

Letters from our readers

5 April 2011

On "The case of Professor Juan Cole"

"Professor Cole's writing gives the impression of a man who has completely lost his bearings." Actually since the professor has written, "If NATO needs me I'm there," this is an understatement. It sounds to me like the professor has completely lost his marbles. Unless of course this is some screen plot and the professor's blog has been hacked into by the Pentagon. And so on. But didn't the same thing occur over Iraq at the start? Doesn't every intellectual outsider long to embrace "conventional wisdom" once? No, but some do. In any case, I'm already listening to the first reports of Libyan civilians killed by NATO bombing. Perhaps the good professor would like to join up and drop some napalm?

Chris
Ireland
1 April 2011
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Thanks soooo much for outing Juan Cole. I read his article, and vowed to write exactly the kind of detailed rebuttal you have done so well.

Best,
DR
1 April 2011
On "The war on Libya: a new eruption of imperialist rivalry"

It appears Trotsky's famous essay needs an update:

"There were never so many pacifists in the world as now, when in all countries men are killing one another. Every historical epoch has not only its own technique and its own political form, but also a hypocrisy peculiar to itself. Once peoples destroyed each other in the name

of the Christian teaching of love of humanity. Now only backward governments call upon Christ. Progressive nations cut each others' throats in the name of pacifism. Wilson drags America into the war in the name of the League of Nations, and perpetual peace. Kerensky and Tsereteli call for an offensive for the sake of an early peace." — *Pacifism As The Servant of Imperialism*

Just substitute "humanitarian reasons," "saving civilian lives" and "stopping a bloodthirsty tyrant" for pacifism and you're good to go.

Joan R
Canada
2 April 2011

On "Australian government imposes new punitive measures on the unemployed"

Once again the government initiative is to blame the very workers for the situation that they are in. No initiative to train working people and to pay them a decent wage. The Labor Party is nothing more than a rotting corpse in a decrepit system that has to make the working class pay for their very existence.

The Labor Party is in namesake only and exists as primarily a steppingstone for union bureaucrats. These organizations use unemployment to drive down the wages of all people in order to drive up massive profits for the large corporations.

In order to combat this offensive a new perspective is needed and the building of rank-and-file committees in all workplaces and the building of a new party on socialist lines.

Julian H
Queensland, Australia

1 April 2011

On "Ohio governor signs law attacking public employees"

Mr. Kasich likes to portray himself as an unconventional politician, which is the reason why he should term the possible November vote as a referendum on his leadership and strongly tell Ohioans that he will resign if on the losing side of the campaign.

Richard C

1 April 2011

On "Rock band White Stripes breaks up: a look back"

I continue to be baffled by the artistic reviews on the *World Socialist Web Site*. While I am certainly in favor of Marxist cultural critique, the WSWS continues to fall short in this regard, despite what I can only assume are the best intentions. Clear artistic achievements such as *True Grit* merit scorn and derision. The work of Hubert Selby, Jr. is described as "overheated prose." One article states: "The drug 'counterculture,' despite its pretensions, never produced anything of insight or lasting value." Apparently the web site is unfamiliar with the works of William Burroughs and Ken Kesey, to name only two very obvious examples from the realm of literature alone.

And yet, The White Stripes, standard bearers of the vapid and decidedly anti-substance subculture of aughties hipsterism, are lamented in their passing. Gone from this article is the social and historical contextualizing that is almost pathological in other articles, where the aesthetic merits of a work of art take a back seat to a didactically "socialist" interpretation of alleged social circumstances informing the artwork.

"This is genuinely exciting music," the writer enthuses. Exciting to whom and for what reasons? Rock and roll at its best is exciting because of its energy, raw sexuality and willingness to push the boundaries of social convention. The White Stripes have none of these qualities, nor did they do anything particularly ground breaking. Throughout the late 1990s and the 2000s The White Stripes made a name for themselves with soulless reinterpretations of

American blues via Led Zeppelin and a watered-down version of 90s garage-blues revival. The band did little to add to the aesthetic palette of this idiom, territory well explored by far more vital bands such as The Oblivians, The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and The Gun Club. Rather, what The White Stripes added were the winking jokes without punch lines and style over substance that characterized "alternative" rock throughout the last decade.

There indeed has been vital, exciting and innovative rock and roll made over the last decade. The Murder City Devils fused psychedelia, punk rock and goth, boasting lyrics that spoke eloquently of loss and tragedy. At The Drive-In adopted the best elements of prog rock and post-hardcore, offering perhaps the most exciting live show I have ever seen. Queens of the Stone Age broke out of the confines of "stoner doom" to become one of the most sonically interesting bands of the post-Nirvana era, without ever skimping on the rock. That the WSWS would choose to highlight the work of such a derivative and lightweight band uncritically raises serious questions about the web site's credibility on issues of culture.

Nicholas P

2 April 2011



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