

Letters from our readers

14 February 2008

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

On “Sri Lankan Independence: 60 years of communalism, social decay and war”

Thank you for the article on Sri Lanka’s problems since its independence. I fully agree that both Sinhala nationalism and Tamil nationalism are bad, harmful to the working class. A Marxist party should resolutely oppose all forms of nationalism—including armed offensive to crush separatism, which, as history clearly shows, can only strengthen separatism. Hence, SEP’s line of condemning both separatism and the armed intervention against separatism is 100 percent correct. I also agree that Marxists should refrain from joining bourgeois governments, however “progressive” they may claim to be. It’s 100 percent correct to condemn Lanka Sama Samaja’s betrayal. Those who betray the working class deserve to be condemned.

FR

4 February 2008

On “Bush budget: programs slashed to pay for tax cuts and war”

What we are seeing with Bush’s latest budget is simply a continuation of Reagan’s “trickle-down economics.” These policies have been devastating to the American people, severely eroding the economic foundation of the US. No matter how you rephrase the issue, this is simply more Robinhood-in-reverse economics, concentrating the collective wealth of the nation into the hands of the few. Step by step, the US is increasingly a feudal state, with the people forced to work hard only to give the bulk of their earnings to the rich. The American people no longer have a stake in this country. There is nothing to work for, and certainly nothing to die for.

DHF

Wisconsin, USA

5 February 2008

On “The world crisis of capitalism and the prospects

for socialism”

Nick Beams clearly elucidates how Leon Trotsky employs long-term phases to account for the historical development of capitalism. This is a worthy application of Marx’s method. After his informative series, it becomes much clearer how Naomi Klein has appropriated the perspective of the left in order to blunt the full impact of “the mobilisation of the working class.”

At one point, Klein cleverly attempts to distort her actual sources by vaguely rendering a Marxist analysis: “The idea that market crashes can act as catalysts for revolutionary change has a long history on the far left, most notably in the Bolshevik theory that hyperinflation, by destroying the value of money, takes the masses one step closer to the destruction of capitalism itself. The theory explains why a certain breed of sectarian Marxist is forever calculating the exact conditions under which capitalism will reach the crisis much as evangelical Christians calibrate signs of the coming Rapture.” Her comparison of the sectarian breed of Marxism to evangelical Christianity is the height of confusion. It substitutes for an honest reckoning that her own notion of the catastrophic impact of capitalism has its roots in a tradition of Marxist scholarship including Trotsky.

In *Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein does a competent analysis by linking the CIA’s psychological warfare with Milton Friedman’s methodology. But the very strength of her work may be its ultimate undoing. Her dominant mode of critique is psychological. In this she shares the New Left’s affinity for psychoanalysis. The intent is quite clear. The only way that society can change is by accepting the diagnosis of the analyst. Since the people have been numbed by the trauma, as analyst, Klein assumes the central place formerly assigned to the working class in ministering the social change.

Marcuse and Adorno influenced the New Left in just

this style of thought. They believed that the European people had been traumatized by Nazism, and, therefore postwar culture lulled them into a total acceptance of consumerism. The New Left extended this reasoning to claim falsely that the working class lacked a revolutionary consciousness.

In place of a revolutionary politics, Klein's criticism of Pinochet is coupled with her muddled admiration for Salvador Allende and a host of Latin American nationalists that preceded him. She really has no grasp of how Allende betrayed the working class into the hands of Pinochet. Like the Pabloite tendencies, she continues to subordinate the working class to a host of more recent nationalists such as Chavez, Lula, Kirchner, Morales, and Correa.

KH

5 February 2008

On "There Will Be Blood: a promising subject, but terribly weak results"

Your review is pitch perfect. I'm so glad you make use of Upton Sinclair's Novel *Oil*, since the filmmaker made so little use of it. I agree that the opening half of the film is compelling, makes good use of a stunning and strange score. Daniel Day Lewis is at his best in the opening and early scenes as his character's single-minded and solitary quest to strike it rich progresses toward an insanity and cruelty so intense I felt as if I were hallucinating as I watched. Once I put my hand in front of my face to see if the oily smoke that drifted and eddied in front of me was real or not. I think for seconds at a time I escaped consciousness rather than experience the intensity of the film's unrelenting march merely swindling the rubes out of their land, the empty promises of a better future for all, into a vision of hellish isolation and cruelty. I think the film will garner a cult following, but Oscar status? Not with films like *No Country For Old Men* and *Michael Clayton* in the running.

PP

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

6 February 2008

On "Bush administration acknowledges and defends use of torture technique"

This stand by the highest representatives of "our," not my, government only serves to reinforce my opinion that "our" greatest criminals still remain free! Impeach the Liars and jail the individuals (most of Congress)

who enable them to continue this reign of terror! Speak out people! Raise a black flag!

RG

Tempe, Arizona, USA

7 February 2008

On "Hitler's 'intelligible response' to the contradictions of global capitalism: The Wages of Destruction by Adam Tooze"

This was a very interesting article. I shall go off and order the book at my local library. You can see the similarities between the strategies of the National Socialists, the Neocons, Margaret Thatcher, et al.

PA

8 February 2008

Thank you for this review of a very important analysis of Hitler's "'intelligible' response to the contradictions of world capitalism." I would just extend the thesis that WWII was an "intelligible" response by capitalists who were driven by their need for preventing potential revolutionary movements to channel fear and hatred into nationalist militarisms that resulted in the most ferocious war in human history with 60 million dead to save the capitalist system. The militarism continues in the USA with the reliance upon Military Keynesianism to prop up a demonic economy. Seymour Melman and Chalmers Johnson have written eloquently on this strategem.

RLB

Bradenton, Florida, USA 8 February 2008



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