

Letters from our readers

16 October 2006

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

On “US Congress legalizes torture and indefinite detention”

You write, “The sweeping legislation meets all the desires of the Bush administration except for an explicit repeal of the Geneva Convention.” Since the 1949 Geneva Conventions are not domestic legislation, they cannot be “repealed” by the United States Congress. Over 190 countries are State parties to this universal treaty with the possible exception of Nauru (as of late 2005). Of course, technically, the United States could “withdraw” from the Geneva Convention but this would be an extremely unpalatable action, which no US government would resort to. Instead, the Bush administration might—as it has already done—call for new “interpretations,” which would formally legalize its violations of the Geneva Conventions.

It is also quite doubtful that the “authorization” by the US Congress to let George W. Bush—the Head of State of a State party to the Geneva Conventions—to “interpret” the Conventions’ provisions is in accordance with international legal principles and State practice.

MZ

Burwood, Australia
29 September 2006

On “Human rights groups condemn US law on military commissions”

“The only people who will be tried will be people who have committed a crime,” said the official. Will the people who are not tried be released? Or will we have increasing numbers of Guantánamo Bays and secret prisons to keep the not-guilty-enough-to-be-tried? Will we know who is being held, or will we just continue the policy of secret detainment? Or will we enact a series of liquidations to get rid of these pesky problems? What is next? If we follow the previous patterns of history, nothing good.

CMS

Portland, Oregon, US
3 October 2006

On “The Foley affair: A snapshot of the depraved state of American politics”

I’m glad to see your article didn’t include the actual e-mail chatter from Foley to his intern that the sensationalist media are more than happy to read out loud. Doesn’t it strike you as odd that this scandal broke out on roughly the same day that Congress legalized Bush’s police-state measures? All of this makes me feel very ill, and I’ll most likely vote for the SEP this November, assuming I’m not drafted before then. Keep up the good work!

KM

4 October 2006

I agree that the entire matter is overblown, especially in view of the fact that I have learned of no real harm to these young men, who probably know more about sex than Mr. Foley, due to the prevalence of promiscuity and prurient matter in the media. But the matter is important because of the light it shines on the amazing incompetence in both parties about mental health. Because I feel strongly about the enormous need for more and better mental health services in this country, I welcome this opportunity. In the years since I was trained, in the sixties, we have only gone backward, eliminating services, dumbing down training, and completely demonizing our best tool of psychoanalytic ego psychology. If we can’t prescribe a pink pill or send the sufferer to a faith-based organization, we prefer to just ignore the problem.

NR

4 October 2006

On “Will a coup in Iraq follow the US elections?”

Perhaps the end-of-the-year deadline for the Maliki government is associated with another deadline set by the IMF for the Iraqi government to implement the petroleum law and the eagerness of American corporations to obtain product-sharing agreements. Is the terror and chaos in Iraq punishment and pressure in order to force the Iraqi government to implement oil agreements favorable to the Anglo-Americans? I feel some mention of this should have been made in the article.

FM

6 October 2006

On “The death of crocodile hunter Steve Irwin and the promotion of an Australian mythology”

I have been a faithful reader of WSWWS for over five years now, but this is my first letter to the editor in that time. Laura Tiernan’s article on Steve Irwin and the broader implications of his persona and the mourning over his death for Australian society is superb. As a politically alienated denizen of the United States, it is especially interesting and illuminating to see in detail how the same dynamics of mass brainwashing for ignoble political and economic purpose using false cultural icons takes place in other parts of the world also. The particular modalities of this brainwashing are adapted to the cultural context in question, but the basic modus operandi is clearly the same. I hope that the WSWWS will in the future publish other essays by contributors from other places to detail in a similar way how this process of brainwashing goes on in their country of origin.

MW

7 October 2006

Why so much humbug? Basically very simple: To take attention from real catastrophic problems. And after all, Irwin was not “crocodile hunter”; he was crocodile torturer. Full stop.

PM

Mackay, Australia

7 October 2006

I just wanted to thank and congratulate you for this exposé of the sheer phoniness of this country's rulers (politicians and media figures alike). I think you forthrightly articulated what more than "a significant minority" are thinking and feeling in these Orwellian times.

It's funny that the death of Peter Brock in the same week provoked nowhere near the overblown response on the part of these "patriots"—perhaps because, unlike Irwin, Brock was a champion of independent thought and action, a genuine and outspoken believer in humanity (as you and I understand it), and by no means one to kow-tow to the establishment.

IN

Sydney, Australia

7 October 2006

On "SEP candidate Joe Parnarauskis addresses University of Illinois forum"

When I read this article, I saw that once again the Democrats and the Greens are trying to present any kind of socialist agenda as inherently insane. It saddens me that the students still believe the Democratic Party is significantly enough more leftist than the Republicans. I am a high school student, and almost every student is both a Democrat and against the war—outrageous. The Illinois Democratic Party has already shown an instance in which it acted even more reactionary than the Republicans—that is, trying to stop Parnarauskis from appearing on the ballot. Once again, the Democratic Party is running on the platform that they are not the Republicans. The Democrats have all but openly admitted they are the "lesser of two evils" and that citizens are therefore obligated to vote for them. Obama and the rest of the Democratic Party have been playing bait-and-switch with their voters. If there were any antiwar candidates, the vote on September 29th would have reflected that. Ironically, the Democratic Party might just be the biggest threat to democracy in America.

MW

11 October 2006

On "The Pope and Islam: Ratzinger's Crusade"

Had Ratzinger been serious about demonstrating his view that violence and religion do not mix, he could have found plenty of quotes from the Catholic Church closer to our own times. He could have dug into the history of Croatia during the Second World War. The genocide which occurred there was so barbaric that it horrified the fascists of both the German and the Italian armies. The German army had to be confined to barracks when the Ustashe were on the rampage; and the Italian army had to be withdrawn from the Balkans altogether when its morale collapsed. One general complained to Hitler: The Ustashe have gone stark raving mad! Even Reinhard Heydrich, the architect of Germany's Final Solution, reported to Hitler that the Croats' methods were sadistic.

The Ustashe (the Croatian fascists) were Catholic and were often led by priests, bishops and members of the Franciscan Orders. Ever since the Serbs settled in the Balkans in the sixth century, the Vatican had considered them to be "perfidious beasts" because they practiced the Eastern Orthodox faith. The father of modern

Croatia, Ante Starcevi, had considered the Serbs to be "a race fit for the slaughterhouse." *Katolicki tednik*, publication of the archbishopric of Sarajevo, June 15, 1941, printed the following:

"For the Croatian people, the Serbs are the biggest enemies, to which, as in the rest of Europe, we can add the Jews, the Free Masons, and the communists.... Therefore: may we finally stop using the dumb claim, so unworthy of the followers of Christ, that one should fight against evil and against ruinous people in a polite and elegant manner."

Pator Mate Mogus, Ustashe commandant from Ubdina, declared this view in *Novi List* on July 24, 1941: "Until now we have worked for the Catholic faith with the prayer book and the cross. Now the time has come to work with rifle and revolver."

The Vatican has a full record of these events. Branko Bokun collected documents and newspaper articles detailing the slaughter and presented it to the Vatican, only to have the whole thing dismissed as "exaggeration." In 1973, he published *A Spy in the Vatican*, documenting the genocide and its cover-up.

JC

6 October 2006

On "Australian charities boycott 'welfare to work' requirements"

This is an interesting article. I learnt more from it than anything I've seen in the mainstream media, that's for sure! It hadn't occurred to me that the work choices onslaught was linked to this, but now that you mention it, it does make perfect sense, doesn't it? Your publication's other Australian articles are also good. You seem to be the only ones covering the goings-on in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Thanks for your hard work.

DK

2 October 2006



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact