

Letters from our readers

13 September 2008

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

On “Political dissent as terrorism: ‘Minnesota Patriot Act’ charges filed against RNC Eight”

Thanks for the article. I’ve read a lot of WSWS columns that concern me, but this one may be the most disturbing. You summed up in your last paragraph what has been brewing since the Patriot Act was passed. For those of us paying attention, this was certainly a trial run for future repression. Your added emphasis regarding the Minnesota law obviously begs the question, “Didn’t the powers that be break their own laws by arresting the RNC8?” Joseph Goebbels would be proud....

DR

11 September 2008

Even writing letters to public officials in Minnesota has been restricted. My e-mails in support of single-payer universal health care and for the rights of casino workers have been “filtered” by the Internet technicians who have banned my e-mails from reaching state legislators.

Also, on Sept. 3, I was denied admission to the State Legislative Building with offices for state representatives and to the state capitol building that has offices for state senators on the grounds that I “was wearing a t-shirt with Che.” I regularly meet with state legislators and their legislative assistants concerning the lack of rights for Minnesota’s 30,000 casino workers.

I appreciated your article on the RNC 8 although you seem to have overstated how democratic Minnesota is. Also, you failed to mention that the prosecuting attorney, Susan Gertner, intends to run for governor of Minnesota on the Democratic Party (Minnesota Democratic Farmer-Labor Party, as the Democratic Party is known in Minnesota) ticket and is seen as the leading contender.

Also, both the mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis are staunch Democrats. You also failed to mention that Democratic United States senator, Amy Klobuchar—a former prosecutor—has been supporting the police in all of this.

AM

Warroad, Minnesota, USA 11 September 2008

On “The Way of the World by Ron Suskind: Revelations of war crimes and moralizing idealism”

Excellent review. If the evidence Suskind cites is not actionable-impeachable, what is? As these further damning indictments come out against the mindless idiot Bush and his puppetmasters, we are subjected to the ongoing farce of a “presidential race.” It will include two people on the slate with almost no experience—one a gobbling Pentecostal—and another person who is an elder who appears in the early stages of senescence (this is meant not as insult but fact—much as it was evident early on that Reagan was impaired). In any event, the crimes and insults just seem to have no end. Obviously, the current system is broken and the diseased element that runs the country must be held to account.

RM

10 September 2008

On the Hollywood film Traitor

The following letter was sent to the World Socialist Web Site in response to the film Traitor, directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff.

Anyone looking for a good movie about traitors can skip the new film *Traitor*. Despite all the action movie hype, it won’t be around long, anyway. *Traitor* is not a movie about traitors, or a sensitive post-mortem on why people might become “traitors.” That old chestnut “The Man Without a Country” is Tolstoy compared with this movie.

What *Traitor* does give us is a hymn to the bravery and self-sacrificing heroics of stool pigeons, snitches, spooks, and the FBI. The FBI in this movie is not the

FBI we all know and love; it is filled with men of daring, intelligence, and good sense. A science fiction movie couldn't be further from reality. COINTELPRO? Not in this universe!

Early on, the lead FBI agent (played by Guy Pearce) brags to his partner about growing up in the Deep South with a white minister for a father: "Every time the Klan would burn a cross on someone's lawn, he'd go out and help put out the fire." Such are the self-serving fantasies our rulers churn out.

Traitor can't hold a candle to the old Cold War traitor movies. There was so much ruling class anxiety in movies like *The Bamboo Prison* (1954), *The Rack* (1955), and *Time Limit* (1957) that despite their reactionary line, they are still worth a look.

Martin Scorsese is our current poet laureate of traitors. Nearly all his movies are about the horror (in every sense of the word) of being a traitor. Take a look at *The Departed* (2006). Every lead character is a traitor to himself and something else he holds dear: a lover, a group, an organization. We're happy they all die by the end of the movie—their suffering is over. Being a traitor in films such as these is a close synonym to alienation in the classical Marxist sense.

Lead actor Don Cheadle has a reputation for solidarity with Darfur. Darfur is a region in Africa and a word globalization activists are not afraid to wear on a t-shirt. Like the so-called genocide in Yugoslavia, it is a place only mentioned when humanitarian cover is required for the use of US military power.

In *Traitor*, Cheadle plays a devout Muslim born in Africa and raised in Chicago. Being upset that "extremists" and "terrorists" are betraying the Koran, he decides to join forces with that great lesser-evil, the USA. Jeff Daniels has a few good scenes as his creep of a boss, the kind of "intelligence" genius who'd rather burn down the world with us inside than admit terrorism is blowback from decades of Washington's policies. (Cheadle is scheduled to play Toussaint Louverture in Danny Glover's upcoming film about that great revolutionary. Jeff Daniels will be playing Dave Dellinger in the 2009 Paul Greengrass release *The Trial of the Chicago Seven*. We have been warned.)

The fine French actor Said Taghmaoui plays lead terrorist Omar, duped by Cheadle into making him part of his plans. One of Taghmaoui's scenes shows how easy it is for an Arab to cross the US-Mexican

border—apparently they all look alike to Homeland Security.

It's hard not to feel anger or contempt at the typecasting an actor like Said Taghmaoui suffers from. His career so far reminds me of the careers of Asian-American actors back in the 1940s. A talented man like Richard Loo could play the commandant of the Japanese POW camp in *The Purple Heart* (1944), or Hirohito in *Star-Spangled Rhythm* (1942), or a chauffeur, but that was it.

Taghmaoui is well known already from *Sleeper Cell* and *Kite Runner*, and has a leading role in the upcoming UK miniseries *House of Saddam*. But I think it is unlikely we'll see him playing James Bond's new boss or the love interest in the next Renée Zellweger masterpiece.

Traitor's "social role" broadly speaking is to sooth and lull qualms about how Washington's rulers go about "protecting" us. Rest assured, the world of *Traitor* is not contaminated with orange jumpsuits or military tribunals or collateral damage. The good guys are sensitive, compassionate, and respect Islam enough to study the Koran.

Sleep well, America.

JR



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