

Letters from our readers

14 August 2010

On “*The ‘humanitarian’ campaign for the war in Afghanistan*”

There was a time in this country where genuine oppositional sentiment was perfectly tolerated in major news outlets. The writers of the Anti-Federalist papers were free to assail no less an esteemed group than the Founding Fathers as “aristocrats” for daring to impose upon the American people such things as a standing army, which one writer argued would “enable them to stifle the first struggles of freedom.” It is inconceivable that such a basic treatise on democracy would be treated seriously in modern news outlets, and it is even more doubtful that they would even be inclined to print it.

Decaying capitalism has throttled culture and public consciousness in the United States back centuries, to the point where even Revolutionary War-era notions of justice are virtually unthinkable anymore. One of the tasks of socialism in the United States then, is to reclaim our culture from the swamps of reaction. This is, of course, inseparably linked to the socialist transformation of society.

Tom A
10 August 2010

I agree. Below is what I tried to post on the *Time* website regarding that article. It automatically rejected the comment saying it was too long, although there were letter-long comments posted earlier.

This is why we went into Afghanistan? To rescue women? I have seen zero evidence of that. Crimes against Afghani women escalated since the invasion!

What happened to this woman is inexcusable—the criminals should spend the rest of their life in prison at hard labor. But it has *nothing* to do with the war in Afghanistan! If the US were *really* in the business of protecting women, then:

Why doesn't the US go to war with the countries in Africa that perform female “circumcision?” Why doesn't the US go to war with India when live widows are burned along with their dead husbands? Why doesn't the US go to war with Saudi

Arabia, one of the biggest abuser of women's rights?

Reasons given by the US government for the Afghani occupation to date:

1. To get bin Laden—*that* didn't happen
2. To bring freedom and Democracy—To quote one of your favorite people: “How's *that* one working out?”
3. Get rid of the opium-heroin supply? Nope, that ain't working either.

So what can the US do to get the oil pipeline? Show the terrible abuses of women.

Well, in my opinion, you're selling another version of the “Gulf of Tonkin-Sinking of the Maine-WMD-Babies pulled out of incubators in Kuwait” excuse the US has used to *manipulate* the people into accepting Eternal War.

Marta B
California, USA
10 August 2010

On “*Obama threatens Iran*”

It's interesting to note the amount of sabre rattling the US does at regimes that have nukes—little to none—and in the end it comes to nothing but mere rhetoric. Any sane foreign leader would want nukes, if strictly for defense and/or backing the US down in negotiations—especially given the US doctrine that we can preemptively strike anywhere in the world we want.

And the US is the only country that's ever used nukes before—and on innocent civilians—which naturally gives us the moral high ground.

A third war in the Mideast? There was a time when Iran/Iraq fought each other and Afghanistan was a place most Americans couldn't spell (well, the latter, given the state of our education system (oxymoron) probably still adheres)...

Rob M
7 August 2010

On “*Inception: But where are the ideas?*”

The one thing about the movie *Inception* that made an impression on me when I saw it was Christopher Nolan’s conservative and narrow vision. The dream thieves carry out their job for the corporate mogul Saito because he fears the Fischer energy empire will become a monopoly that will dominate the world’s energy networks. There’s no mention of how the rest of humanity, let alone the planet itself, might benefit from the break-up of the Fischer empire! Also, the idea that is implanted into the Fischer heir’s head is a very banal one: be your own person, live your own life. How often do we hear that mantra in our daily lives? Too often, I believe: the idea itself through repetition has become an empty one—how will the Fischer heir be his own man?

Apart from this, I agree that *Inception* is a relatively straightforward and very smooth, efficient, sterile movie that caters to the computer-gaming crowd who is comfortable with blurred identities and multiple fractured narratives.

Jennifer H
Australia
7 August 2010

I’m a freelance English language journalist here in Egypt. I’m a great fan of the WSWS and often cite when doing articles, political and otherwise, but I think you’ve got it very wrong on the movie *Inception*. The psychological stuff is really a smokescreen for political and artistic antagonisms.

For instance, Robert Fischer, Jr. (Cillian Murphy) is the son of a dying *oil* giant, Maurice Fischer (Pete Postlethwaite). As Saito explains, the boy is about to inherit a conglomerate that will dominate the *energy* sector and become a *super power* in its own right, determining the fate of his own country and industries.

So, this is about American *empire* (they use the term in reference to the Fischers), and the father is a person so dedicated to making money that he neglected his son and wife, even ignoring the childhood photo Robert puts next to his deathbed. In other words, the government is neglecting the people and country, in the pursuit of profit and ‘empire’. Not surprisingly then, the wise people in the movie are all old-world, and specifically English—Eames (Tom Hardy) who’s in Mombasa and Miles (Michael Caine) in Paris.

This is a continuation of what Christopher Nolan did in *Batman Begins*. As for the psychology, it’s really the therapeutic role of art. Nolan seems to be saying that it’s Hollywood’s role to do some “inception” in the US mass political psyche. Also,

Mal (Marion Cotillard)—note why she kills herself, thinking that the world they’re in isn’t real and that death was the only release. This is like the assassins order during the Crusades and their perverted Platonic philosophy; this is the unreal world of shadows and departing it should bring no regret. (One of Cobb’s team is a Muslim and his job involves people escaping from their daily lives through dreams!)

Respectfully,
Emad
7 August 2010

On “*Pakistani floods: A man-made not a natural disaster*”

Excellent article.

Abdi J
7 August 2010

On “*Record number of Illinois families on food stamps*”

It’s interesting to see how many people in this country still look down their noses at those receiving benefits from food stamps, housing assistance, etc. With one of every eight persons here now on food stamps, you’d think that the public would finally wake up to the fact that they may very well be the next ones signing up for assistance.

While it outwardly appears that food stamps are a subsidy for poor people, in reality a great deal of it is a subsidy for businesses that refuse to pay a living wage. As noted in the article, many working people receive food stamps and a great many more are just slightly above the cutoff line.

Using currency conversion tables and historic minimum wage data from the internet, we can easily find that if the 1968 minimum wage was adjusted for inflation, it would be well over \$10 an hour today—substantially higher than the \$7.25 that employers (both large and small) are allowed to pay their workers. It’s because the employers are pocketing additional profits instead of paying their employees that these people are unable to afford food.

Troy J
9 August 2010



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