Letters from our readers

21 November 2005

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

On "US Senate feigns outrage over big oil's windfall profits"

Thank you for an excellent, detailed article. I watched part of that hearing on C-SPAN until I could take it no more. The sight of those five smug and arrogant oil corporation CEOs was enough to turn one's stomach. Their smirking faces seem to be telling the whole world not to take those proceedings seriously, that the whole thing was just a charade.

The attitude of deference and servility of the senators facing them was no less nauseating. You can almost read on their faces a self-warning to be careful what not to say. After all, those fat cats were the people who pay the legalized bribes that help them get reelected. And to think that those senators' and congressmen's duty is above all to represent the American people! What a travesty!

This brought back to mind another hearing not too long before of Secretary Rice appearing before a similar committee. At one point she shamelessly bragged about "liberating Iraq." You'd think that now that the whole world knows that all the claims that had been made to launch that criminal war against the Iraqi people were lies, someone in that hearing room would have the guts to remind that yes-woman that the only liberation that she and her boss had provided was to send more than 100,000 innocent Iraqis to their graves, to level their cities, to destroy their infrastructure, to shatter their way of life and reduce a once prosperous society to poverty.

If one has still the slightest doubt about any significant differences between Republicans and Democrats, one should consider that both parties support the US colonial imperialistic war's aim of world hegemony, of which the control of the Middle East's petroleum is just one step. How else to interpret what Kerry was quoted to have once said, that even if he had known those facts in advance (i.e., that the claims used to deceive the American people were mendacious and forged), he would still have voted for the war?

Even those among the power elite, honest enough to admit that the war had been a disaster, are careful to say it was a mistake, not wrong, not a crime of gargantuan proportions. The same was true in Vietnam. Those who finally said it was a mistake would never have so described it had the US won!

SR

14 November 2005

On "Sri Lankan election: Vote for Wije Dias and the Socialist Equality Party"

I have been following the SEP (Sri Lanka) 2005 presidential election campaign with much interest. Their implacable opposition to all forms of bourgeois nationalist opportunism distinguishes them from all other political tendencies. I am sure that the Sri Lankan masses, sickened by long years of war and intensified attacks on their living standards, will increasingly find that the only political force in the land that gives voice to their concerns and aspirations is the SEP.

EG

South Africa

14 November 2005

On "Film documents American use of chemical weapons in Iraq"

Thank you for covering the recent screening of the Italian documentary, *Fallujah: the hidden massacre*. This documentary further exposes the profound criminality and inhumanity of the Iraq war to a potentially wider audience that is shielded by the mainstream media. It also reveals, particularly to those who may doubt, that US foreign policy will stop at nothing in achieving its geopolitical aims on behalf of the ruling elite. This can only be done with the ever-compliant media establishments who have demonstrated a coordinated silence since the screening of this documentary. They too are responsible for the death and suffering of the Iraqi people in Fallujah.

These disturbing images left me with a profound feeling of sadness and anger. One should be reminded of the US Department of Defense definition of terrorism: the unlawful use of—or threatened use of—force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives. "War by terror" would be more fitting to describe the current so-called "war on terror." Further, it undermines the basis of US attempts to convict Saddam Hussein for the same crimes that, needless to say, were originally endorsed by the US. No wonder the media is silent. May this article together with the link that you provide be circulated widely.

JB

Hamilton, Ontario

11 November 2005

On "US auto workers union launches sham 'war' against Delphi"

I really enjoyed your article on Delphi. We are experiencing the same thing in the newspaper industry in Northern California, with the *San Francisco Chronicle* spearheading the charge. Is there a master plot by these types of corporate clowns?

TP

Colma, California

11 November 2005

On "Kansas school board passes anti-evolution science standards"

One of the most distressing things about this case is the school board's redefinition of science itself so that it "not be limited to natural explanations." Why don't we outlaw Galileo, Newton and Einstein while we're at it and take up Tarot instead? Or is that a non-acceptable, non-natural explaining device? Though I am not proposing the actual use of Tarot cards as a means of divining past or future events, what, exactly, *would* the limits be for non-natural explanations?

Not only is the proposition lazy, it is also dangerous. Will we return to the days when mental illnesses were judged to be demon-possession? Should we ascribe any loud sudden noises to the footsteps of angry behemoths? Where does this end?

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CMS
Portland, Oregon
12 November 2005

On "Bush's counteroffensive on Iraqi WMD"

It is really surprising. Even after failing to show the existence of an ounce of WMD in Iraq after three and half years, the head of the US administration still had the audacity to proclaim WMD as the reason for waging war against Iraq! Even going by the US intelligence before the war, why did the US not pass the information to the UN weapon inspectors, the "authorised" agency? If the US administration believed that Iraq really had large quantities of readily deployable WMD (chemical, biological and nuclear), could they dare to enter and attack Iraq?

JP
India
14 November 2005

On "Simon Wiesenthal: Nazi-hunter dead at 96"

According to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Canada, 3,000 Nazi war criminals entered Canada between 1946 and 1951, many put on government "welfare" that taxpayers who actually fought the war were now paying for. Compare this to the Canadian government denying entry to Jewish refugees who were fleeing certain death. Compare this to the war heroes that volunteered to fight against the coup by fascist Franco against the Spanish Republicans, a duly elected democratic government. The Canadian government was not opposed to the coup, but was opposed to the volunteers who never received one cent of war veteran benefits or recognition despite the fact that volunteers in the Vietnam War did. The government preferred to support Nazi war criminals instead.

War is a racket or why else would governments and their sponsoring corporations/banks make so much profit from conflicts and then accept into their borders the very people workers were tricked into fighting against, while denying citizens who did fight for justice, democracy and truth any recognition? It makes me wonder if we should stop looking for Osama Bin Laden in the caves of obscure deserts and start looking for him on the streets of New York.

SN Powell River, British Columbia
14 November 2005

On "A soldier's story: Fugitive GI speaks to WSWS on Iraq war"

Thanks to Jeff Riley and Joshua Key, a brave and moral human being, for the article. If you are reading this, Josh, never doubt that you made the right decision. If only there were more soldiers like you, who put their humanity above the lies of patriotism and nationalism.

It is unfortunate that, like most Americans, Joshua Key had to experience the realities of war before understanding the motives behind it. This nation's cultural approach to war, its cultural understanding of it, is based on a popular right-wing myth: the idea that war can be a good thing. Why are we not socializing our young people to know ahead of time that calls to war are almost always based on lies? Why does it take witnessing atrocities and lies firsthand for our youth to realize, "Hey, elites are using our bodies to fight a war to enrich themselves!" This is a truism that has been understood by wise people for thousands of years! It appears Americans must relearn it every so often. How many more Vietnams until we figure it out once and for all, and apply a far more restrictive test to the proposition of participating in war?

It seems to me Vietnam did have an effect on how we see Iraq. I think this war will end much sooner, with less cost in lives on both sides (though the cost has already been horrendous). Hopefully, it will serve to "inoculate" us for a longer period of time—before we forget and, yet again, are taken in by the simple lies of fascists.

BB
Oklahoma
15 November 2005

On "Soviet era posters at London's Tate Modern"

Regarding "Socialist Realism," the phrase was first used by Ivan Gronsky in a speech to leading Moscow writers on 20 May 1932 and quoted three days later in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (*The Literary Gazette*). Stalin reportedly used the phrase during a meeting at the home of Maxim Gorky in October. Thereafter, Andrei Zhdanov and Maxim Gorky codified and defined it at the First Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934.

Since there is no specific mention of it in the review, I also want to note that Socialist Realism was originally conceived as a populist-Bonapartist literary doctrine and method, which was subsequently applied as a cultural policy to other forms of artistic expression, including dance, film, music, painting, and sculpture. Because of its theoretical and structural ambiguities, the concept readily accommodated bureaucratic policy changes and fluctuations in the totalitarian Stalinist Soviet Union and deformed workers' state.

Taking Stalinist North Korea as an example, Socialist Realism has been in force there since the Soviet Red Army liberated the area from Japanese colonialism in 1945. The doctrine, however, is now called "Juche Realism" or "Juche-oriented Realism," after the official state ideology. Nevertheless, this national adaptation retains the core Socialist Realist tenets of "partiinost" (party spirit), "ideiinost" (ideological expression), and "narodnost" (national character), which were established by Zhdanov and Gorky in the 1930s. There was, incidentally, an exhibit of North Korean propaganda posters at the Kunsthal Museum in Rotterdam, Netherlands, in 2004 (http://www.northkoreanart.com).

The indigenous iconography and symbolism notwithstanding, these deceitful and formulaically designed works are replete with typical Stalinist motifs: bountiful harvests, invincible soldiers, smiling workers, etc. Perhaps the WSWS may want to consider writing on this subject sometime in the future.

ADW
15 November 2005

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