

# Letters from our readers

30 December 2008

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

*On "Faces of foreclosure in Pittsburgh"*

I can hear it now ... all those people you interviewed made bad decisions, so it's their fault. Look at the guy that paid for his broken car instead of paying medical bills....This is how the conservative mind pinpoints faults of the poor and working poor, forgetting, of course, the billions of dollars worth of bad decisions CEOs made on Wall Street. But the poor remain vulnerable to attack; you can actually see them on the streets or in the malls, making it easier to criticize what they are buying and putting into their carts, if they're smoking instead of paying the rent. What we can't see is the luxury life of CEOs, at least in everyday life. We hear about it, but it isn't in our face like poverty. Plus, most of us bought into the capitalist dream of being just good enough to someday become rich, like Oprah Winfrey, pulling ourselves up from our bootstraps. How many times have we heard this one?

We do have a pecking order. Someone pecks us. We don't look up; we look down and peck somebody else we consider "lower" than ourselves, pointing out all their failures while ignoring the horrendous ones of those "above" us and our own. We live with the social myths designed to motivate us for the most part, to remain slaves of the elite. While socialism is not without faults, its greatest strengths are reigning in the powers of the elite and destroying social myths that keep us enslaved. As long as the ruling elite keep the idea that wealth distribution gives to those who are undeserving (and to be sure this does happen, but not to the extent of the myth and additionally, I would rather have a society capable of tolerating some abuse than none, i.e., a police state) the majority of the public will resist it unless and until the unfairness built into capitalism stands on their doorstep. It is doing so ever more increasingly around the world.

When the Easter Islanders finally realized that no matter how hard they prayed to their stone gods, they still suffered, they still died from starvation, the survivors kicked over those statues in disgust. I am waiting to see our financial "gods" go the same way.

Stephanie N  
British Columbia, Canada  
22 December 2008

*On a letter to the WWSWS*

I take strong issue with a recent comment by a reader: "Intellectuals such as Lukacs, Schopenhauer, [and] Nietzsche fight to replace science with the irrational, the religious, and the subjective". The reference to Georg Lukacs is flatly wrong. Though Lukacs finally resigned himself to Stalinism in 1929-1933, he was a talented intellectual and a materialist.

The reader is obviously not familiar with Lukacs' pre-Stalinist writings such as *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), *Lenin* (1924), and *Tailism and the Dialectic* (1925/26) or his later works like "Nietzsche, Forerunner of Fascist Esthetics" (1935), *The Young Hegel* (1938), "Art and Objective Truth" (1954), *The Destruction of Reason* (1954), and *The Ontology of Social Being* (1971-1973).

Lukacs, to be sure, was not a consistent Marxist materialist dialectician like V.I. Lenin and L.D. Trotsky. But it is a fundamental distortion of fact to say that the Hungarian philosopher was an anti-scientific irrationalist. Please allow me to draw the reader's attention to the first paragraph of "Art and Objective Truth," which summarizes materialist epistemology:

"The basis for any correct cognition of reality, whether of nature or society, is the recognition of the objectivity of the external world, that is, its existence independent of human consciousness. Any apprehension of the external world is nothing more than a reflection in consciousness of the world that exists independently of consciousness. This basic fact of the relationship of consciousness to being also serves, of course, for the artistic reflection of reality" (*Writer and Critic*, 2005, p. 25).

Of course, before Lukacs' "Marxist" turn in 1918, he was a proponent of Romantic philosophy and had pronounced affinities with Kierkegaardian existentialism. This is seen, for example, in his early work *Soul and Form* (1911): "There is no system in life. In life there is only the separate and individual, the concrete. To exist is to be different." That is a confused philosophical perspective.

The young Lukacs had an ambiguous relation to the idealist dialectics of G.W.F. Hegel, but eventually turned to him by the time of *The Theory of the Novel* (1914). After 1918, under the decisive influence of the October 1917 Russian Revolution and Bolshevism, Lukacs never returned to the naive nihilism of his youth. Read with caution, the philosophical writings of the post-Romantic Lukacs are useful materialist considerations.

Sincerely yours,  
Adam Haig  
23 December 2008

*On "Ron Howard's Frost/Nixon: Trivializing a war criminal"*

Thanks for the excellent review. I retain a dim recollection of watching part of the original interviews in the '70s. I have not yet seen the film, but I will go because of the performers, particularly Michael Sheen, who is one of my favorite young actors. He was brilliant in *Gallowglass* on television about 10 years ago and also in the Oscar Wilde film with Stephen Fry, and his two different portrayals of Tony Blair, in *The Deal* and *The Queen*. Like the best of British actors, Sheen seems able to play anything. Would that there were more actors like this appearing in major productions in the US.

Performances aside, however, you are quite right to remind us all of the bestiality of Nixon-time and his self-justification after he was hounded from office. Once he was pardoned by Gerald Ford, he proceeded to rewrite history, not unlike Stalin in an earlier era.

Thanks for the review.

Carolyn Z  
California, USA 23 December 2008

*On "Obama, the military and the threat of dictatorship"*

Thanks for a very solid, well-written analysis. You write,

"The point is well taken. Having failed to quell resistance and restore order in Iraq and Afghanistan, what would be the prospect of the military succeeding in an occupation of the US itself?"

"That these questions are being asked by the Pentagon's strategic planners should be taken with deadly seriousness. Those commanding the armed forces of the US capitalist state foresee the present crisis creating conditions for revolution and are preparing accordingly."

The question, as Trotsky might have remarked, answers itself once it is fully unpacked as, "If the Pentagon had a hard time subduing a nation whose citizens understood that they were the victims of a brutal colonial occupation meant to steal their wealth and destroy their sovereignty, how much better might it succeed—with or without the judicious application of a covert operation that tilted the balance of public sympathy in their favor—in domestic operations in which they were cast as the strong man on a horse restoring law and order necessary for civilized life?"

In a recent Harper's article entitled "Plan" and again in his recent book *The Predator State*, James K. Galbraith laments the destructive effect of the so-called "free market" upon the fundamental capacity for constructive governmental planning and coordination of effort, remarking in passing that the only section of government now capable of engaging in and implementing the long-term planning necessary for its successful continuation is the Pentagon. There are many caveats, of course, but he has a point. Your question has an unhappy answer but I am pleased to see you

at last coming to terms in print with the vast power and resources of the ruling class in a case of asymmetric warfare in which the other side controls almost all the critical information. The people would indeed have power if united by a coherent ideology or simple, clear and direct political objective, but they lack such unity, and our ability to produce it is very limited.

Michael G  
23 December 2008

*On "US: The crisis in the Screen Actors Guild and the need for a new political perspective"*

Having heard second-hand what artists in the SAG community are experiencing, it is refreshing to receive a clear perspective from the WSWS. Thanks for assembling this article and clearing it up for me.

Jordan M  
23 December 2008

*On "GM closes plants in Wisconsin and Ohio"*

It would cost the equivalent of 60 cents a gallon to charge and drive an electric car. The electricity to charge the car could come from solar or wind generated electricity. If all gasoline cars, trucks, and SUVs instead had plug-in electric drive trains, the amount of electricity needed to replace gasoline is about equal to the estimated wind energy potential of the state of North Dakota. Why don't we use some of the billions in bailout money to bail us out of our dependence on foreign oil? This past year the high cost of fuel so seriously damaged our economy and society that the ripple effects will be felt for years to come.

Sherry  
25 December 2008



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**