

Letters from our readers

8 December 2009

On "Seventy years since the outbreak of World War II: Causes, Consequences and Lessons"

I'd like to thank you for this lecture. This seems to me to be the most concise, lucid survey of 20th century history I've read. And although it is inescapably depressing, it is also oddly liberating in that it seems to light up the present situation by rooting it in the past.

The "end of history" was a glib recent slogan, and yet it seems to sum up the propaganda I've been fed most of my life, i.e. we, in "the West" have been living in a little comfortable bubble which was presented as the final stage of civilisation's progress. We thought all upheavals were securely in the past.

Your lecture, by shattering all that and reconnecting us to genuine history, makes clear how superficial our thinking was and also how trivial is the daily "analysis" of events as presented on the media. The truly depressing thing is that the present "war on terror" construct, presented as some utterly new unforeseeable eruption, is a depressingly predictable regurgitation of the hackneyed propaganda pattern of the past.

The paragraph about the capitalist nations tobogganing towards the abyss with their eyes closed seems unfortunately all too appropriate. Surely only the most willfully self induced ignorance can still maintain that the smiling, charming face now occupying the White House can possibly signify any change?

George M
Scotland
6 December 2009

On "The pro-war Nation and Obama's Afghan escalation"

This is one of the finest articles I've ever read on the WSWS, and I read it regularly. Outstanding analysis by Mr. Walsh. In retrospect, it makes all the pomp and circumstance attached to the election of Obama all the more revolting to see his true colors exposed. One thing that nobody seems to have noticed in these left-leaning publications is the extent to which Dick Cheney seems to still be setting the tone in affairs related to US militarism, from beyond the political grave. Guess that would be another embarrassment.

Mike T
Michigan, USA
4 December 2009

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I work in an inner-city high school that is far from insulated from the social consequences of the Obamian politic, but the liberals and left radicals on staff can't stop gushing over Michael Moore's "open" letter to Obama. Teachers ought to know better, but everywhere anymore, my colleagues behave as though teaching were a call to personal martyrdom. And if they don't wake up, that's exactly what's going to happen.

Day after day here at Rainier Beach High School in southeast Seattle, young people who have been profoundly traumatized by the destruction of home life (brought on by the massive dislocation which is a product of the Obamian economy) come here seeking the safe haven public schools used to be, at least in a tiny relative sense. But it's no longer here either. Frustrations mount. Two teachers in the last month have been assaulted. The hallways at break time between classes feature dozens of behaviorally challenged late adolescents who indulge in pushing and screaming contests. These students have been mainstreamed long before they were ready, and the consequences are plain to anyone who has eyes or integrity enough to see. I won't say the school is a ticking time bomb, I've seen far worse. But anybody who's seen similar situations can see where this is heading. Next comes the fires in the wastepaper baskets and the shit smeared on the restroom walls.

But the line among many educators who really ought to know better is that social engineering fantasies will carry the day. It's a farce, really. The postmodern "left" has much to answer for. The future is with the independent socialist leadership of the working class majority, or there is no future.

Michael H
Washington, USA
4 December 2009

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Wow, never has a sentence been so succinct and correct in all respects:

"The Nation writers speak for a highly privileged, complacent section of the population, largely insulated from the consequences, military and economic, of the Obama administration's policies."

I went to a Democratic fundraiser two years ago, and the restaurant was filled with well-known professors, politicians, lawyers, architects, businessmen and students, each drawing a comfy paycheck in a secure position. Not one person among them had calluses on his/her hands, and nobody in the room belonged to a union. Not one was a veteran, I imagine. It's simply astounding

to believe that anyone could have a political opinion to be taken seriously when they are fully insulated from war, famine, unemployment, wrongful termination, loss of insurance, racism, poverty, urban violence, or pollution. Most of the people in this country battle with these issues on a daily basis and, coincidentally, have no voice in changing anything. Calling the shots from an ivory tower or from a gated community is one thing, but to be out there living it day-to-day gives one's opinions much more credibility.

PK

4 December 2009

On "Britain: Iraq inquiry hears the testimony of guilty men"

The inquiry will not examine one of the most significant contributors to the Iraq catastrophe—the significance attached by the European elites to the end of the Cold War. Blair and many others understood the process thus: America has emerged as the world's sole super power. It is free to determine the ordering of the world and able to do so. In the new liberal American Empire the role of European lieutenant (or lickspittle) is up for grabs. The British elites supported Blair in his struggle for this position. The Iraq war was a price worth paying for securing their place in the new world order. Over the coming decades (they thought) economic advantages would follow from their intimacy with the sole active determinant in the ordering of global power. Consequently, actual economic benefits from the Iraq operation were irrelevant. What mattered was to prove to the American elites that they were the indispensable servant. In this the British elites could not have made a better choice than the servile Blair.

Chris

Ireland

4 December 2009

On "150 years since the execution of John Brown"

This was an excellent article. During the reading, I had a thought about a parallel between Brown and Trotsky. When Brown said, "Had I interfered in the manner which I admit ... had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends, either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class, and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right. Every man in this Court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment...I believe that to have interfered as I have done, as I have always freely admitted I have done, in behalf of His despised poor, I did no wrong, but right. Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel and unjust enactments, I say, let it be done."

This reminded me fiercely of Trotsky's declaration in "I Stake My Life," where he said, in regards to an impartial commission finding him guilty of crimes Stalin accused him of, "I DECLARE:

IF THIS COMMISSION DECIDES THAT I AM GUILTY IN THE SLIGHTEST DEGREE OF THE CRIMES WHICH STALIN IMPUTES TO ME, I PLEDGE IN ADVANCE TO PLACE MYSELF VOLUNTARILY IN THE HANDS OF THE EXECUTIONERS OF THE GPU" [capitals were Trotsky's].

It is shocking to see how each individual was so dedicated to the cause they fought for that they really were willing, and did die for their cause. These are the exemplars of revolutionaries.

Bryan S

4 December 2009

On "US prepares Fallujah-style offensive in Afghanistan"

Does anyone seriously think that Pashtun fighters will allow themselves to be trapped? The Marines will occupy Nausad and the guerrillas will disperse, turning Nausad into an interment camp for the Marines.

Carlo C

5 December 2009

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On Iraq, Obama said: "I will promise you this, that if we have not gotten our troops out by the time I am president, it is the first thing I will do. I will get our troops home. We will bring an end to this war. You can take that to the bank." (October 27, 2007)

And that has not really happened. Just because the news isn't reporting it, doesn't mean our troops are not still there and being deployed to Iraq.

Myra K

North Carolina, USA

6 December 2009



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