Letters from our readers

22 May 2010

On "IMF dictates shock program to Romania"

This is just terrible. It will make suffering even worse. The IMF policies are inhumane and should not be allowed when people are already having a hard time due to economic slowdown.

Ibivi
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
18 May 2010

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Your article neglects to mention the main cause for Romania's predicament and why it finds itself between the "rock and a hard place" of the IMF and pending economic collapse. The reason is the unstemmed corruption till now propped up by the left-leaning, self-serving PSD government, who have done everything in their power to buy supporters with unneeded public service jobs.

Even the constitutional court judges are looking after their own interests with their recent vote to suspend the anti-corruption department of the government. It's the very cronyism that has prospered under the guise of socialist reform that is to blame for the current government's predicament.

David H
18 May 2010

On "SYRIZA rally: the reactionary politics of the middle class 'left' in Greece"

Not bad, could have been better.

But I would say that calling SYRIZA a middle class coalition is a bit misleading. The same goes for CP of Greece. CP of Greece, unfortunately, still has a working class base, more than SYRIZA.

P.S. SYRIZA has also some connections—surprise, surprise—with the NPA [New Anticapitalist Party in France] too !!!

Orestes P
Greece
18 May 2010

On "Thai demonstrators defy government ultimatum to end protest"

We follow the protests live from the rally stage on Internet TV, plus blogs and Twitter.

A big issue for the government is that, since their blockade, the people that have arrived from Bangkok and surrounding provinces have formed themselves up into satellite rally sites, surrounding the military cordon—plus there are rally sites in many provincial cities.

All the government news talks about dispersing the main rally, but seems to ignore the real problem that the whole country is mobilising.

There are many "redshirt" leaders available that are leading their individual groups, but all have attended a big round of education seminars that toured the country, so they are reasonably aligned in their objectives and loyalties.

I don't think the government knows how to handle this and is stalling on its supposed push for dispersal because of this.

David B
Australia
18 May 2010

On "Steelworkers officials dismantle blockade at Vale Inco"

Your article would be so much better if the writer was speaking with some knowledge of how business works. I am not for or against the workers, but to say that the company is not providing workers with a decent standard of living is ridiculous. The miners in Sudbury enjoy one of the highest standards of living in our area. To say that the future is to mobilize and organize production for human need without regard for company profit or shareholder returns shows the writer is disconnected from reality. Stating the facts with some educated commentary would yield a better result.

Art D
Ontario, Canada
18 May 2010

On "The specter of catastrophe returns"

If only there were a clear path to the establishment of socialism. The idea of uneducated working people taking over the means of production, distribution, and finance is quite frightening. The ruling class has made sure that the working class is uneducated and largely ignorant—not the least about how to think critically, how to solve problems and how to communicate effectively.

There are also problems with empowerment, initiative, and self-esteem that must be addressed. Give them their beer, their TV, their preoccupation with brand names, and they're happy to let the ruling class solve matters too complicated for them to think about.

Samadhi P
18 May 2010

On "Deepwater rig owner wants to pay workers a fraction of its own insurance payout"

They are merely proving Marx's point, "The worker will therefore get no more for his labour than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labour or the wage will therefore be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life."

Once they need no longer maintain the worker's life, it is all public relations.

John S
18 May 2010

On "BP disaster spreads oil pollution across the Gulf of Mexico"

A PBS documentary on Katrina aired last night: it pointed out that the significant impact to New Orleans was also due to the fact that wetlands have been shrinking at an alarming annual rate.

The Mississippi River over time has deposited huge amounts of silt, creating a natural defensive shield around the area (creating a vast wetland infrastructure).

With the levee system established in the postwar period, the Mississippi River deposits less silt and thus reduces the wetland area.

In an area such as this below sea level, the decline of nature's own cleansing mechanism, has left New Orleans more vulnerable to hurricanes—coincidentally, at the very same time as hurricanes have increased in intensity due to global warming and the rise in ocean temperature....

Larry S
Michigan, USA
19 May 2010

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On "Marxism and the Holocaust"

Good argument. The opponents of the hypothesis seem to be ignorant either of the course of the Second World War or the implications of these events:

Germany invades USSR—June 22, 1941
Battle of Moscow—December 1941 (Russian counter-attack)
Battle of Stalingrad—End of 1942/2 Feb 1943
Battle of Kursk—July/Aug 1943

Each of these battles represented a qualitative step in the military defeat of Germany and its allies. So in the first months of this war it was clear to the German military and sections of the German bourgeoisie that defeat was a real possibility. And with that defeat the end of the Nazi Party.

But once the party's existence had come into question, the party's policy of exterminations takes on a new character. Failure to exterminate Communists, Jews and any other "enemies of the regime" will be taken by its opponents as a sign that the Nazi leadership recognizes its approaching end. Denial of the Nazi Party's end requires the party leadership pursue to the utmost those parts of its policy that are within their power to effect.

Given this, every setback in the war was met with renewed drives to exterminate its declared enemies. And every such drive was a public statement of the regime's hold on the instruments of state power. Given the particular expression of the bourgeoisie represented by the Nazi Party and the course of the conflict there was nothing illogical about the policy of extermination.

Chris
Ireland
19 May 2010

On "Once more on the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition"

Chris Marsden is quite right to point to the Socialist Party of England and Wales' orientation to the trades unions in his response to a complaint that the party had been unfairly portrayed in articles on the WSWS.

This is a consistent element in their politics. They are seeking to build a mass workers party as an alternative to Labour, but by "mass" they mean based on the unions as the organisations of the working class. In order to get the process started they make all sorts of concessions to union leaders, such as allowing them to dictate the terms in running the TUSC electoral alliance. They hope that by such means they will attract more union support for their project and thus draw in workers. However, this would be a reformist trap for workers and indeed for the Socialist Party itself. Union leaders would be interested in such a project only to provide themselves a platform from which to mislead workers.

The Socialist Party of England and Wales began their project as a Campaign for a New Workers Party, which was put on hold when they went instead into the "No to EU" campaign for the European elections. This anti-Europe stance was a concession to "little England" sentiments they justified by the need to develop broader alliances. This then morphed into TUSC. As allies in the Stalinist CPB [Communist Party of Britain] had dropped away there was less need to include the overt chauvinism, but the basic method is the same and holds the same dangers.

The unions are all too often a breeding ground for nationalist views. The more evident their incapacity as organs of struggle becomes, the more they pose as defenders of the national economy, or of one group of workers against another. They operate entirely within a national legal and political framework. Nationalist sentiments have long been cultivated by Labour movement figures. In the 1930s Oswald Mosley abandoned a leading position in the Labour Party to set up his fascist blackshirt movement and used the slogan of "British Jobs for British Workers". The same slogan was raised again by the National Front in the 1970s, and then by Prime Minister Gordon Brown on assuming the leadership of the Labour Party.

It was no surprise then that right-wing elements sought to raise it in the Lindsey Oil Refinery strike in 2008. The strike leaders faced down and marginalised the more overt signs of nationalism, but the strike itself was a reaction to the allocation of work to workers from abroad and was ended when about a hundred jobs were reassigned to British workers. This was hailed as a victory by the Socialist Party of England and Wales, who had members involved, and by various radical groups. However, it could only be seen as a success if viewed in narrow trade union terms by those desperate to see signs of a revival of militant struggle. None of the left groups, the Socialist Party included, posed the need for a rank and file movement in the engineering contracting sector that cut across national boundaries in a political struggle. The best they could do was a call for all workers to be in the union.

Mike M
Sheffield, England
20 May 2010

On "Thai military crushes Bangkok protest"

John Roberts wrote: "The ruthless army crackdown on protesters yesterday is a warning to the working class in Thailand and internationally of the measures that will be used increasingly to suppress any opposition to the impact of the worsening global economic crisis."

However, the crackdown is not a warning but the actual suppression of working people as they protest on the streets. Workers have not been able to articulate clearly their demands and class position, and they have no independent organisation, but their class distress, class rage and potential class power is clear. And that is being repressed right now to break the spirit of workers in Thailand and as an example to us all.

Jie
Australia
20 May 2010

On "Detroit police kill seven-year-old child"

An officer should have control of his weapon at all times. It is clearly no accident that he did not. It was negligence!

Heather
Michigan, USA
21 May 2010

On "Scotland: Savage education cuts imminent"

I still have the e-mail that was sent to all of us in February. Having taken a look at the consolidations, most of them simply do not make sense and are completely untenable, which is how I'm certain they want them. This restructuring is done specifically so they can begin to eliminate departments and cut programmes deemed unfit for its business model.

This began under the previous principal [of the University of Glasgow], Sir Muir Russell, and Anton Muscatelli, with his considerable knowledge of structural adjustments, will apply this to the university.

Also, for the record, I've not heard not anything about any resistance from UCU or the SRC, which is not a surprise, given, as you say, they are in support of the cuts that are surely to come. I'm glad I'll be finishing my English Literature PhD at the end of the year, because my sixth sense tells me that my department, among others, will be subject to drastic cuts, if not outright eliminated. Thanks for posting this article.

CMC
Glasgow, Scotland
21 May 2010

On "George Will: a pompous defender of wealth and privilege"

On one side, "perverse aspiration", "vice", "moral hazard", etc.; on the other, "merit" and "character". Why doesn't George Will say it plainly? Poor people are bad, rich people are good.

Greg S
Dover, New Hampshire, USA
20 May 2010

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Bravo!

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John S
20 May 2010

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Your article on Will is absolutely on target. He has made a good living recycling the vestiges of ideas and concepts which may have been valid when he learned them at Trinity a generation ago. It is disgusting to see people like Will wallow in wealth earned from fossilized "knowledge" that has not been updated in 45 years, particularly when younger academics and commentators who really have intellectually valid ideas are forced to live in poverty due to cutbacks in college and university budgets.

A particularly filthy aspect to Will's actions is that he has, in his personal and "professional" life obtained all the benefits a progressive, liberal educational system rooted in New Deal ideology could provide and now uses those tools to destroy the system that enabled him to obtain such knowledge and to deny it to others. The only conclusion one can reach from Will's conduct is that he is both intellectually lazy and he has made a conscious choice to use his literary gifts, however limited, on behalf of the forces of reaction, because they pay better than progressive organizations.

Will's career can best be characterized in the terms Harry Truman used to describe similar "commentators": "The prostitutes of the mind in my opinion...are much more dangerous to the future of mankind than the prostitutes of the body."

Peter L
East Granby, Connecticut, USA
20 May 2010

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Thank you, for debunking this pretentious windbag/fraud. Will, to put it succinctly, is an a****** and poseur.

Twenty years ago I worked in DC at a large bookstore and would occasionally find an out-of-print book for him (through his secretary—no direct contact, thank goodness…this was before the Internet when it was quite a bit harder to do.)

One day at the Dupont Circle bookstore, Will was browsing and the owner of the store went over and touched him on the shoulder and greeted him. Will barked at him—"Get your f****** hands off me!"

I'm sure the owner was merely trying to be friendly, especially as Will had his Down's syndrome son with him.

You'd think a man who has a mentally challenged son would have some sympathy for those who are not born with a high IQ and all those other qualities he lauds in support of his Social Darwinism, etc. What would have been his son's fate had he been born to a poor family and had to live by his father's lights?

A loathsome hack and tool, who slimes the patina of pseudo-intellectualism on everything he does…like William F. Buckley, whose verbal skills slathered over a mediocre intelligence…his historical constructs and verbosity are, as you point out, mere straw men….

Good job, and timely.

Rob M
Mobile, Alabama, USA
20 May 2010

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Thank you so much for providing an overdue article summarizing the long-running and noxious journalistic spew of George Will.

I have had the mispleasure of being exposed to Mr. Will's justification of brutal policies of the ultra-right and his elitist diatribes through various media for many years and was happy to see that your insights on his track record were succinct and, as usual, on-the mark.

Sincerely,

David D
Dallas, Texas, USA
20 May 2010

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This decomposing society abounds in well rewarded media maggots, all in the service of a criminal, out of control bourgeoisie. But George Will stands out (as did his social mentor Bill Buckley) in a crowded field for his pseudo-erudite snobbishness. He duly represents the emptiness of the Right.

Patrice G
Stratford, Connecticut, USA
21 May 2010

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