

Letters from our readers

26 January 2007

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

On “The significance of Venezuela’s and Ecuador’s nationalizations”

Dear WSWWS,

I am writing to express agreement with Bill Van Auken’s analysis. Regarding President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and his approving references to Leon Trotsky and the internationalist socialist theory of permanent revolution, Mr. Van Auken writes, “Whether Hugo Chavez has any more familiarity with Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution than having seen the words imprinted on a book cover is not known. Whatever the case, its central perspective holds true for Venezuela and Latin America as a whole. It is impossible for these countries to free themselves from the grip of imperialism on the basis of a national revolution led by any section of the bourgeoisie or its representatives—including radicalized military officers [like Chavez himself]. That task can be achieved only by means of the independent political mobilization of the working class as part of an international revolutionary class to put an end to capitalism.”

Chavez does own a copy of Trotsky’s *Permanent Revolution*, to be sure. Whether or not he has *actually* read the book is another matter. One December 2006 source quotes him as saying on Venezuelan television, “I’m not a Trotskyite but I read Trotsky; I’m not a Marxist but I read Marx. And I read Rosa Luxemburg, etc.” Indeed, he is certainly not.

Suddenly, two January 2007 sources, for example, have him declaring duplicitously, “What is the problem? I am also a Trotskyist! I follow Trotsky’s line, that of permanent revolution.” Further, “Trotsky said that the revolution was permanent, it never finishes. Let’s go with Trotsky. It is Trotsky who is correct that the revolution does not finish.”

This, coming after the preceding passage, is the language of a political swindler and demagogue. The political record shows that Chavez is not a socialist. Rather, he is a left-leaning populist, a neo-Peronista, whose incompetence in genuine Marxism suggests that he does no more than scan the orthodox Marxist classics for convenient turns of phrase.

Whatever Chavez thinks he appropriates from the theory of permanent revolution—which he defines with crude empty-headedness—he conceives it in fundamentally petty-bourgeois nationalist terms, even when he has noted elsewhere that his so-called “Bolivarian Revolution” in Venezuela must spread to all countries in and outside Latin America.

Chavez advocates the nationalist conception of “Bolivarian socialism, Venezuelan socialism, our socialism.” He models himself on Cuban left-nationalist leader Fidel Castro; he has spoken favorably of Chinese Stalinist Mao Zedong’s ultra-leftist Cultural Revolution; and he has called Emir Hamad of the Qatar dictatorship his “friend and brother.”

The politically backward and degraded outlook that Chavez reflects, coupled with the defense of capitalist relations of production in Venezuela, ensures that the Venezuelan masses are in for a monumental disappointment under his rule. Mr. Van Auken is right to identify the “increasingly bonapartist character” of this political imposter and his pseudo-leftist regime.

Sincerely yours,

ADW

21 January 2007

On “White House propaganda campaign: Bush, Cheney smear opponents of US war in Iraq”

If we remember back to 2000, it was Bush who campaigned and “won” his election as a big-business guy, a manager that would be good for “the market.” It is telling how he is now the “war president.” It is no surprise. The same class has produced this war in a response to the dot-com bubble burst of 2000-2001, multiple “Enrons” and the subsequent economic downturn, along with the declining economic position of the US and the weakness of capitalism today worldwide. If capitalism is not weak based on a few growth and market figures, etc., it is undeniably weak in morality, integrity, honor and democracy, as this sad story shows.

JB

16 January 2007

On “Poll shows 82 percent of Germans feel politically disenfranchised”

The article about the disenchantment of the people of Germany with electoral politics is relevant not only for Europeans, but for the people all over the world who believe in democratic practice. Being a victim of British Imperialism during our fight for independence in India, I always dreamt that once we became a functioning and free democratic country all problems would be solved. But at present our elected representatives in most cases do not represent the aspirations of those whom they are supposed to represent. The vested interests, the media and the corruption and casteism and religious factors in the country’s politics have made a mockery of public interests.

SJ

India

16 January 2007

On “Military, CIA prying into Americans’ financial records”

Surely you are aware of the fact that an illegally appointed regime committing war crimes by the score has to worry about enemies outside as well as inside the gates. Bush, Cheney, and Company are now playing “whack-an-enemy” when it comes to journalists, politicians, citizens, and clergy who disagree with their thuggery. How long before they munch the suicide capsules in an underground bunker is anyone’s guess.

PK

16 January 2007

I want to let you know that I made a FOI (Freedom of Information)

request to NSA for any records they have on me. They replied that they are exempt from FOI requests and listed a bunch of reasons why they are exempt. I guess that's why they allow FOI requests direct from their web site; since they don't plan to respond to them anyway. I thought you should know this. It may be worthy of a story.

KH

17 January 2007

On "Maryland Reservist killed by police after refusing deployment in Iraq"

I served with in the same Platoon with Sgt. Dean and am in contact with all his soldiers. I have recently found out about this, and we are all concerned and hope nothing but the best for his family. *We are truly sorry.* This was something that could have been avoided, and one well placed shot to the head by a police officer sounds outrageous.

PC

Torrance, California, US

17 January 2007

On "Australian government cuts thousands of welfare recipients off benefits"

One would think that Australia would want to examine the results of such policies as workfare requirements in other places, like the US, to see if they were feasible. Americans are just starting to get some idea of the far-ranging economic impact of similar policies that not only harm the very poor but have played a significant role in keeping wages low and increasing poverty in the general population. Homelessness and hunger have steadily risen. Desperate people take desperate measures, and we've seen an explosion in the number of people in prison. Providing basic humanitarian aid to these same people would cost a fraction of what it costs to keep them in prison. We have seen how companies will lay off segments of their workforce, only to replace those workers with super-cheap welfare labor, steadily increasing the number of the poor. None of this even touches on the long-range costs, such as permanent health problems resulting from childhood malnutrition, long-term medical costs from those who couldn't afford health care, and on and on.

On the subject of requiring the ill/disabled to work—it doesn't work. This state tried to impose this policy, with very poor results. Some can work, full-time or part-time, and some cannot, no matter how harsh the punishment. There is a shortage of disability-appropriate work, and the government has not had the will to improve this. These policies were tremendously damaging to many, increased the healthcare needs of many of them significantly, and the required work policy was finally ended.

In short, work requirements for those who can't work and/or don't have access to disability-appropriate jobs is not only cruel and unreasonable, but is tremendously costly to taxpayers/government, with very poor results.

DF

18 January 2007

On "China's defence report highlights growing dangers of war"

You write, "There are signs, however, that the US is striving for nuclear primacy—that is, the ability to prevent nuclear retaliation in response to a first strike." You may wish to read Lieber & Press, "The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy," in the March/April 2006 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. There are blunt statements as well as "signs." The summary for the article states, "For four decades, relations among the major nuclear powers have been shaped by their common vulnerability, a condition known as mutual assured destruction. But with the US arsenal growing rapidly while Russia's decays and

China's stays small, the era of MAD is ending—and the era of US nuclear primacy has begun."

The authors make it clear that current US policy contemplates a preemptive nuclear strike against China *and* Russia. They state explicitly what has been clear from the start, that the Strategic Defense Initiative's purpose was to protect the US from the nuclear response to such an attack that might be generated by the very few remaining nuclear armaments of the destroyed country.

MG

Los Angeles, California, US

19 January 2007

On "The coronation of Nicholas Sarkozy: French interior minister named Gaullist presidential candidate"

I'm a little confused by your statement, "The Gaullist candidate goes so far as to accuse the official French left of betraying the worker." From all the reading I've done I'm compelled to conclude this fact belongs in the realm of a simple truism and therefore one wouldn't have to "go very far" in order to make such a claim concerning the "official left" in France.

Respectfully,

HS

Burbank, California, US

20 January 2007

On "Kyoto's Clean Development Mechanism: global warming and its market fix"

Dear Mark,

This is an excellent analysis of what capitalists engage in—making "deals" rather than acting concretely to solve environmental, social and economic problems. Evading responsibility for the catastrophic effects of their technology, economic and social order is a characteristic of a system based on individual greed and self-indulgence. Such a system is unsustainable. Capitalism is incapable of solving the crises that it generates at all levels. Those who think it can are engaging in a self-deception, especially those who embrace deceptions like CDM.

GC

San Jose, California, US

16 January 2007



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