

Letters from our readers

5 July 2008

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

On “Bank of International Settlements annual report: World economy may be at ‘tipping point’”

Here in the American South I see everywhere the evidence of affluence—everybody it seems has newer model cars, the outward material trappings of success, the striving classes seeming to be doing quite well—and I wonder why, given the dire predictions I see on your site and elsewhere, how this appearance differs from reality. I am not an economist, far from it. Your article is helping me puzzle out this seeming contradiction: the appearance of affluence when the economic facts suggest that we are most likely on the precipice.

The appearance, of course, is the outward material surface of things: bought commodities, slick cars/gas guzzling SUVs/trucks abound (even as car production languishes/jobs slashed/worker wages-rights devastated), the hyper-churning of the consumer market without which the capitalist economy could not exist (?)—but all of this, as you point out, purchased/cashiered with easy credit, the piling up of enormous debt which must be paid and which has led to current credit/mortgage crises, and so on. The reality lies in the cold hard facts you cite, whose face will increasingly become more visible as conditions worsen. Surface appearances will soon, perhaps, begin to reflect these realities?

The historical precedents you cite—former crises, boom and bust cycles of capitalism—are very illuminating. Please continue to explain these forces, for those of us who are not specialists.

RM

1 July 2008

Insightful and well-researched article, as always, Nick. I would only add, briefly, that it seems like many of the “happy-talking-head” economists in this looting Bush administration team and among the private corporate sectors’ looting financial Ponzi teams, who were talking just a month ago about the recovery of the economy and avoidance of recession, are now admitting that there may

well be a “deep recession.”

Perhaps to be more honest than they ever were in the past, they should simply contract the hedgy term “deep recession” to the shorter, more accurate, and easy-to-understand, concatenated word “depression.”

AM

Sanford, Maine, USA 1 July 2008

On Riots in Mongolia

Dear Sir,

I would like to talk briefly about the very recent riots that happened in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia Tuesday night. It is my belief that this event was not accurately presented by the international media and if possible I would like to hear some explanation in terms of Marxist/socialist views.

The riot, looting and burning of the Social Revolutionary Party office was started due to allegations of vote tampering. What has not been reported was that the protest and riots were started by the leaders of a defeated party (the People’s Movement Party) who were reported to have offered participants in the demonstration the equivalent of US\$15, one bottle of vodka for every four people and one bag of stones for everyone.

It is true that many were angry at the Revolutionary Party who were involved in many different scandals during their rule. Yet there was no evidence of vote tampering nor had the official result been announced. As the president of Mongolia said, there are legal measures available to handle allegations of vote tampering, yet none of those measures were taken advantage of before the losing parties started the riots.

It would seem that this losing party decided to crassly manipulate the anger of the working masses as a political weapon. That it is the same party which retained sole power in Mongolia during its socialist period is now being attacked for corruption during the democratic period is to me an indication of the relative ease that politicians had in exploiting money from the working people.

This riot should show that capitalism has not been the positive answer in Mongolia that it was famed to be. Nor

is Mongolia a shining star of the new democracies in the world. The large amount of anger that was able to be fomented from such a seemingly minor event should show that the social polarization caused by corrupt capitalist politicians and Western investors alike has severely unbalanced this country, almost to the point in which the illusion of democracy can no longer be maintained.

Thank you,
OC

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
2 July 2008

On “Not quaint at all—The BBC’s Filth: The Mary Whitehouse Story”

What an interesting review tracing the cultural and historical issues lacking in this broadcast in a way WSWs uniquely does! I’m expecting a copy of this program from a friend in the UK soon, but I can remember the era very well. Hugh Carleton-Greene was also the brother of Graham Greene, and the mention of “Schwizzlewick” brings back memories. It was not a popular or long running series and is only remembered today for featuring one of the early appearances of veteran TV actor Patrick Mower. But, from what I can remember of it, I cannot recall any such episode described in the review. As we all know, creative license can be used by the Right but in more dangerous ways, especially by omitting Whitehouse’s political allies, both past and present.

TW
2 July 2008

On “Bush administration settles Hatfill suit, buries anthrax investigation”

According to South African press reports, Hatfill has boasted, at various times, of serving in the US Army Special Forces in Vietnam and of participating in clandestine operations in the erstwhile Rhodesian SAS and the apartheid-era South African Defence Force, as well as the neo-Nazi AWB’s Aquila Brigade. It appears that he never actually served in the Army Special Forces, nor was he ever in Vietnam. He did however spend a year in the Marines in 1971 and was in the Army Reserve between 1975 and 1978. He attempted to join the Army Special Forces, but “washed out of the program after about a month.”

Thereafter he spent about 15 years in Rhodesia and South Africa. It was at this time that he claimed membership of the Selous Scouts, the SADF and the neo-Nazi AWB. These claims are hard to verify. According to an associate of his, Edward Rybicki, Hatfill had

somewhat of a “Walter Mitty complex.” Nevertheless, it is clear that Hatfill identified with the cause of the white supremacists. His association with the AWB arose from a newspaper photograph and article about the AWB’s special training camps pinned onto a lab notice board. The photograph supposedly showed Hatfill and several AWB members in the company of AWB leader Eugene Terreblanche. This led to Hatfill claiming membership of the AWB, which was essentially a terrorist organization.

Whether this is true or not is difficult to verify. Nevertheless it is clear that the FBI has more circumstantial evidence against Hatfill than it has against Jose Padilla, raising the question as to why Hatfill has not been arrested. Moreover, there are also questions as to why the US government was prepared to give highly sensitive security clearances to someone who claimed to have been associated with the South African military (at the time of Project Coast—the apartheid regime’s biological warfare program), the Selous Scouts and a neo-Nazi group.

EG
South Africa
3 July 2008

On “US advisers steered Iraqi oil contracts to Western firms”

I wonder about this: In the past the US had an explicit or implicit agreement with the Arab OPEC nations. It said: “If you price oil in dollars (rather than euros, as Saddam did in 2000), we will protect you from all harm and keep the oil flowing.” When Saddam violated the agreement by pricing oil in euros, we “removed” him. I wonder if in stealing Iraq’s oil we are sending the other nations a message: If you screw with us, you’ll be invaded, deposed and we’ll steal what we want. *Or*, are we creating a new policy. Finally, how are the other Arab nations reacting to this? Are they in opposition or in agreement or something in between?

SES
Carthage, Missouri, USA
1 July 2008



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