

# Letters from our readers

14 June 2006

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

*On “Australia, Timor and oil: the record”*

Thanks for the excellent coverage and analysis of the Australian intervention in East Timor. Nearly all other media reports have portrayed the Australian invasion as a humanitarian action, inspired by the lofty ideals of the Howard government. The gangster-like character of this intervention—in reality, an international mugging—is all but ignored. I believe that it is important that the facts surrounding the true relationship between Australia and East Timor should be widely publicised. Perhaps your article should appear in other media outlets.

Regards,

EG

6 June 2006

*On “US military moves to condone ‘humiliating and degrading’ treatment of prisoners”*

As incredible, though perhaps not surprising, given the moral compass of this administration, as the subject of this story is, I can’t help but think about the members of the US military who are now in prison, convicted of inflicting some of these same techniques on prisoners in Iraq. I was thinking specifically of the case of Private Lynndie England who was convicted of engaging in sexual humiliation techniques at the Abu Ghraib military prison and possessing photographs of the results of the very actions that the US now wants to legitimize. It would be interesting if members of that brave bunch known as the White House Press Corps would query administration officials about the seeming contradiction of maintaining service members in prison while working to legalize those very actions that placed them in there to begin with.

TA

6 June 2006

*On “CBS journalists wounded, killed in Iraq: Where the responsibility lies”*

A very accurate piece on the press role in Iraq. It really does seem that the press serves for no other reason than to advance the view of the administration. I grew up in the

Vietnam War era, and the difference in press coverage is striking. Sadly, I suppose it only is indicative of the American public’s unwillingness to face real issues anymore.

MB

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, US

1 June 2006

Charles Bukowski, the late working class poet, one time said that he learned, in a kind of epiphany, that there is a cost to enjoying middle class privileges. It is a general falsity.

One can understand how someone growing up working class would adopt this perspective. It never feels natural to provide ideological cover for one’s social superiors. A feeling of betrayal and guilt dogs one’s sense of morality. If one did some research, I bet there are few reporters working for major corporations whose parents were blue collar laborers. The children of the working class can’t make the cut because lying doesn’t feel as natural to them as it does for those who grow up middle class.

Why the hostile media reaction to the massacre in Haditha? It is because these killings were not being ordered from the White House. Rogue killings, if we can assume for a minute that they were, indeed, done without orders, is a sign that military discipline is breaking down. It is only a matter of time before the marines point their guns in the direction of those giving the orders. That best explains why the media is all in a tizzy over this.

The distinction between the gunning down of civilians by frustrated and angry Marines and the systematic slaughter with smart bombs under the authority of Bush and the generals is one that only the stupid crop of reporters will make.

As for John Murtha, he is working himself up in a lather of indignation because, in his small world, those killings are going to hurt the US image abroad and make it more difficult to intervene elsewhere to serve US imperialism. Never mind the fact that the war has cost the lives of 250,000-500,000 Iraqis.

KK

1 June 2006

On “Mozart turns two hundred and fifty”

Just finished the fifth part of your article on Mozart. Reading the last paragraph while listening to Symphony No 40 brought the suppressed flood of tears to my eyes. Thank you for writing this article, for putting so much of yourself into it. The whole experience of reading and listening to the music at the same time has made a lasting impression on me. And I am sure it will do the same for thousands of others around the world. I think that it marks yet another sea-change in the quality of the contents of the WWS. I look forward to the day when millions of workers all over the world will be queuing up outside opera houses, and theatres, and concert halls, and art galleries, and libraries and not only as spectators but also as creators. That is what our lives are all about. My father (who only died last year) used to tell me how during the Spanish Civil War there was a real thirst for literature and art, and you could see workers reading and reading anything everywhere, even in the militia trenches.

VS

2 June 2006

On “Bush administration reverses US ban on talks with Iran”

Starting about 10 years from now we can anticipate a reappearance of land-based contiguous military empires, such as the old Austrian, German and Russian Empires. The reason for this is that as oil supplies dwindle, productive agricultural land areas and populations will acquire increased economic value and also military power potential importance. At the current time ‘power’ is centered on controlling oil flows. Controlling the strategic chokepoints of this flow has been the main objective of all internationalist ‘strategy’ since World War I. As the use of renewable fuels expands, control of the production ‘base’ of these fuels—arable lands and their working populations—will become of much greater strategic importance to regime survival than formerly.

OM

5 June 2006

On “Dixie Chicks stand their ground”

This is my first time to read the full history of the Dixie Chicks and their encounter with Bush backers. Thanks very much WWS. BTW, how has Toby Keith fared? It saddened me to find that my former employer (Ford) used him on Ford commercials. I opposed the war by demonstrating and carrying a huge flag on a mast around downtown Indianapolis. I’m a drafted Korean War vet. (51/52).

MW

Indianapolis, Indiana, US

7 June 2006

Thank you, Tom, for this article. Although I am not a real Dixie Chicks fan, I applaud their stance against the war and their forthrightness against Bush.

The type of hysteria stirred by the right-wing radio jocks and government shills like Diane Sawyer is not uncommon in this country. The well-known destruction of Elvis Presley recordings in the 1950s (and the general demonization of rock and roll at that time) was not so unprecedented as popular culture would have us believe. I’m reading a book called *Darkest Before Dawn* about the Montana sedition law passed during World War I, when anti-German (and anti-IWW) madness overwhelmed the state, resulting in the sentencing to terms of up to 20 years of people who happened to make an offhand or unflattering remark about the war or President Wilson in a saloon or elsewhere. People who refused to buy War Bonds were accused of “disloyalty” and local counties created their own special councils to spy on the populace, even granting themselves the right to subpoena people and interrogate them. Spoken German was forbidden and German books were burned. Even preachers in German congregations were forbidden to preach in German.

Why this particular mania persists in the United States is an interesting question. Nearly a century later, we can look back on many instances of this kind of “groupthink.” The same slogans that we hear from the right wing today were used during the first World War: support the troops, dissent put troops in danger, dissent was the work of German spies trying to weaken the US’s resolve, dissent was the work of the IWW in its plot to take over the world, etc.

Wasn’t it Karl Marx who said, “History repeats itself; first as tragedy, then as farce”? But we aren’t laughing. Perhaps the third and fourth and fifth times have destroyed our sense of humor.

CZ

San Francisco, California

7 June 2006



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