

# Letters from our readers

6 November 2007

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

On “US attorney general nominee refuses to condemn torture techniques”

Since the inception of the Bush presidency we have seen a process whereby the administration’s lawyers have sought to overturn or undermine long established juridical principles and, in effect, render illegality legal. In Germany, an analogous process occurred in the 1930s. While there are significant differences between the current day USA and Germany of that time, it is instructive to compare the way in which the law was usurped to normalize the unthinkable.

In both cases, a state of emergency was declared to strengthen executive power. In Germany of the 1930s the Reichstag fire provided that opportunity to the Nazis. The attack on the Twin Towers provided a similar opportunity to the Bush administration.

Political theories, devised in the main by lawyers, laid the foundations for the executive usurpation of power. In Nazi Germany it was argued that a dictatorship more effectively embodies the will of the people; this notion was more fully fleshed out as the Fuhrer Principle. In the USA we have seen a cabal of people around Bush promoting the notion of the unitary executive principle, a principle which strengthens the president’s ability to act unilaterally without regard to the limitations of law and Congress.

In Nazi Germany, parliament was reduced to a mere rubber stamp. In the USA, despite gaining control of congress, the Democrats have not effectively challenged the president’s usurpation of power and in the main have acted as enablers of the Bush administration.

In 1934, German Nazi Justice Minister Roland Freisler issued a warning to judges: “It is not the role of the judge to alter the existing laws of the nation” because “chaos and anarchy would replace unified leadership” if judges had to “decide questions which can be solved only from the superior vantage point of the Fuhrer.” Under Bush we have seen similar pressure exerted upon the judiciary.

In both Nazi Germany and the present day USA, administration lawyers have argued that an unconventional enemy has rendered international laws and constraints obsolete. Gonzales’ characterization of the Geneva Conventions as “quaint” is a case in point. In both cases, legal opinions, memoranda and directives led to state-organized practices of brutal interrogation, torture and extermination of enemies. Both the USA and the Nazis made use of secret prisons.

What is clear is that the US administration, with the complicity of the Democrats, poses a mortal threat to the world today, much

in the same way that the Hitler regime did in the 1930s.

EG

1 November 2007

On “Auto workers oppose CAW’s sweetheart deal with Magna”

I have sent an e-mail to Basil (Buzz) Hargrove:

“Dear Basil,

“Are 13,000 jobs lost enough for you? Do the workers in Canada have to rely on a different type of justice? We as a union have been advocating as per your book, *A More Human Canada*. We do not go back, we move forward. We as workers have tried to achieve those goals, yet in the light of your new ‘fairness of shamework,’ sorry, it’s ‘framework of fairness.’

“I do not see how CAW members can hold their heads up and support your decision. I was never so proud to be a CAW member when we as a union (Local 27) shut down the cities (London, Windsor, Toronto, etc.) in the Days of Protest. How can you, as the most respected labour union leader (next to Bob White), abandon the most fundamental principles of trade unionism? As an elected rep of unit 17 (Accuride), I have been told if this is accepted as CAW policy then maybe we should look to switching to a real union.

“Buzz: I hope you do not put us in that situation. Thank you for your time.”

PM

CAW Local 27, Unit 17

London, Ontario

2 November 2007

On “*Rendition: An open attack on the Bush administration’s system of torture*”

Thank you so much for your compelling review of *Rendition*. I saw the film today based upon your recent discussion, and I must say, the film certainly portrays the degraded condition of our current political situation in moving detail.

Your point about how the mainstream media totally dismissed this film rings especially true. While the film’s message is penetrating, it’s still encouraging to see that art can express so movingly our truly precarious political reality. Too bad the film will not find a larger audience. I was alone in the theater this afternoon, and I doubt the film will run beyond a week here in our small town (Yelm, WA). But I did want to express my gratitude to you for your forthright and honest appraisal of this important film.

JM

Yelm, Washington, USA

2 November 2007

In his review of *Rendition*, your reviewer makes the following remark: “Jake Gyllenhaal also gives a fine performance in the film and has similarly been derided by critics. Both he and Witherspoon

give quiet, understated performances. No one is chewing up the scenery with their overwrought method acting here and so most critics have not bothered—or been able—to notice their contributions.”

It is rather unfortunate that this intelligent look at an important film makes such a flippant and disparaging remark about “method acting.” I’ve been an actor for 30 years, a member of all the acting guilds and federations and untold number of stage, radio, film and television credits, and never has a single person who disparages the method been able to tell me what “the method” is. I have reason to believe that the writer of this piece doesn’t either.

I am a method actor and proud of it. Just suffice to say that “the method,” fundamentally, is a way to search for the truth in theatrical performances. It placed acting on a very material foundation—that of the actor’s person—emotionally, psychologically, physically—and his/her relationship to the outside world. It was not—and is not—based on some idea of what reality is, which is imitative and representational.

May I remind this writer that some of our finest actors of the past 60 years have been method actors? The list of famous names and great actors associated with Lee Strasburg and the people who branched out from him is too long to mention. Just begin with Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Anne Bancroft, Jane Fonda, Robert de Niro, Gene Hackman, Dustin Hoffman, Jim Stanley, Geraldine Page, Rip Torn, etc., etc.

How is this to be explained? Would he call these method actors “scene chewers”? As in all professions and art, there are those that misuse their tools. And there are, indeed, many actors who become self-indulgent with “the method.” But those never get anywhere. In trying to understand the world through the art of acting, “the method” has left us a profound legacy.

Thank you for a fine review, though. Apparently, *Rendition* is a must-see film.

RR

Los Angeles, California, USA

3 November 2007

On “Jean Charles de Menezes shooting: Metropolitan police found guilty of endangering the public”

I’ve just read RR’s letter <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/nov2007/corr-n03.shtml> about giving up US citizenship. My response is, “Where would you go?” It is far better to stay and fight for improvement rather than seek a utopian Shangri-la that does not exist.

As a UK citizen seeking US citizenship for mainly legal reasons, I wish also to condemn this shooting of de Menezes. It shows again that England is no longer a place for democratic rights nor freedom from police attack (something usually associated with the USA in so many Hollywood movies used by the establishment to distinguish British “fair play” from “violent America”). This is no longer the case and the killing of this unfortunate man was nothing less than murder, something denied by Sir Ian Blair of the Metropolitan Police.

Ironically, one of the first defenders of this action was Michael Winner, director of *Death Wish*, hours after it happened. Ironically, the former “Red Ken” Mayor Livingston has now justified these events. As long as New Labour remains in power

and the necessary alternative democratic pro-human rights, working-class orientated movement remain far from being realized, this incident will be the first of many, particularly in the light of the growing anti-asylum-seeker and anti-immigrant sentiments now taking over both the United Kingdom and Europe.

TW

3 November 2007

On “An Evening with Brian Wilson”

I beg to differ with your correspondent’s letter on the Brian Wilson article. Obviously, music buying was very different in England than it was here in the states during the 1960s. Contrary to FS’s statement that “great” albums didn’t exist and that “most record buyers could not afford albums,” I bought albums all the time, of every single artist whose music I liked. Albums only cost \$3-5! Everybody I knew in school and out bought the hit albums of all the greats, from the Beatles to Cream to Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, Rolling Stones (especially the Stones, to whose music we danced at parties), and Procol Harum to the folkies to (yes!) the Beach Boys, the Youngbloods, Richie Havens, Frank Zappa and Bob Dylan. Everyone I knew had scores, if not hundreds, of albums in the 1960s and 1970s. There was even a genre of FM radio called AOL for “album-oriented rock” that began when concept albums started coming out. FM radio would play an entire album at a sitting if the DJ was in the mood. Lots of people listened to the Beach Boys from beginning to end. Their single “Good Vibrations” came out in the spring of 1966, when I was a freshman in college, and we played it nonstop that entire spring until Sgt. Pepper arrived. Everyone bought *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *The White Album*, and played them nonstop, too.

I agree with FS on two important points, however: [your opinion of] McCartney and that any one year of the 60s-70s beats the entire output of anything that came out after Reagan became president.

CZ

San Francisco, California, USA

31 October 2007



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