

Letters from our readers

15 November 2011

On "The unravelling of the European Union"

This whole situation could be fixed in a few hours if these governments simply went to Switzerland, opened up the bank accounts of people who have not been paying taxes for the past 30 years, and distributed the money amongst the bottom 99 percent of the population who actually do pay taxes.

With the flip of a switch everyone in Greece could see 25,000 euros appear in their account next week. Problem solved.

PK

14 November 2011

On "US authorities step up nationwide crackdown on Occupy protests"

You make a great point; as a defense lawyer I have seen how the charges tend to directly depend on how bad they beat up my client, with the most serious charges reserved for the most violent beatings.

Dan M

California, USA

14 November 2011

On "Police attack Occupy protesters in Berkeley, California"

"Before tents were pitched, UC police officers had suited-up in full riot gear—equipped with batons, helmets, gas masks, teargas guns, etc.—just on the other side of the building. As students put up tents, news came in of police massing to drive them out. Students formed human chains protecting the tents. A battalion of riot police then came in from either side to force the students out."

This is the exact tactic used by the National Guard on the same campus in 1968. I was there and got tear-

gassed for the first time in my life. They suddenly charged from the other side of the building and started lobbing the gas at us.

Carolyn

California, USA

12 November 2011

On "Thomas S. Kuhn, post-modernism and materialist dialectics"

Dear William,

Reading this took me right back. I remember reading Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* a few years after it came out in 1962.

I remember feeling very uneasy about his theory of paradigms as being idealist but not being able to make a real critique.

This I find excellent.

TS

France

12 November 2011

On "US, UN snub Tamil National Alliance delegation"

Great article, well done, and kudos to the editors for having the guts to publish this.

Mark S

Australia

11 November 2011

On "Former leader Arthur Scargill makes apology for British National Union of Mineworkers"

I was at the meeting and agree fully with the comments by the author. Scargill and Capstick should be seen for what they really stand for, and none of them

can be taken seriously by miners that are left in the industry or any worker. Firstly they showed contempt for the recent deaths and injuries of miners over this period, from the miners who died at the Gleisson colliery in Wales to the death of a miner at the Kellingly colliery in Yorkshire. They still spew out the old analogies of why the strike was lost whilst at the same time they say it was a great victory for workers. The devastation to communities and the mining industry are a testament to that. They whined on how it would have been incorrect to join the European Union basically more concerned with the problems that exist within the decaying system of capitalism, rather than representing the class interest of the working class. These decaying left bureaucrats have nothing to say to the working class and must be seen for what they really are. For years they've enjoyed a decent lifestyle presented to them by miners and the NUM. They are now surrounded by their Stalinist friends and the fake left, who act as their apologists.

Malcolm B

12 November 2011

On "Thai floods compound government's political problems"

Thanks, John Roberts, for this excellent article, the likes of which I haven't seen so far in the mainstream news media here. I have an interest in this news as I work for a law firm that has an office in Bangkok. This really drives home the vulnerability of global economic and trade networks to local environmental and social conditions in particular countries. The story reminds me of the joke about the Soviet Union locating its one and only laundry detergent-making factory in the Caucasus: when something happened to the factory causing it to shut down, the whole country couldn't do any washing for six weeks.

I'm guessing that many components that go into our PCs, laptops, mobile phones, iPads and other consumer electronics gadgets are made mainly in Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, and other countries in the Southeast Asian region that over time are becoming increasingly prone to strong typhoons, earthquakes and volcanic activity. It might not take much—let's say another earthquake near Jakarta that causes a

mudslide—to completely shut down industrial production in factories located around that city.

As with Bangkok, many major cities in SE Asia are built in flat areas and floodplains and have experienced such rapid industrial development with an accompanying rise in population that proper urban planning has taken a backseat. Rapidly rising property prices and deals under the table between developers and government agencies throw farmers off their land, disrupt and break up communities, and encourage much real estate speculation which makes it difficult for people to live in cities and forces them into satellite dormitory communities miles away from their places of work. Planning for flood control becomes impossible and any measures taken after a flood event are simply palliatives to ease local and international concerns but which don't actually address the underlying problems.

It's likely too that increasing deforestation in northern parts of Thailand will add to future problems of flooding for Bangkok. Thailand is in the unfortunate position in that increased centralisation of industry in Bangkok will make the city more vulnerable to flood events but decentralisation of industry to other parts of the country will have a similar effect. Look at a map of the country and you'll see what I mean: several rivers rising in hilly and mountainous areas in Thailand, Laos and China have their confluence near or in and around Bangkok. Look at Cambodia and Vietnam and you'll see Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City are also located on a major river (Mekong); as industrial growth increases in those two countries, the risk of large-scale flooding is likely to increase for those cities for much the same reasons.

Jennifer H

12 November 2011



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