

Letters from our readers

27 April 2006

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

On “Fall, but no decline—The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History”

Dear Ann Talbot,

I go trolling through the WSWs archives every now and then looking for articles of interest that were submitted before I began reading your journal around 2002. Last week, I stumbled upon your exchange with Sandy English back in the spring of 2000 and your essay that sparked the debate. The quotes from Ste. Croix were compelling, and I looked forward to reading him.

What a surprise when the next day I opened your web site and saw “Fall, but no decline.” It’s wonderful that the WSWs provides me with so many sources with which to study history from a Marxist, i.e., historical perspective. I discovered James McPherson through your web site (David Walsh), and for the first time in my life I began to study the American Civil War and its antecedents. I had thought all the literature was largely pro-slavery, or at best ambivalent about the causes for the war (i.e., postmodernist). I now have a sense of pride for the achievements of many Americans in that era.

I have read a few things on Hellenic and Roman history, some by Finley. He’s a good writer, but I never seemed to be able to grasp the nature of these societies from his books. His work is nuanced, but I came away a bit confused.

I did a Google search of Ste. Croix. I came across a critique of his work by a Professor Doughty at Drew University: No doubt, Ste. Croix has incurred the displeasure of this Professor of the New Testament. I look forward to reading *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*.

PB

22 April 2006

Your review of the book by Peter Heather touched a

nerve on the subject. It sounded some familiar themes and reasons to conclude that it was not entirely because of the invasion of the barbarians that the Roman Empire fell. My recollections come from having read *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A Reappraisal* by Michael Grant. Its 327 pages are a truly scholarly work. It is broad, deep, and astonishingly relevant to the present. Americans could benefit from some of the analogies to today’s situation in which class distinctions grow daily, government moves further from its people, militarism becomes the tool of a policy of world domination, and so forth. Grant identifies 13 defects (social, military, economic, etc.) each reflecting “disunity.” He addresses them with vivid descriptions, and details and clearly demonstrates how their combined forces led to the Fall. Heather is also thanked for having added clarity to the assumption voiced by the Bush administration that the biggest threat to America is from without. We know that is it from within.

Regards,

RG

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, US

23 April 2006

On “Britain: Documentary reveals plan for coup against Wilson Labour government”

Thank you for a fascinating account of the anti-Wilson plotters, and how strange (or is it?) that no one before you has gone into the subject in any depth. It is also a good reminder of what the seemingly harmless Royal Family can be used for: in times of crisis all that mystification we are enduring now with the old lady’s birthday can be put to use in the interests of right-wing putschists, or justifying and anointing whatever unjustifiable act the ruling clique are up to. But it makes the eventual assassination of Mountbatten even more curious. There is a widely held theory that the IRA was not to blame, but some elements of British intelligence got rid of him because he was favouring

negotiations with Sinn Fein. The only saving grace of all these terrorists, whether state sponsored or otherwise, is that they so often end up doing each other in some ghastly 'night of the long knives.' But do you have any leads to the Mountbatten story?

RH

23 April 2006

On "A mea culpa on Iraq by pro-war journalist Johann Hari"

Johann Hari purports to have seen the error of his ways, hence his pathetic flailings and hand-wringing in his latest column. It seems as if he wants the reader to feel sympathy for him, a poor deluded fool. The sight of Johann Hari standing atop a mountain of corpses to proclaim his innocence fills me not with sympathy, but with disgust.

EG

24 April 2006

On "Indian Stalinists reaffirm support for UPA government"

Thank you for your comments on the state of the Indian government. As an Indian living abroad, I am in dire need of some 'real,' honest news. I believe the only left-wing news source in India is the *Hindu*, though I am not entirely sure of its intentions. But you seem to elucidate the matter to a considerable extent. India is a third world country, suffering from abject poverty, and it will only get worse. Indian politicians are in the process of physical decay, as moral decay was successfully achieved long ago, maybe as far back as when India won its independence. There is little hope for the poor of the Indian community, with secular hatred on the rise, increasing repression of lower cast or 'untouchables' and not to mention female infanticide. I wonder where my country is heading. Not that farmers have not been committing suicide, but with hyena Bush unleashing his corporations on the agricultural industry, soon India will be entirely dependent on the US, once more becoming colonized, only this time it will be done voluntarily

WM

26 April 2006

On "British military doctor court martialed for refusing to serve in Iraq"

Thank you for an essay which demonstrates that the term "military justice" is a contradiction in terms. It belongs in a lexicon with entries for: "military

intelligence," "compassionate conservatism," "socialism in one nation," "free market," "mercantilism," "guided democracy," etc.

LL

Whitehall, Pennsylvania, US

22 April 2006



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