

Letters from our readers

1 February 2011

On “Mass protests continue in defiance of Egypt’s government and military”

As far as I can glean from the net the Egyptian army is a conscript army, in which the ordinary soldiers are treated like dirt by their officers. And that would certainly explain why it was held back for five days. Such an army is inherently unreliable during a revolutionary period. And the longer the demonstrators interact with the ordinary soldiers the more problematic the army becomes as an instrument of rule for the old political order. If the current political elite don’t use the army soon they are very likely to lose it.

Chris
Ireland
31 January 2011

On the WWS coverage of the uprising in Egypt

“Egypt and its enabler, America”

Dear SEP,

The reporting by the WWS continues to be among the best of what I read. But there is more to simply reporting. The orientation toward the crimes of capitalism and its shackling of government to the degradation of society is the most insightful. Here and abroad.

The adage about absolute power and corruption is playing out in Egypt and that revolution is history in the making. The story’s emerging: little by little the polarized rich and poor inequalities in that society are revealed, how Egypt is used by the United States, how the bribery fattens a corrupt elite, how Egypt is used to devastate the Palestinians, et cetera, et cetera. No wonder the Egyptians are in revolt.

The American players are so very predictable: Joe Biden, with his “I’d not refer to him as a dictator,” Barack Obama, about as platitudinous as his State speech, “... these are human rights...” while he simply gives no recognition to the torture, corruption and suppression of the people. The political pronouncements coming from the American government/state department are so safe as to be meaningless. How can there be much credibility for Joe Biden, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton? How hollow will their platitudes and cardboard make them and America appear to the Middle East.

Al Jazeera is a most reliable source of information and in comparison to the mainstream media, how can anyone read the bland and biased, so without any concept of the polarity of rich and poor in Egypt. It’s just reportage, so like the latest football scores or who’s top dog among the Hollywood celebrity.

An intractable leader can ruin a country. The power of those in a ruling

government/regime is practically total, even more so for a dictatorship. Mubarak is ruining that country in order to maintain his presidency, and any support by the US brings it down. No wonder the Egyptian people want an end to 30 years of dictatorship, regardless of what Joe Biden calls it.

From my reading of history and revolutions in particular, among the more prominent necessities for a revolution’s success is the military: it needs the backing of or agreement of the military, the military to reject a current leader, the military not to turn on ‘the

people’; the monied interests/financial interests have almost universally been opposed to a change in the status quo, and, not too much immediate opposition from neighbor states to take advantage of the fluid situation.

In the last of these, considering that one of the established goals of Israel is to foment discord and division in the Middle East, the Zionist state is undoubtedly playing a prominent role and a role to influence its mother country enabler, the United States, to foreign policies which will further alienate so much of the world.

Michael S
31 January 2011

On “Egyptian government deploys police, shuts down Internet, ahead of mass demonstrations”

What is happening in the Middle East is fantastic news, and so refreshing to see that it is not instigated by Islamic groups, but is an expression of the revolutionary spirit of the oppressed.

I have tried to give support on Facebook, but what is evident is that this is being censored, not in just in Egypt, but I take it by Facebook itself.

What I would be interested to hear is a overview of the role and activities of these ‘social networks’ as I have been unable to comment on many, including “Julian Assange,” and “Barack must go.”

I look forward to the WWS doing an investigative piece on this.

John
28 January 2011

On “The New York Times and WikiLeaks”

The *New York Times* revealed what it was when it, more than any paper, supported the invasion of Iraq. It also buried anti-war protests here in New York and in DC. Really, the *Times* more than other papers, is a state newspaper.

Rose R

Connecticut, USA
31 January 2011

On “Australia: Grantham flood survivor threatened with arrest”

I am just interested if “inciting fear and anger in the community” is under the sedition laws. Checking out the criminal code this is all I can find.

If they can do this they are unanswerable to anyone!

Australia in the late 1960s was such a great place to be. Now the police are almost paramilitary in Queensland. I am shocked as a Queenslander if I can't raise concerns without being charged.

John W
26 January 2011

On “Ex-Washington, DC schools chief escalates campaign against public education

I do apologize for not using my real name—it is a sad world we live in the United States today when as a public school teacher in DCPS I am afraid of speaking truth publicly for fear of retaliation.

My comment on this article is that Valerie Strauss' article in the *Washington Post* the other day reported that in addition to his \$2 million salary, Klein receives a yearly pension of \$34,000 for his “service” to NYPS. Of course, he has spoken aggressively against teacher pensions.

A DCPS Teacher
26 January 2011

On “Detroit cuts funding for homeless warming centers”

Snyder's neck is what needs to be on the chopping block! What a myopic cretin he must be!

Mike
31 January 2011

On “Obama's jobs fraud”

I worked for GE in the 1970s & early 80s, when Reg Jones turned the reins over to Neutron Jack Welch who got rid of employees and leveled many of the buildings in Schenectady—it “used to be” a GE town, but he moved most of the operations to Mexico.

GE has shed more US-based jobs, and outsourced them to India, Mexico, Welch also “built” GE through buying companies like RCA and getting rid of the employees. He and Larry Bossidy tried to merge the new Honeywell into GE which would have eliminated 65,000 jobs in Europe.... they were stopped, not by the US, but by Europe.

GE also has reportedly paid *no US taxes* for years... A really fine corporate American Citizen... they're a bunch of hypocrites...

John K

27 January 2011

On “Sri Lankan government intensifies Colombo evictions”

A clearly written article, the voice of oppressed against oppressors. More importantly it did not isolate the people, the photos conveyed the class solidarity needed among them without dividing them as Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims. I can see it is consciously done.

Sathish
27 January 2011

On “Obama's State of the Union address”

Harry Truman would have summed up the State of the Union message more tersely. Referring to the “old soliders” speech of Douglas MacArthur, Truman said it was nothing but a bunch of damned bullshit.

Exactly.

Phillip S
27 January 2011

On “True Grit, a revenge tale from the Coen brothers”

Mr. Lee's review of *True Grit* makes me eager to see the film. I have not seen the earlier film, either, but I am a fan of Charles Portis's book. I hope that the Coen brothers retained something of Portis humor and complexity.

He supplies a nearly perfect narrative voice for Mattie Ross as she tells the story many years later, and sets it knowledgeably in the social conditions of the post-bellum South. For all the violence and outlawry, Portis gives his characters not only a human face, but also a humanistic slant, sometimes even in the worst of them.

One wonders what was at work in American culture in 1968, when the book was written, that make it a more satisfying artistic experience of the 19th century frontier than so many current works, such as Cormac McCarthy's loathsome *Blood Meridian*.

Sandy English
New York, USA
27 January 2011

I don't know that I can provide any “insightful criticism” requested by comrade Nick, [See “Letters from our readers,” 27 January 2011] but I'll try to provide “the historical conditions that inform that context”.

Charles Portis's novel *True Grit* was published in 1968, the year of the Tet Offensive and the failure of the Pentagon to maintain the fiction that they were “winning” in Vietnam by crushing mass resistance—in the US and Vietnam.

It was also the year of the My Lai massacres; U.S. troops murdered hundreds of Vietnamese villagers—all noncombatants—in what authorities surmised was collective punishment by US soldiers to revenge the loss of comrades during search and destroy missions. According to Colonel Anthony Herbert, murders of this kind occurred in every combat unit that

operated in Vietnam.

The release date of the original movie (1969) saw the inauguration of Richard Nixon as President of the United States and the concoction by his administration of the POW/MIA propaganda to portray U.S. prisoners of war as innocent victims of Communist savagery. The majority of American prisoners were downed B-17 Flying Fortress crews who had been deployed in carpet bombing raids on North Vietnam urban centers. The POW/MIA myth was designed to counter the emerging reports of US military atrocities, including My Lai, Con Son prison and other detention and torture facilities, as well as the mass civilian death tolls due to saturation bombing.

The myth persists to this day: the POW/MIA flag is flown nationally at government facilities, legitimized by the Whitehouse and Congress in 1988. It was further

manifested in the “Rambo” film series, Ted Kotcheff’s *First Blood* (1982) and sequels directed by Sylvester Stallone and others, celebrating themes of retribution and revenge related the POW/MIA issue. This alone has had something to do with how Vietnam Veterans interpreted their war experience, their “war record”.

In 1969, The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Covert Intelligence Programs (COINTELPRO) was in full swing, infiltrating, among others, Left Wing and socialist political action groups opposed to the war. The programs was exposed and reported to be disbanded 1971. The FBI engaged in psychological warfare and committed vandalism, assaults, beatings and assassinations. The object was to frighten, or eliminate dissidents and disrupt their movements. The brutality and vindictiveness of the program is well documented.

Let the foregoing thumbnail sketch serve as the “social context” for the original movie directed by Henry Hathaway and the theme of revenge. I leave it to the viewers to determine if his “revenge” film reflects or resonates with the “social context” in 1969.

The year is now 2011. The Coen Brothers are at the top of their directorial careers. They’ve chosen to remake a movie with the particularly potent theme. Why?

The Coen Brothers do not require a thumbnail review of the last 10 years; they lived through it.

They are certainly aware of the recent release of footage entitled “Collateral Damage” made available by Wikileaks in 2010. [See, “US soldier in WikiLeaks massacre video: ‘I relive this every day’,” 28 April 2010] Although not “revenge” killings in a narrow sense, the murders were conducted under the euphemism “rules of engagement”, a catch-all term that can be applied to any act of violence to justify “self-defense”.

One wonders what affect this footage has on men like Joel and Ethan Coen.

Meanwhile, the Obama Administration continues to play the “terrorist” card to whip up hostility and fear of the Muslim world, fueling calls for the revenge of “9/11”, a complex construct of myths and disinformation, never fully or independently investigated.

Why is the treatment of “revenge” such an obsession in country where the political, media and military elites are never victims at all; and where the American public is purposefully denied the facts about the wars and devastations carried out by these elites? How can a people grasp the issues in a movie about victimization and revenge, lacking “the historical

conditions that inform that context.”

In response to comrade Nick P and his call for “insightful criticism”, I offer the following paragraph from Hiram Lee’s review of the 2011 release of *True Grit*:

“Killing another human being is no easy thing to do. The artist might ask, under what circumstances does a person (especially one so young) arrive at a point at which this becomes possible, or even simply thinkable? What does desire for revenge do to a person and what are the consequences for one’s psyche once the act is committed? What are the broader social implications of such a law-and-order mentality? This rich ground for drama, and for social insight, is left untouched by the Coens, as it was by Hathaway in the earlier film. Both works suffer considerably for it.”

Yours Truly,

Little Mattie – Revenge Consultant

Randy R
Arizona, USA
28 January 2011



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact