Letters from our readers

18 January 2005

*The following is a selection of recent letters received by the World Socialist Web Site.*

On “Sri Lankan President puts military in charge of relief operations”

This is nothing new in Sri Lanka, especially by the Bandaranaiques, who have ruled under emergencies and curfews ever since they used racial and religious sentiments to come into power from 1956. The tsunami disaster is no exception. Even the opposition UNP has found it convenient to use the same tools to govern the country when they were voted into power, though to a lesser extent. The result is that democracy itself has been hijacked/perverted in the process, and the ordinary citizen has lost his/her fundamental freedoms and rights except to be servile to the party in power at the point of the gun or under fear of arbitrary arrest and detention under draconian laws. Any thinking person can see that governments exist not for improving the welfare of the people but, a priori, for the benefit of the politicians and the security services. No wonder then that corruption is at its peak and any control to check or exceptionally bring culprits to book is used only as a convenient aid to hound out political opponents. The concept of democracy is used only to hold the mechanical process of elections when convenient, and that is about all. Once in power, governments do what they like, and if opposition is encountered, call in the military, to suppress opposition! In other words, military dictatorships have come into their own. This is certainly the case as far as Tamil-speaking people are concerned. The goings-on with aid distribution are living proof of what has been established as seemingly normal over the years. Only this time, after the tsunami, foreigners are also getting to see what goes on as a matter of course. No wonder then that everyone aspires to be a politician to reach wealth, influence and power, as seen from the stupendous number of candidates at each election.

SM

14 January 2005

London, England

On “After the 2004 election: The Socialist Equality Party and the struggle for the political independence of the working class”

You have accurately portrayed the Democratic Party. It is

somewhat of a Trojan horse. At one time, in bygone history, it did more accurately represent the interests of the workingman/woman. However, it was always a vehicle to keep the choices of political dissent within a certain spectrum. The difference is only that that spectrum has narrowed considerably. This is due to the huge amount of money required for election, which is required to buy media coverage. This reflects the sad fact that, in the US at least, the media has replaced interpersonal contact in society. So TV ads have replaced grassroots organizations. This has further led to the huge influx of financial capital into the party. As you know, money almost always equals control. An exception to this was the internet organization of fundraising of Howard Dean. This is another reason he was so dangerous.

An examination of the Republican Party reveals a different kind of decay. This is a culmination of the policy of using “wedge issues,” begun in the Nixon administration and exemplified by his “Southern strategy,” covert term for racism, and a war on drugs (largely an invented issue) and crime. So, the party does not address overall issues relevant to the populace but, through demagoguery, stirs strong popular passion in segments of the population on certain narrow issues and then presents the candidate or party as the solution. So long as the party fulfills its promise on these issues, it can pursue its other agenda.

However, the party has expanded this idea. It has used provocation, such as the Iranian hostage crisis and, most brilliantly, 9/11, to secure adherence to its imperialist military doctrine. It has incorporated the religious right, which for a share of power has zealously gone along with the program. So you now have the religious right advocating a war on Muslims and reactionary fiscal policies and programs that largely benefit the upper economic layers of society. This could not have been accomplished without the pandering to the South, the most prejudiced and backward area of the nation. Indeed, the South now virtually controls the party, in areas other than financial, where they have virtually teamed up with Wall Street.

So the reality is a party that has seized almost total power, has only a slim political plurality (and some would argue it does not have that), and has pursued disastrous fiscal,

foreign, and military policies that are hanging over the nation like a “sword of Damocles”; and another party that offers no substantial alternative.

Something’s gotta give, but will there be an organization around to pick up the pieces when things come apart? The current ruling elite will not give up power without a struggle, and the Democrats will not offer any alternative that will anger their financial benefactors. A propaganda campaign will be necessary to make the difficulties look inevitable or blame it on liberal policy in previous administrations. This will require severe propaganda gymnastics and contortionism. A rational look at the causes cannot be tolerated.

I personally predict severe political repression. The Patriot Acts were not conceived in the belief they would not be used.

TR

14 January 2005

On “US defends ‘evidence’ obtained through torture at hearing for Guantanamo prisoners”

Great article! Many of the commentators miss the fact that the government attorneys continuously assert unlimited presidential authority as Commander-in-Chief in a time of war. They also miss the fact that early on through Michael Chertoff they asserted the right to apply these actions to US citizens. The guilt by innocent association is also asserted, as in the case of the little old lady in Switzerland. But that is also part of the Patriot Act. Virtually any action that has an economic impact can be considered as harmful to the interests of the US. It lays the groundwork for the prosecution of strikers (Oakland, California, for instance), tree sitters, boycotters—whomever they chose to prosecute. They are laying the groundwork for total repression and the use of concentration camps for anyone they arbitrarily consider a danger. Hitler would be proud of Bush.

RR

11 January 2005

Orange Park, Florida

On “Uruguay: victorious left turns sharply to the right”

Thank you very much for an excellent and timely article. I am, along with many Uruguayans, dismayed at Tabare Vazquez’s actions, which you described so well. I would note that in offering the ambassadorship to Batlle, Vazquez completely and publicly humiliated the newly appointed Minister of Exterior, the respected and principled socialist Gargano, who knew nothing of such things and who dismissed in a radio interview the first announcement as “absurd.” There are other strong sources of disappointment, but I would mention only one. This was the meeting Vazquez held with Catholic bishops in which he promised to ban abortions even if they were approved by Congress. This

happened in a country where more than 60% of the population supports abortion, a support which is/was in the platform of the Socialist Party. Also, Vazquez is further eroding the strict separation of Church and State which was instituted by the first Batlle at the turn of the twentieth century, and which only recently started to be weakened when Lacalle (from the traditional “Blanco” party) became president. It is hard to believe that a socialist is further to the right than Kerry was! Most people still support him and at this point still prefer to give him the benefit of the doubt—to do otherwise would be too bitter for most, who deposit so much faith and enthusiasm in a leftist government. Thank you again for your wonderful article.

IR

9 January

On “Pennsylvania state police cleared in killing of 12-year-old”

I feel that it wasn’t right for the police to kill him. All we want is justice. Michael was my little cousin, and he didn’t even get to live to see his 13th birthday. The police are supposed to protect and serve us. Well, how are they doing that when they are killing young innocent people? How do you think we look at police now? We don’t even call them to help us with our issues; we just take it into our own hands or just leave it alone. If we don’t have justice there won’t be any peace!

CC

11 January 2005

Uniontown, Pennsylvania

On “CBS purges producer, executives for anti-Bush broadcast”

Exactly right analysis. This is obviously an attempt to silence and discredit any independent press action. It will probably also aid in stopping any press/media dissemination of the theft of the last election by the cabal running puppet Bush.

JM

12 January 2005

Canada



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