

Anti-imperialism vs. anti-Americanism: an exchange of letters

26 February 2007

The following is an exchange of letters with a reader on the article “Blaming the Iraqis: A new cover-up for American militarism”.

You are absolutely right! And the first one in print to say so. My husband and I have noticed that diversionary tactic in political speeches.

But what else can they do in this political shell game? The “Blaming Iran” tactic seems to have failed (so far), so they need to place the blame somewhere. The Iraqis are like the likely choice. Remember, many Americans *still* think Saddam was behind 9/11!

The fact that the massacres did not start till *after* the US invasion has already been forgotten by the US public. Just keep talking about Brittany Spears’ shaved head and lack of underwear, and the latest X-Box, and they forget there even is a war.

In the recent documentary on the Iraq war, *Ground Truth*, a 25-year-old soldier who lost a hand said that when he got home someone asked him how it happened. When he answered that he’d lost it in the war, the next question was, “What war?” He answered, “The Iraq war.” The response was, “Really? Is that still going on?”

The US never had the right to invade Iraq, just like the Nazis had no right to invade Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Russia, etc. The people of those countries sabotaged Nazi trains and killed as many German soldiers as they could. Were they right? Or were they wrong?

If another country invaded the USA, would it be wrong for US citizens to sabotage and to kill the invading soldiers? I think all killing is wrong, but we should apply the same rules.

It’s pathetic for American soldiers to play “Innocent Victim” when they invade a country that has done nothing to them, bomb villages, torture innocent civilians, rape 12-year-old girls and set them on fire. The survivors are going to take revenge on the next American soldier they see. And the soldiers in *this* war don’t even have the excuse that they were drafted. They *volunteered* to go kill, but can’t understand why anybody would want to shoot *them*. Let’s get real.

Americans paradoxically think of themselves as saints with God on their side and as Tough Guys who have every right to do anything to anybody if it gives them a little more oil for their SUVs, or more land stolen from Native Americans and Mexico,

or passage for their ships, such as taking the Panama Canal from Colombia.

I can’t even figure out why we went to war with Vietnam, or fermented assassinations in Indonesia, Angola, Chile and Chad, just to name a few.

I wish the US Government would at least stop being so hypocritical and admit they don’t give a rat’s ass that they’re murdering innocent men, women, and children for money, instead of justifying it by saying they are bringing “Democracy” to a country, or “Liberating it from an evil dictator,” or saving them from “Communism,” or by lying that Iraq was behind 9/11, or they had WMDs, or whatever the latest bogeyman happens to be.

Iraq never attacked the US, just like Vietnam, El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama or the other tiny little, unknown countries which never attacked the US. Yet the US always manages to find a pretext for killing innocent people there. It’s all about money!

Sorry about the rant. I just finished reading *Fiasco* and I’m pissed. Not only is this an evil, greedy government, it is also incredibly and absolutely incompetent!

Which reminds me of the great quote by Will Durant: “A civilization cannot be destroyed unless it has already been destroyed within.”

MB

20 February 2007

Dear MB,

Your response to Patrick Martin’s article “Blaming the Iraqis: A new cover-up for American militarism” is welcome. We can certainly appreciate the anger and frustration you feel over the rapacious and criminal war being waged by the Bush administration. But the salient point here is that you are not alone in this view.

There continues to be no political outlet for the mass opposition to the war that revealed itself in the repudiation of Bush’s policies in the 2006 mid-term election. The lack of any genuine outlet for antiwar sentiment within the two-party system has been underscored by the post-election prostration of the Democratic Party “opponents” of the war.

Your letter indicates a more than passing familiarity with the crimes of US imperialism over the last six decades. But it is now time to place these events within a proper analytical

framework, or, as the great philosopher Spinoza once wrote, “Not to laugh, not to weep, but to understand.”

When you say, “The fact that the massacres did not start till after the US invasion has already been forgotten by the US public,” it is time to pause. I think you tend to identify the obvious lies and distortions advanced by the capitalist media with the consciousness of the vast majority of the American people, which has not remained by any means static.

How does one account for the results of the 2006 elections? The growing disquiet and anger, even hatred, aimed at the government’s policies has not gone un-noticed by Bush and Cheney, who have made it abundantly clear that massive public opposition will have no impact on their decisions either to continue the Iraq war or to launch a new one against Iran.

I believe that to an unfortunate extent your response to blaming the Iraqis is to blame the Americans (the American people as a whole), and this is a wrong approach that I hope you will reconsider. That there has been backwardness and confusion expressed in the American population since the events of 9/11 is undeniable. How could it be otherwise?

The US ruling elite through its kept media has worked incessantly to sow this confusion and to conceal the actual events behind the peculiar stand-down of domestic security and intelligence on the eve of 9/11, and in its aftermath, the real motivations behind the explosion of US militarism.

It is true that the Republican and Democratic parties collectively exercise a dictatorship over political life, constricting the parameters of the “debate” on the war, as though no-one outside of their cloistered environs recognizes that it was their decision to launch this aggressive war in the first place that has created this tragedy for the Iraqi people and for thousands of American families. The machinations of Democrats and Republicans alike have become increasingly transparent, so ensnared are they in the catastrophe that is the Iraq war.

Their attempt to bludgeon the American people into supporting this criminal enterprise has turned dangerously awry. There has been a dramatic, but as yet politically inchoate shift in the thinking of a large section of the American people towards the war and the militarism of the ruling elite in this country. People are drawing their own conclusions, and events such as the government’s callous disregard for the victims of the Katrina disaster, the attack on the right of habeas corpus and the general erosion of democratic rights, and, finally, the unprecedented socio-economic polarization have burrowed their way into the consciousness of millions.

We are in agreement that the Iraqi people have the right to take up arms to repulse the attempt at re-colonization of their country and the plundering of their natural resources. At the same time, however, it cannot be emphasized enough that the Iraqi masses urgently need a political perspective no less so than people in this country.

Socialists do not blame the general population of a particular

country for the crimes of their rulers. Thus, we opposed residual anti-German sentiment that revealed a profound ignorance of the reasons for the rise of Hitler and the victory of fascism, particularly the pernicious role of Stalinism in paving the way for the historic defeat of the German working class.

In the same way, we are opposed to ascribing collective guilt for the crimes of the Bush administration to the American people, and for that matter, even the US soldiers, most of whom are economic conscripts forced into this situation by circumstances that they themselves barely understand. The question of “supporting the troops,” hurled at genuine opponents of the war by Democrats and Republicans alike, is a fraud. What has been the result of this “support” except the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and more than 3,000 Americans, with over 20,000 wounded?

We have to place the blame squarely where it belongs. Anti-Americanism as it is advanced in some radical circles—and by political reactionaries in other countries who use it as a convenient cloak to mask their own nationalist appetites as well as attacks being prepared against their own working classes—depicts the United States as a monolithic society devoid of social contradictions. I think you would agree that nothing could be further from the truth. The United States is an extraordinarily diverse country, rife with class divisions of an explosive and potentially revolutionary character.

You must not content yourself with superficial analyses and emotions. It is the American ruling elite and its political representatives who are criminally responsible for waging aggressive war against Iraq.

I would urge you to read an article we posted in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, “Anti-Americanism: The Anti-imperialism of fools”. In it, we wrote, “For Bush and his ilk ‘defending freedom and democracy’ is merely a code phrase for the right of the American elite to have its way around the world. To the ordinary American citizen these words mean something quite different. The sinister reality of the US government’s new ‘war against terrorism,’ with its grandiose aim of reorganizing an entire region of the world in line with American geo-political interests, will make its way into the popular consciousness provided the necessary work is conducted by socialist internationalists.”

I hope you will continue to read the *World Socialist Web Site* and correspond with us.

Yours truly,

Walter Gilberti, for the WSWs editorial board
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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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