

Letters from our readers

24 March 2012

On "Leon Trotsky and the defense of historical truth"

Thank you, David, for this important and essential speech and the meticulous and diligent analysis in your book defending Trotsky! How the world has changed: I remember the times when the students of the Stalinist youth organization (Spartakus) in West Germany gloatingly called us "ice pick" when we distributed our Trotskyist publications at the university. Now, the International Committee of the 4th International can gather such a large audience in a city of the former East-German GDR. It is the material conditions of the capitalist crisis that make people review their conventional concepts. The fight for historical truth is inseparably linked to the fight for a socialist alternative against capitalism. The speech in Leipzig and the previous introduction of Rabinowitch's book in Berlin show that the ICFI and the PSG are gaining acceptance and a reputation of being the Marxist point of reference for a growing audience in the German working class.

Hans-Peter
23 March 2012

On "The Pope's visit to Mexico deepens assault on the secular state"

A great article detailing the insidious influence of the Catholic Church, quite resembling what's been happening in my country Croatia in the last two decades. It reminds me of the writings of the British Middle Ages historian Christopher Hill:

"But 'religion' covered something much wider than it does today. The Church throughout the Middle Ages, and down to the 17th century, was something very different from what we call a Church today. It guided all the movements of men from baptism to the burial service, and was the gateway to that life to come in which all men fervently believed. The Church educated children; in the village parishes ... the parson's sermon was the main source of information on current events and problems, of guidance on economic conduct. The parish itself was an important unit of local government, collecting and doling out such pittances as the poor received. The Church controlled men's feelings and told them what to believe, provided them with entertainment and shows. It took the place of news and propaganda services now covered by many different and more efficient institutions—the Press, the BBC, the cinema, the club, and so forth....

"The Church, then, defended the existing order, and it was important for the Government to maintain its control over this publicity and propaganda agency. For the same reason, those who

wanted to overthrow the feudal state had to attack and seize control of the Church. That is why political theories tended to get wrapped up in religious language. It was not that our 17th century forefathers were much more conscientious and saintly men than we are.... We can be sceptical and tolerant in religious matters, not because we are wiser and better, but because Cromwell, stabling in cathedrals the horses of the most disciplined and most democratic cavalry the world had yet seen, won a victory which forever stopped men being flogged and branded for having unorthodox views about the Communion service.... Under these circumstances social conflicts inevitably became religious conflicts. ...

"But the real clash is between these class interests: behind the parson stood the squire."

The crisis of capitalism is demanding of the ruling classes a response that cannot be implemented democratically. This is where the interest of the political elite more and more intersects with the clerical, and the social (class) conflicts are again becoming shrouded in religious conflicts.

Mirko L
21 March 2012

I find this news from Mexico as stunning. In the summer of 1963 I took a few courses at UNAM. They were taught in English to about 20 Americans and Canadians. All the instructors were Mexican, Ivy Leaguers, very worldly, and probably rich.

My Mexican History professor was a Harvard grad, class of around 1915. While recognizing that the ruling, and virtually only party with power, PRI, was corrupt, he absolutely despised the PAN. He called the PAN a tool of the Catholic Church. What I remember most was his saying that "No respectable person would join the PAN, only rural peons." Learning of the Catholic Church's role in the history of Mexico, what he said came as no surprise. At that time (1960s) no member of Government (and they were all PRI) was allowed to set foot in any church, not even for a wedding. The doors would be kept open, and the father would stand outside and look down the aisle. How times have changed!

The article also should enlighten us all as to this current nonsense the evangelists, and Santorum and his masters in Opus Dei are spouting about "religious freedom" in the USA. Mexico is showing us what will probably happen here.

Mexican history is incredibly exciting, and I wish that more

people knew of it.

Thank you.

Rich H

21 March 2012

On "Autistic teen fatally shot by police in suburban Chicago home"

As a mother of a 15-year-old with Autism and a Mental Health clinician, I would like to highlight a number of issues in relation to the article "Autistic teen fatally shot by police in suburban Chicago home" and a comment on the letter from Cortney D from 13 March 2012.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a subtype of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) and listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM IV-TR). In many countries ASD is still considered a "mental illness"; it is my understanding that is the case in the United States.

Whilst I understand and agree with Cortney's point to not "perpetuate the socio-cultural stigma surrounding disabilities" and as stated later "If you're going to write on a tragic case like this, please set aside neurotypical privilege and share a bit of awareness, advocacy, and education before plunging in," I think a little further explanation may be useful.

Many people with ASD or Asperger's and their families, myself included, feel quite strongly in opposing those on the "spectrum" being viewed as having an illness, being disabled, needing to be fixed or in fact having the "illness" somehow eliminated. As with many other perceived "disabilities" what is needed is respect of "difference."

The murder of this boy highlights the lack of adequate support and resources for those with ASD and for their families, an issue faced not only in the United States but other so-called advanced countries, Australia included.

I feel this tragic and heartbreaking story, sadly one of many, serves to highlight many issues that many of us face every day, including school refusal, challenging behaviours and lack of support services. Many people with ASD develop co-morbid mental health conditions such as anxiety disorders and depression.

Here are just a few questions that should be asked: Why was this young man refusing to attend school? Why are the individual needs including sensory sensitivity, language difficulties and challenging behaviours of those with ASD and Asperger's still largely ignored? Why are those with ASD discriminated against by not having adequate access to accessible education? Where was the support for the family struggling to manage challenging behaviours of an adolescent male? Why are so many children and adolescents with ASD forced to be treated through the mental health system, including inpatient mental health hospital wards? Why were the family forced to call police for assistance with

dealing with challenging behaviours directly related to this child having a diagnosis of ASD? Why are police still shooting and killing, at will, individuals with mental health conditions and disabilities? Why are so many people incarcerated in state prisons suffering untreated mental health conditions?

As the article pointed out "The young boy's death is a result of the total breakdown of the most basic mental health services available to working families in many areas of the US. In budget-strapped states like Illinois, deep cuts have forced the closure of numerous mental health facilities, replacing mental health care with law enforcement, resulting in the criminalization of those in need of care."

Capitalism does not and will not offer adequate care for those members of the working class that need specialized services. They are thrown on the scrapheap of society, considered to have no rights, with no worth attributed to their lives and viewed to have no positive contribution to make to society.

Only under a socialist economy can "best practice" services such as specialised health, education and training facilities be offered. Only under socialism, where profit is not the driving force behind all areas of the economy, can the individual needs of those within society be addressed, allowing individuals every opportunity to fulfill their full potential.

AL

Melbourne, Australia

22 March 2012

On "Florida shooting focuses attention on 'Stand Your Ground' laws"

When I was living in New York, a retired homicide detective told me that the police always advised homeowners who shot someone trying to break into their house to drag the body inside before they called the cops. Thus the Castle Doctrine was enforced.

Carolyn

California

23 March 2012



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