More letters from our readers

22 January 2009

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

On "Waltz With Bashir*: 'Memory takes us where we need to go'"*

I was very grateful for David Walsh's review of *Waltz with Bashir*, as this critique is what encouraged me to see the film. The creators of this work deserve to be acknowledged for making a film that honestly and intelligently assists us to question the horrors of war, via the perspective of those who experienced it. While I personally have never experienced war, its very existence and the suffering it produces must be rejected and prevented. *Waltz with Bashir* took me on a journey that deepened my understanding of the horrors and criminality of war and which has resonated with me beyond the film's remarkable ending.

The timing of the release of this film is important to note. The film deals with the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in the early 1980s and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It's hard for one not to see the parallels between the suffering experienced in Lebanon then and what is currently taking place in Gaza, or Iraq and Afghanistan. I believe everyone needs to see this important and exceptional film.

JB
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
19 January 2009

On "Salute: A moving tribute"

The vendetta against Peter Norman should serve to educate the broad population in the ways of the powers that be. It isn't a matter of a personal grudge but a naked and cynical expression of class interests. Anyone who may receive the attention of the official mass media must be vetted. Cross the line and no holds are barred.

In such cases, the usual conventions cease to apply except for the one basic rule which applies across the board: In a capitalist democracy, the more capital you have, the more democracy you get.

A very worthy effort by Matt Norman.

James Brewer
20 January 2009

On "China dispatches warships to Somali waters"

Thanks for the article on China's naval ambitions. Somali piracy provides a convenient cover for rivalry between world powers.

While the WSWS has mentioned the importance of oil in this region, there is a further lucrative resource at stake—Somalia's fishing grounds, which are some of the richest in the world. Reports going back to 2006 deal with the plundering of marine resources by European and Asian fishing interests, as well as the dumping of toxic waste off the Somali coast.

Fishermen reported that foreign vessels would ram Somali fishing boats, pour boiling water on them and, at times, hire Somali militia to drive away locals. It was also reported that foreign fishing vessels used nets with very small mesh sizes, illegal dragnets and at times, even dynamite.

Worldwide, fishing stocks are in a state of total collapse. Coupled with the fact that Somali fishing grounds are particularly rich and unprotected have made them very attractive to European and Asian trawlers.

In December 2004 the Indian Ocean tsunami washed up dozens of containers containing toxic waste. Local people along the Somali coast sickened and some died. The UN envoy to Somalia reported that he had reliable information that European and Asian companies were dumping toxic waste, including nuclear waste off the Somali coast.

The Somali fishing trade is not particularly profitable for Somalis. Traditionally, most of the Somali catch has been destined for export. However, the protracted warfare in Somalia and the collapse of basic services has made it virtually impossible to refrigerate catches destined for export.

Although some fishermen have turned to piracy, the greater numbers of pirates are people who are not connected to the fishing trade. However, illegal fishing and the dumping of toxic waste give Somali piracy a veneer of legitimacy. Money from ransom operations ends up in the coffers of the bosses and government.

The deployment of foreign warships to Somali waters is also in part, to protect those plundering Somalia's marine resources. While pirates extract $100 million from ransom operations each year, the illegal annual catch is worth approximately $300 million. This is undoubtedly one of the hidden agendas that drive the militarisation of the seas off Somalia.

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Eric G.
South Africa
21 January 2009

On "New York state workers rally against Paterson's budget cuts"

The loss of funding for the New York State Empire Games, referred to in the article, has now led to the cancellation of this year's planned summer games. This stands in marked contrast to the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been provided to the Yankees and Mets by New York City to build new stadiums. Clearly, the fat cat owners of these commercial enterprises are of much greater importance to the capitalist politicians than are young, amateur athletes.

PP
New York
18 January 2009

On "Israel's war on Gaza and the role of the Middle East bourgeoisie"

We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the US government has some powerful incentives to *not* want peace in the Middle East, from access to oil to the tremendously profitable sales of arms to both sides of the battles.

DHF
Wisconsin, USA
16 January 2009

An observation on the changing times

Socialism has an appeal now that it did not have even a year ago. I am seeing this all around me.

Capitalism is collapsing, and there are plenty of people who will be looking at alternatives who would never have thought of it before. There are changes going on that are transforming life for many, many people.

Our neighbor was an investment banker until a few months ago. I don't know him well—saw him every day, though, dressed to the nines, very expensive looking pinstriped suits, silk ties, white shirts, every hair in place—fancy shiny black shoes, clean shaven, briefcase. He would walk out every morning, pick up his *Wall Street Journal* and get in his Mercedes. My family called him "pinstripes." Tall, dignified, distinguished man. Just what you would think of as a banker. My wife would joke about his perfectly polished shoes and claim they blinded her on sunny days.

I heard that he lost his job about six months ago. I wasn't sure, but that was the rumor. Last week, on a cold morning, I was going out to give the trash to the garbage collectors. I heard a voice say: "Hold on!" and it was Pinstripes. He came running out with the trash and wanted to catch the truck.

But what a difference! He wasn't going to the fancy office. He didn't get in his Mercedes. He was obviously hanging around the house. He was wearing one of those classy heavy blue overcoats that executives wear—but there was no nice suit jacket or smart necktie or even a white shirt underneath. Just a T-shirt! He had on the pants of a sharp looking pinstriped suit, but those "blinding" black dress shoes were nowhere to be seen. No silk socks. In fact, Pinstripes was barefoot. Barefoot! He was the last guy you would ever see outside in his bare feet. And he hadn't shaved for a couple of days. But he was wearing a nice watch. (Rolex? Who knows?)

He's standing there with his garbage bags (no briefcase this time) and he picks up the *Wall Street Journal* out of the mailbox. He is bouncing from one bare foot to another on that cold morning as we're waiting for the truck and greets me awkwardly. After the truck leaves, we talked for a minute, and he had to trot back in because his feet were cold, and we started talking for a few minutes inside his kitchen with his wife.

He told me his job was gone and wasn't coming back; his stocks were almost worthless; the beautiful house might be lost; they would sell the Mercedes. He said a lot of things that people say when they're in bad shape and need to talk.

He asked me (blue collar) what he should do. I told him to keep growing the beard, forget the pinstripes and the white collar and get a job driving a truck or as a janitor. He wasn't ready for that. But he will be soon. He won't be putting those nice suits back on for a long time, if ever. He joked and asked me if I knew anyone who would buy his collection of size ten Italian shoes. His wife didn't laugh. Was he joking?

There are a *lot* of people whose lives are looking very, very different. When pinstripes starts mopping floors and driving a pickup, he will be thinking very differently. This literally barefoot, former master of the universe has been humbled and will be very open to new ways of thinking.

Jim W.
18 January 2009

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