Letters from our readers

23 December 2010

On "Chinese leader denies any aim to replace the US as world hegemon"

The Chinese governments policy of confrontation with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands resulted in a public humiliation for the Japanese government. And forced Japan into an active anti-Chinese alliance (including South Korea) led by America. This stratagem on the part of the Chinese political elites has clearly resulted in a Pyrrhic victory. China appears to be acting the part of a Hegemon before it has achieved Hegemonic status. A state making such a basic error may never achieve this ultimate goal. If, for instance, Russia was to join NATO. And as a consequence India was drawn further into this new expanded western orbit. Having made this schoolboy error some of the Chinese elite wish to row back. The military apparently wish to row forward but I doubt this. This is a time of maximum vulnerability for Chinese hegemonic pretensions. I expect the sound of silence to break out. Assuming that North Korea doesn't provide an excuse for a military humiliation of the Chinese forces by America.

Chris
Ireland
17 December 2010

On "Madoff lawsuits charge JPMorgan and HSBC with complicity in Ponzi scheme"

This latest expose of the criminality of the top social class through its financial apparatus recalls some similar reporting a good number of years ago on the drug trafficking industry. There is no way the international drug cartels could be laundering the huge piles of cash they receive without the cooperation of the banks. It must still be going on. Which of course raises questions about the involvement of the US and other governments.

HL
18 December 2010

On "Julian Schnabel retrospective in Toronto: Art, celebrity, and the market"

I greatly admired your article, above all because you captured wonderfully the empty language of today's art world in both its artistic productions and its critical representations. More wonderfully, you grasp, it seems to me, the need to revive Marxist criticism in the arts, which was stillborn in the 1920s. I like especially that you look over the artist's shoulder at the rapidly changing historical epoch which is reproduced falsely or accurately even in artistic abstractions. I look forward to more articles along these lines.

AL
Toronto, Canada
20 December 2010

My letter to *Time*:

Your choice of Mark Zuckerberg for the Person of the Year is an apt reflection of the character and concerns of contemporary American society. Rather than recognizing the efforts of Julian Assange in cultivating the national conversation regarding our imperial efforts in securing the energy resources of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the enormous long-term costs measured in both dollars and international humanitarian credibility, you instead choose to celebrate the efforts of "the social networker", whose work has allowed people to post up-to-the-minute updates about what they are having for lunch, what they think of the latest celebrity gossip, and to tend to an electronic barnyard of animals.

Zuckerberg is purveying the 21st century's version of bread and circuses to a myopic and somnalescent American public, while the flames of empire, fueled by a red sea of our burgeoning national debt and the blood of both our own soldiers and of innocent "collateral" civilians, burn ever hotter.

Arthur R
20 December 2010

On "US corporations move to create a part-time, contingent workforce"

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The company I worked before hired interns for free, promised them a salary at the end of internship if they promised to stay, and simply forgot it. Once reminded after a few months—since interns are somewhat not sure how to approach this, being new—they started paying but way less than the low-end in the labor market for the job.

And once interns started protesting, the management simply put them on a brutal performance plan and forced them to leave.

This was in the so-called lucrative profession of software engineering—Web 2.0.

Thushara
21 December 2010

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I worked as an "on-call" temporary worker for a huge, international law firm for most of this year before finally getting a permanent position elsewhere. The firm was understaffed and had laid off a considerable number of people at the end of 2009, only to find that they needed more people.

Instead of hiring full-time workers, they worked through an employment agency to create a pool of temporary workers. We would sometimes get called just an hour or two before the shift started. The hourly pay was all right, but there were no benefits and the firm had no intention of hiring any more permanent employees. And we are talking about highly skilled people working as temps because there is no prospect of a "real" job in sight.

Carolyn
California
22 December 2010

On "British police training facility opened in former mining village"

I would like to endorse the writer's statement and analogy of the 1984-85 miners strike, having myself endured that period of struggle.

I also agree that the full extent of the strike as not yet been written; there's been many publications written about the strike itself, the hardships of miners and there families and pictures of violence of police on miners and communities, whose only crime was to fight for their jobs. It is disturbing to say the least to hear of this new training ground for the police. They have already battered people to death on demonstrations with truncheons. What will it be like when they're armed with real weapons?

This is a real warning to the working class in general. The cowardly role of leaders like Kinoch already said by the writer have, along with the role of the leaders of the trade unions, none of which serves the class interests of the working class. The ruling elite driven by the world political and economic crisis, will use these weapons to kill workers and youth who reject government austerity. This crisis is going to effect for many unbelievable misery for years to come.

Around the world capitalist armies are killing innocent peoples, in the USA families can't pay for their utilities having electricity to their homes cut off, these in sub-zero temperatures, to which many have already died. The constant stories of elderly and young children burning to death in homes where utilities are shut off. All this in the interest of greedy profiteers who rule everyone's lives.

Thatcher made it very clear in this period during 1984-85 as she warned that we have to be aware not of our enemies without but *the enemies within*. To this she meant the entire working class in this country. For the ruling elite this as never been more true than as it is today.

Malcolm B
21 December 2010

On "Washington Post details vast growth of US domestic spying"

They hate us for our freedoms.
– G.W. Bush

PK
21 December 2010

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