

Letters from our readers

7 June 2006

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

On “US Marines to stand trial for massacre of Iraqi civilians in Haditha”

As the commander in chief of all the armed forces, Bush is personally responsible for all of the killings and torturing by US troops and private contractors (mercenaries). He should be arrested, tried and convicted like any criminal would be. Then as he fingers them all, the rest of his cabal (formerly known as ‘administration’) should be locked up as well! Then throw about 95 percent of the House and the Senate (formerly known as the ‘legislative branch’) into the ‘drunk tank’ and lose the key (permanently). Never vote for *any* Republican *or* Democrat, as they are equal opportunity enablers of *wars of aggression* for capitalist profit.

JB

29 May 2006

I am continuously surprised (who knows why) by the fact that most people I know (in Silicon Valley, California, land of the PhDs) still have no idea that we have been committing atrocities in Iraq. During the past six months, several people have told me, “We aren’t doing any harm there.” If anything, despite what I’ve read of opinion polls, public perception, at least locally, has increasingly diverged from reality on this point.

During the Vietnam War a friend of mine returned from boot camp and told me his drill sergeant had said they could rape the women and children before killing them. A young man, he was surprised and horrified by this. Today in Iraq, it is my impression that the same policy continues, although in Iraq, given Islamic culture, such victimization can be tantamount to a death sentence for any victim. Our callous disregard for women and children has fueled the opposition and caused many more deaths and casualties among US forces, yet nobody talks about this problem within military culture. Military culture and the horrifying abuse of women and children are inextricably intertwined. The notion of war as a battle between armed men has become almost antiquated. It is atrocities against the weakest members of society we rationalize as “just war.”

Why is this? Based on the evidence, I’d say that a license to rape with impunity must be something worth fighting and even dying for, although personally I see no real national security benefit to be derived from this strategy.

By the way, your articles are brilliant, a gold mine.

PZ

Cupertino, California

29 May 2006

On “India’s Supreme Court intervenes in caste-reservation controversy”

The contradictions within the opinion generated among the upper caste and middle class student and educated youth are clear. These youth are made to believe that their merit will go unrewarded and

meritless candidates are rewarded. But reservations for seats in higher education already existed in other forms. There was no such opposition to girls’ reservation in some states and the ‘management quota’ wherein the college administration is authorised to sell seats to wealthy candidates at prices depending on the reputation of the college and the demand for the particular course.

When millions of poor children do not have access and means to receive and complete school education, the caste-based reservation helps only the upper echelons within the ‘backward’ castes already having relatively comfortable social positions. The continued reservation policy only creates rifts in the society and in the absence of increased opportunities, makes the youth believe it as the source of their misery.

After five to six decades, the hollowness of reservations for dalits (former untouchables) is visible from the struggle in the State of Andhra Pradesh for further categorisation and category-wise reservations in government jobs and education, based on the caste-hierarchy that exists among the dalit communities. There was no integrated approach to the problem of caste discrimination and integrate them; political parties have used the divisions and reservations, for getting populist votes.

JP

India

4 June 2006

On “South Africa: Factional war intensifies between Mbeki and Zuma supporters in ANC”

It must be noted that Ms. Slaughter’s analysis captures most of the salient points that underpin current political developments in South Africa. The latter, no doubt, is fraught with contradiction, leading to much confusion for ordinary citizens on the ground. The fact remains that Zuma—the deputy president of the African National Congress—like South Africa’s president himself, is not at all concerned with the real interests of the country’s struggling masses. Zuma’s opportunistic tendency has revealed itself time and again in the past whenever he found himself in difficulty, be it because of a corruption scandal or allegation of sexual abuse. Whenever the time was ‘ripe,’ he’s solicited the support of mass organisations. That these organisations habitually welcome and extol him—despite the fact that his past record shows no record of him being involved in anti-capitalist programmes concerned with wiping out the miserable social and economic conditions of South Africa’s toiling masses—remains of course another matter for discussion.

However, I wish to point out that Ms. Slaughter’s citing of a phrase from the *Guardian* newspaper may be misunderstood and create an illusion regarding the country’s transformation since 1994, the year of its first democratic elections. She writes, “the *Guardian* accused Zuma of deliberately using ‘tribalism in his fight, undermining the ANC’s century-old anti-tribal philosophy.’” Granted, while these are not the words of the reporter herself, but a quotation from the capitalist-

owned print media, the fact that this statement goes [un]challenged, presents the notion that this is a factual matter. The truth is that the ANC, like all other nationalistic organisations in South Africa, is deeply rooted in tribalism. Just the other day the president himself appeared on a national platform, complete with florid blanket, pipe, straw hat, and knobkieri (stick) in hand—the tribalist gear of the isi-Xhosa tribe. While this in itself is a rather superficial case in point, the South African Constitution guarantees the existence and future function of ‘traditional leaders’—i.e., the leaders of the South Africa’s various tribal camps. Today, they continue to exist and function officially in various parts across the countryside, as well as in governmental structures. Since 1994, no official of the ANC has ever publicly opposed South African tribalism or explained where this colonial concept really originates from or warned about its inherent dangers, dangers that can be observed across much of Africa and elsewhere today.

Since the mid-1950s, the liberation movements that arguably were most closely associated with Trotskyism—the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), together with the African Peoples Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) and the Teachers’ League of South Africa (TLSA)—consistently opposed the concept and practice of tribalism and the carving up of the country on supposed racial lines. These organisations and others in effect consistently called for the creation of a truly non-racial, equal, non-sexist, non-capitalist, non-tribalist social domain. Today, while the ANC may not openly talk about tribalism, it nonetheless continues to support it relentlessly. The ANC does not promote in the least the concept of non-racialism but rather the concept of multi-racialism. Both of these—tribalism and so-called multi-racialism or ‘rainbowism,’ to use the more fashionable term—constitute fundamental points of convergence with Apartheid ideology. As such, it is quite perceptible that no profound change in the national situation, as in the capitalist economic domain, has occurred since 1994 in so-called ‘post-Apartheid South Africa.’

CK

London, England

30 May 2006

On “Why Australia wants ‘regime change’ East Timor”

I have been following the news out of East Timor by checking all English language sources that I can find online, and I am somewhat surprised to find that your web site is the solitary voice speaking out in defense of the democratic system in East Timor. Even Amy Goodman is in lockstep with Howard, and Chomsky and Zmag are silent on the issue. Thank you for thinking clearly when evidently no other English language commentators can.

KH

31 May 2006

On “Cindy Sheehan condemns Australian prime minister as an ‘illegal combatant’”

You probably are aware of this already, but I would like to bring to your attention the fact that in Australia there was basically *no* coverage of Cindy Sheehan’s visit in the mainstream media. I read this via a link from another web site.

SM

1 June 2006

I liked this article. Out here in Australia, there is no news of this one-woman stand on the need for honesty in government. Prior to reading this article I did not know that this courageous woman was in Sydney, my nearest city. I also liked the way that Sheehan’s ‘voice of the people’ was balanced by a factual statement from someone on the

ground doing his best for the victims of this undeclared war.

RG

Lithgow, Australia

1 June 2006

On “Medical emergency: Facilities and care in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina”

As an ER nurse working at an inner city hospital in New Orleans, post Katrina, I have to comment on the last article. Yes, we are definitely still in crisis. It is *very* stressful trying to work an ER because the beds in the hospital are full. We are mandated by the federal government to meet a strict high level of care, yet we are understaffed, undersupplied, and overwhelmed at times with more patients than can in my opinion be safely handled by the nurses working and the amount of beds available. My hospital administration has been wonderful. They are desperately trying to give us everything necessary to do them and our duty to New Orleans proud. Please keep our plight in the nation’s eye. It will help explain to our country why the people of New Orleans continue to die in the streets for lack of medical and psychiatric health care. Please do not forget New Orleans, but also remember the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They too have a crisis continuing, and the media has all but forgotten that they lost *everything*, that their people can not come home because there is still nothing to come home to. Bless you and yours.

CJ

Poplarville, Mississippi, US

31 May 2006

On “Machinists union reaches tentative agreement with Northwest Airlines”

You hit the nail on the head about the relationship between the IAM and NWA in helping the company fight our strike. Your observations were right on in regards to the betrayal of their own members. While I may not agree with all of your points of view, this article got it right. The race to the bottom continues with all of the unions doing nothing to stop this corporate agenda. Right or wrong, at least AMFA at NWA had the guts to say enough is enough. If all the other unions on the property, had done this, things would be different today, at all carriers. My opinion of course. I am proud to be a striking, non-sabbing technician at NWA.

PC

1 June 2006



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