

Letters from our readers

16 June 2012

On "Russia prepares army for Syrian deployment"

This is a particularly dangerous development. It raises the prospect of military units of NATO and its rivals directly facing each other with hostility, primed for military conflict between the major powers.

There may be a terrifying similarity with October 1962, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis, when the B-52s were close to the Soviet border ready to attack Russia should a conflict have broken out in the Caribbean Sea as a result of the blockade against Soviet ships.

One can imagine that there will be severe consequences as soon as any invasion of Syria is launched by NATO. Whether the Russian military fights the NATO units at this time would probably depend on the level of tensions at other flashpoints.

Of course, Iran and China's interests in the region cannot be ignored. A similar situation is heading for emergence in Iran and an escalation of disputes in the South China Sea could predispose the Iranian powder keg to explosion when the Chinese military responds to a US-Israeli invasion of Iran.

The spectre of October 1962 could return almost exactly 50 years after the time that the planet came closest to nuclear conflagration. That is, unless Obama decides to withhold military action until after the presidential elections.

BH

12 June 2012

On "British journalist 'set up to be shot' by Syrian rebels"

This news doesn't surprise me at all. We have been told that the Houla massacre was the work of the Syrian Army yet the fact that many victims were shot execution-style in the back of their necks and that many of them were Shi'a Muslims or Alawites suggests that the Western-backed rebels were responsible for their deaths.

I've also heard news that the rebels have been infiltrated by Libyan rebels who fought against the Libyan government and this in itself suggests Western complicity in the current fighting in Syria and also in Libya last year. So it's possible that many atrocities attributed to Colonel Gaddafi's forces last year were in fact staged by rebel forces.

In addition, independent journalists like Mahdi Darius

Nazremroaya and Franklin Lamb reporting from Libya last year were targeted for killing; Lamb was shot in the leg. There was also some news last year that a NATO commander admitted that the BBC had been providing assistance to NATO forces by giving ground position information of government troops to NATO, but it seems to have been pulled.

Jennifer H

12 June 2012

On "ISO silent on Obama's kill list"

Same with *Workers World*.

Gene Clancy's June 10 *Workers World* article, "Drones' murder of innocents highlights U.S. hypocrisy" [which is housed in the WW web site's Editorials section, and thus amounts to little more than just one comrade's essay] underscores the "letting Obama off the hook" aspect of their coverage of the anti-NATO demo in Chicago in May.

Clancy gives a useful list of US drone attacks over the last 11 years, underscoring the horrific consequences of the use of this weapon for workers in Somalia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan today.

But nowhere is there a mention of the fact that drone targets are selected with the direct input of President Obama himself. Clancy's article is dated June 10. On May 29, the *New York Times* ran an article detailing Obama's very hands-on approach to selecting the drone target list. Clancy makes no mention of this fact, which the Obama administration itself is promoting as a way to steal a march on Republican opponent Mitt Romney.

How can a Marxist-Leninist party be built when one of the central insights of the communist movement on imperialist war, and class war in general, is omitted: that "the true enemy is at home"?

Or, to put things more starkly, if not more comradely: Are we to protest things like the Chicago NATO meeting when a black Democrat is in the White House, but be permitted to protest the US president and the US government when a cruel and smirking Republican like George W. Bush is in the White House?

Jay R

14 June 2012

On "Science fiction writer Ray Bradbury: 1920-2012"

Years ago, the most accurate articles covering the 911

“production” I found on the WWSWS. For whatever reason, I lost contact until recently when a friend confided that he aligned himself most comfortably with the socialist viewpoint. Always looking for a fresh perspective, I rediscovered your site, read several articles including this one on Ray Bradbury, and was hopeful to see high journalistic standards are alive and well. Patrick Martin’s anti-NATO article expressed my sentiments as well. Thank you for insightful reading.

Renee S
Texas, USA
14 June 2012

On “Guitar and folk music great Doc Watson dead at 89”

Watson’s childhood coincided with the First Great Depression; that needs to be pointed out. Moreover, that Americans, more often than not urban dwellers, are currently experiencing the devastating effects of the Second Great Depression. Half of all Americans are dependent on meager government aid to exist from day to day. In other words, “nearly half of the population is low-income.”

From the sketch of Doc Watson’s childhood I gathered that he suffered the hardships of chronic poverty associated with remote, rural regions of America. I don’t doubt that “it would get so cold that frost formed on [his] pillow.” Similarly, tens of thousands of Detroit residents recently faced evictions and utility shutoffs during the winter months. I personally know very well how alarming it is to wake up when the temperature in my 7 ft. X 7 ft. camper drops into the upper 20s (degrees Fahrenheit)—a common enough occurrence for many who live in recreational vehicles.

Watson’s father, “a farmer and a sawmill worker,” no doubt possessed a great variety of practical skills—a capable man. The Watson home was a sturdy and durable log cabin. That he built the cabin “with his own hands” was a necessity, not a vanity project. I know that my parents, who had been young workers in the Detroit auto industry in the 1930s, felt gratified when they completed building an 1100 sq. ft. frame house in California’s San Fernando Valley “with their own hands” in the late 1940s. They raised their three kids in that house. (Note: all houses are “built by hand” or at least assembled by hand. Ask any one of the thousands of unemployed journeymen carpenters.)

Certainly, General Watson “did not have much money” living in rural Deep Gap, North Carolina, a community founded on the old Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. Bartering and communal exchanges for goods was a means to cope with primitive and harsh conditions.

The urban poor in 2012 face their own set of challenges. I recently watched a young unemployed man purchase two six-packs of soda pop with his food stamps (\$5.00), walk around that back of the supermarket, empty them on the ground, and immediately recycle the cans for a refund of \$1.20. These are the degradations and absurdities associated with the Second Great Depression for those who do “not have much money.”

With “11 children in all”, the Watson home was indeed crowded. Due to the current Depression, family and kin are doubling and tripling up in their apartments, houses and mobile homes so as to pour their earnings into gasoline and food purchases. Millions of Americans are testing the limits of poet Robert Frost’s adage on “home”: “Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” (From his poem “The Death of the Hired Man,” 1915). Beds are being “shared” in this crisis. All this has consequences.

One of my coworkers, in his early twenties, is sleeping on the sofa at a cousin’s apartment because his aunt threw his out of her place. The printing plant where we work hires mostly temp agency workers, like myself. When production slows, the management immediately starts pulling people off the line and sending them home. Twenty-five hours a week of fast-paced labor at near-minimum wage (in Oregon \$8.80/hr.) is about average. This young man is enlisting in the US Army so he can “fight in Afghanistan”—part of a proposed “hundred year war” on “terrorism.” The current Democratic Party administration, and the Pentagon, feeds his disorientation daily.

On the subject of Doc Watson’s music, his live album “Old Timey Concert” (1977), with fellow musicians Fred Price and Clint Howard, was my favorite. I about wore it out listening to it. In the early 1980s, I attended a Doc Watson concert in Arcata, California. In his encore, Doc and Merle had hundreds of college kids singing “Dixie” at the top of their lungs. This, at the opening of the Reagan “revolution” and the right-wing “backlash.”

Another consequence of global depressions are rebellions, insurrections and social revolutions. Public figures, including entertainers like Doc Watson, will draw conclusions from their experiences—their sufferings. My question is whether or not Watson’s opus fully engaged his experiences and understanding of the era in which he grew up, or whether “intense sadness” or “haunting expressions” will suffice. These questions might profitably be addressed in an obituary.

Randy R
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14 June 2012



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