Letters from our readers

26 July 2008

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

On "What accounts for Europe's love affair with Obama?"

Absolutely on the button. The US/EU ruling class knows very well that their people have seen through all the ruses—Christianity, Faith, Conservatism, Lower taxes—and now need another diversion while the real job, bilking them of the last portion of their life savings, namely their homes, proceeds to completion. Obama is their ultimate magician's puppet.

VRS
USA
24 July 2008

I think the world embraces Obama not as any sort of messiah, but in the same way we embrace the first signs of spring. One must keep in mind that spring (at least, here in the Great Lakes region) can also bring deadly floods and tornados. Although knowing the potential for harm, there is still a sense of relief when the bitter winter ends.

I fear that the sense of hope so many feel is a false hope. Obama does intend to "draw down" the war in Iraq, but only by expanding it into Afghanistan and Pakistan. On economics, he embraces the get-tough-on-the-poor agenda that has so deeply harmed the US over the past decade (primarily by continuing the use of the poor as a no rights/no choice, bottom wage workfare workforce, largely as a replacement labor, effective for wiping out unions and suppressing wages). He supports the welfare "reform" agenda that has been central to the steady decline in the life expectancy of America's poor along with the sharp increase in infant mortality among our poor.

DHF
24 July 2008

On "New York Times boosts Pentagon push for wider bombing in Afghanistan"

You note the statement in the *Times* article, "They said these more stringent rules [for Afghanistan] required a significantly lower risk of civilian casualties than was acceptable in Iraq."

Let us take what they are saying it face value, which is dubious to begin with. But this just has it rear end backward under international law. As I explain in *Protesting Power*, where I distinguish Iraq from Afghanistan, the US technically is the belligerent occupant of Iraq, but not most of Afghanistan. Therefore, all civilians in Iraq are "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention, whereas most civilians in Afghanistan are not "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Hence the citizens of Iraq must be accorded the highest degree of protection possible, and as specified by the Fourth Geneva Convention. Arguably, most citizens of Afghanistan are only entitled to the benefits of the so-called targeting rules set forth in Additional Protocol 1 to the Four Geneva Conventions, which even the US government recognizes to constitute customary international law. And of course the civilians of Iraq are also entitled to the benefits of the AP 1 targeting rules as well.

Francis A. Boyle
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Champaign, Illinois, USA
24 July 2008

On "China's Olympic security measures reveal a regime under siege"

Any pretence that the Olympic Games is the world's biggest sporting event, or that it is in any way connected with sport as such, or as a unifying experience for nations to live in peace and harmony, as envisaged by Baron de Cubertin, is long gone. Instead it is now a naked commercial exposition, the world's biggest, with billions of pairs of eyes watching the commercials, the logos and promotions of a blinding variety of consumer goods. But wait, there's more:

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there are billions of dollars in revenue to be garnered by the TV networks and newspapers, the tourist operators and a variety of other business interests.

A typical win-win situation, right? Wrong! It is also an opportunity to greatly increase the exploitation of the Chinese working class and the peasants, to institute, under the mantle of the "Olympic ideal" and nationalism, a police state. For the working classes, a classic lose-lose situation. This is, as in other capitalist states, including Australia, the only way a regime can protect itself against the population.

In the case of China, and the Olympics, the ruling class is treading a fine line: on the one hand, there are great commercial gains to be made by the ruling class, as well as enhanced political "prestige" around the world, and a great chance to advance qualitatively and quantitatively repressive measures against a restive population; on the other, an ever-present danger of a social explosion at a time of increased exploitation, runaway inflation, repression, evictions and expropriation amongst the wider population. The shutting down of industries in the vicinity of Olympic venues, the displacement of over a million Beijing inhabitants, traffic control to reduce pollution in view of the Birds Nest stadium and other venues, police controls, "preventive" arrests of suspected activists, all add fire to the tinderbox that can become a revolutionary situation.

In the end, it is the population at large that will pay for this capitalist extravaganza, just as the populations of Seoul, Sydney and Athens have paid and are still paying them off. In fact, Montreal still has a debt to pay. Viewed in this light, it is a quintessential capitalist enterprise, ever expanding, with each one more costly and "secure" than the previous one, ever more corrupt, and now militarised, until, like the capitalist system itself, it will collapse under its own weight, for which we should fervently hope and strive for.

MS
Queanbeyan, Australia
23 July 2008

On "Returning veterans face mounting joblessness and low wages"

From having just read your article I'd say that you've made a pretty thorough analysis of the overall situation plaguing not just veterans but this entire country as well. The reality of it is almost too much to bear sometimes, because this is the so-called "land of opportunity" and yet there are disabled vets, young and old, living on the streets, starving, praying to God that they could have a decent home to live in, a stable job from which they could profit in numerous ways, and mostly that the US government would actually care enough about the interests of this country to exact meaningful and positive changes.

Instead they are shunned by their fellow Americans for what they've done overseas, ironically enough in their own defense and that of the land from which they were born; they are the hungry, the weary, the poverty-stricken and the disillusioned warriors.

I know this all too well, because I am one of them at the tender age of 24. I too feel a deep-seated sense of rage, bitterness, resentment and utter hatred towards both this greedy, heartless, careless country and government.

RG
24 July 2008

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