Letters on the death of Gerald Ford

6 January 2007

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site *on the death and funeral of former US president Gerald Ford.*

On "Ford's funeral: the hollow pomp of a corrupt and crisis-ridden establishment"

Thank God, (and you can take that as literally or figuratively as you choose) that someone finally has the guts, perspective and insight to objectively critique the grotesque exhibition of the past week in supposed devotion to Gerald Ford. To me and countless others who are similarly disgusted, *you* are the "healer" that Ford was advertised to have been.

In a civilized country, it would be sickly ironic that at the same time that the 3,000th US soldier had died in Iraq—with only cursory media coverage—one single person's death and related ceremonies could be drawn out for more than a week. I could maybe see three or four days if he'd risen from his coffin, but really! In any case, since this is no longer a civilized country, we've come to expect such spectacles. After all, iconology has worked so well for religion. Devolve government accordingly and the ruling class can hypnotize the entire population.

Well, I just really wanted to say thanks and commend you on your article. As I alluded to earlier, you are one of the few voices I can count on—you and WSWS in general. Happy New Year to all of you.

SB
Baltimore, Maryland, US
3 January 2007

Thanks for revealing the self-serving and disgustingly excessive coverage of the Ford funeral. Yes, you are right; it tried to cover the corrupt and criminal activities of the current White House with this sentimental six-day orgy about a nondescript politician. No insight from the media during this endless process, either—propaganda at its worst.

VS
3 January 2007

Well done. It is refreshing to read someone who writes the truth. I feel you hit the nail right on the head.

SW
Bronson, Kansas, US
3 January 2007

Well done. We need a collection of statements, such as yours, put together in book form and used by academicians to help students see the need for an alternative interpretation to mainstream thought. One good sign about the "consecration" of Ford, a mediocre person, by the establishment is that it may indicate that they may be getting desperate with regard to a mounting disenchantment with upper class dominance of the government's political process.

RLB
Bradenton, Florida, US
3 January 2006

A mention just in passing: one must add the state funeral of Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945 to the list of funerals for presidents who died in office. The media coverage of FDR's remains as they went from Warm Springs, Georgia, to Washington for a state funeral, and eventually to Hyde Park, NY, for burial was done under wartime conditions. No doubt coverage was tightly controlled and meant to be used as a tool of propaganda. Still, one cannot help feeling even in this day and age that there was a lot of genuine affection for the man that no mere propaganda could honestly portray. And while FDR was certainly no socialist—by any measure—his administration did bring about changes that curbed at least a few of the worst excesses of capitalism. And it also demonstrated that a presidential administration could in some way break away from traditional labor laws and help protect the worker and allow him or her to organize, in other words, to at least recognize working people's hard fought gains for what they were.

What a miserable comparison the Ford funeral was in contrast.

PL
4 January 2006

This postmortem hagiography of Gerald Ford is positively vomitous. Of course, those of us old and aware enough to remember don't buy any of this BS. Things are at a parlous pass in America and our ruling masters continue blithely and merrily along as though things are just fine. I think—social conditions in America being what they are (divisive, explosive, bifurcated and ready to pop)—that they are in for a very rude awakening. At least that is my hope. Although the propaganda machine churns 24/7 keening the same song of happyland horsehockey, the sharp fang-tooth of class difference is beginning to be seen and felt by working Americans, who bear the brunt of everything and have no representation. If my words sound somewhat hyperbolic, please understand that they in no way can come close to encompassing the harsh reality many Americans face. Thanks for setting the record straight and reminding us of what a complete tool Ford was, his nice guy image be damned. I see from the paper today that they finally put him in the ground. He and his ilk are responsible for putting the American Dream there a long time ago.

RM
Mobile, Alabama
4 January 2006

On "Former US President Gerald Ford dies"

You have done a nice job in this article as usual, penetrating the distortions by the mainstream media of the public record of former

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President Ford.

You were correct to highlight Ford's presidential pardon of Richard Nixon, as that act constituted a historic travesty of justice. However, I was a little surprised that you did not also mention Ford's earlier role as a member of the Warren Commission, the LBJ-appointed body which in 1964 performed the first official investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and which of course concluded, against all evidence to the contrary, that a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was responsible for Kennedy's murder.

Poll after poll since 1964 has shown that a majority of Americans do not believe the findings of the Warren Commission, and in fact a second government investigation in the 1970s, this time by a US House subcommittee, concluded that JFK's assassination was most likely a conspiracy. Meanwhile, millions of Americans (myself included) have become permanently traumatized, not only by the gruesome murder of a popular and promising president, but by the obvious fact that the Warren Commission's report had represented a massive cover-up of the true circumstances of the assassination, mounted at the highest levels of government.

By all accounts, Ford, unlike several of the other Warren Commission members, never questioned any of its findings. Ford became the last surviving member of the commission, and continued to staunchly defend its findings whenever they were challenged, even to the point of lobbying to have the conspiracy documentary "The Men Who Killed Kennedy" permanently removed from The History Channel (it is my understanding that he may actually have been successful in that).

Taking into account both his pardoning of Nixon and his status as a Warren Commission member, Ford has the unique status of having been a major player in not one, but two of the biggest whitewashes in American history. He helped to cover up crimes and conspiracies that are surely among the most diabolical to have taken place within the last 50 years. Given that after all these years we still don't know how and why JFK died, and that we also still don't know the extent of Nixon's abuses of power, Ford in a sense has helped to rob us of our history. Was that not in itself a crime of the highest magnitude?

RM
Durham, North Carolina, US
29 December 2006

Gerald Ford's real legacy was that he helped in the cover-up of JFK's assassination. When he was on the Warren Commission he moved the bullet wound entry position to allow the single-bullet theory to prevail.

Ford's changes tend to support the single-bullet theory by making a specific point that the bullet entered Kennedy's body "at the back of his neck" rather than in his uppermost back, as the commission staff originally wrote.

The first articles that hit the papers seven years ago went through several redactions to obfuscate the importance of this story. I still have hard copies of these attempts to rewrite history.

JS
29 December 2006

The headline in the December 28 edition of the *Fort Lauderdale News-Sun Sentinel* is "Gerald Ford Sacrificed His Own Political Career to Soothe Scandal-Ridden Nation." The subtitle: "Ford Helped Heal Cynical Nation." Wow, imagine that. He "sacrificed" his political career and "helped heal a nation." An entire nation! Not just a few people, mind you, like a doctor would; or perhaps a few hundred needy souls, like, say, a miracle would. No, he helped heal an entire nation. (The nation of course being one big monolithic family. Who would dare think otherwise?)

And the sacrifice? Should not the sacrifice befit the not thousands, nay, millions, for whom it was made? Was it, Abraham-like, a son? A wife? Season tickets to the Redskins games? When we speak of Ford's sacrifice, we speak instead of a ... career.

Further states the *Sun-Sentinel* article: "The pardon was widely derided at the time and may have caused Mr. Ford the 1976 election. But historians now say that in pardoning Nixon, *who had appointed him vice president less than a year earlier*, Mr. Ford put the interests of the nation before his own personal ambitions" (emphasis added).

In short, he pardoned Richard Nixon, otherwise charged at the time by special prosecutor Leon Jaworski as an "unindicted coconspirator" in the Watergate scandal. And who, pray tell, were some of the indicted coconspirators? Let's see now, there was John Ehrlichman, H.R. Haldeman, and John Mitchell, all of whom went from The White House to The Big House. And I don't mean heaven.

And, finally, this brief eulogy from recently defrocked Florida congressman Clay Shaw: "He prevented us from having to go through the agony of a trial of our former president, which I think would have been a disaster." But of course! Isn't it obvious? The "agony" of justice, the "disaster" of a trial. Who could stand such a trauma?

TF
Fort Lauderdale, Florida, US
29 December 2006

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