

Letters from our readers

21 March 2013

On “Cyprus banks close as bailout terms spark Europe-wide crisis”

Russian web sites reviewing the history of similar schemes, confiscating a proportion of deposits, shows most clustered in the period just before and after the Second World War.

The Cypriot scheme ensures that runs on banks and capital flight will now cluster around 2013. From here on in, the first rumour that an IMF consultation is necessary for Euro country X will trigger a crisis in the banking system of X as depositors all try to shift their funds abroad. As many bourgeois commentators have noted, the damage done to the operation of the capitalist system is out of all proportion to the actual sums required. The total amount raised by the confiscation is about 6 billion euro.

What becomes clearer at each stage of the Euro/EU dissolution is that German hegemony is likely to be a brief affair.

Chris

Ireland

19 March 2013

On “The ‘Dirty War’ Pope”

I was a Catholic for 58 years and an ordained minister—a deacon—for 8 of those years. I served in what I call the “bowels” of the church as a business administrator and fund manager and development officer from 1996 to 2008.

In my job to bring two parishes in the Diocese of Superior, WI within generally accepted accounting principles I was met with reactionary behind-my-back maneuvering by pastors to thwart my attempts to bring accountability to the people of those parishes.

I have accounts of these maneuverings and probably could write a book on the hypocrisy, backstabbing, injustices (especially in the pay and benefits of the church workers), and my interactions with a priest who eventually killed himself because of accusations that he murdered a parishioner and another person.

It took me a while but finally in 2008 I quit working for the church and in 2009 I became an atheist and a socialist. It is ironic that the Catholic Church has not excommunicated me or has not even laicized (taken away my clerical status). They can’t do it without opening a can of worms as I acted ethically and was correct in my actions.

Another great article, Bill.

KS

USA

16 March 2013

History proves many times that the Roman-Catholic Church is by far not the only one endorsing the crimes committed in the name of religion and that the Vatican is not the only one working hand in hand with governments trying to impose religion as the supreme truth in order to control people. The tendency of right-wing politicians to use the Church to contain the drive of people towards intellectual and social freedom has become in Romania even more visible during the last years. But the influence of the Church rests on many decades of manipulation and public control.

The Romanian Constitution from 1923 declared the Orthodox Church as dominant in Romania. From there proceeded various privileges and the ever-growing importance it played within the state, having great influence and power.

Apparently, the Communist Party under Ceausescu condemned the religious belief, but tolerated it within certain legal limits. In return, the church subjected itself to the party and played the role of a buffer between the Stalinist regime and the majority of the population.

After 1989, the tendency of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) towards even more power and influence continued to grow to alarming heights. The Romanian political class tolerated and supported it, using it as a political tool for their own personal agenda. To name just a few aspects:

- Orthodox religious leaders are very often present at formal occasions of the Romanian State. Many of them have public appearances alongside major political leaders and their religious messages often contain political promises and goals, as well as the urge to support certain political positions.

- Even in times of crisis, the Romanian state offers huge sums for the construction and repair of churches. In Bucharest, a huge and luxurious Cathedral—Cathedral of the Salvation of the Nation—is in construction as we speak. The initial cost was rated by the Church at 400 million Euros (\$503 million). The Government has donated 11 acres of land, worth around 200 million euros for the project, and more than 10 million Euros from the public budget. With the Governments support, BOR went as far as to declare that the financial-economic crisis is the result of “a profound spiritual and moral crisis that can be overcome by increasing our faith, prayers and the cooperation to complete a place of worship that gather people(...)”.

- Politicians constantly use religion to gain trust, and, especially during election years, decide upon many laws which favor the Church. The Social-Democratic Party (PSD) even suggested a few years ago that members of the clergy should not be investigated for a possible collaboration with the former Communist secret police (Securitate).

- In March this year, BOR demanded publicly the introduction of articles that refer to the name of God in the future Constitution of Romania as well as the importance of the Christian tradition for the Romanian population, the highlighting of the role of the Orthodox Church within the history of the country and the necessity of teaching religion in school.

These are, of course, only very few examples.

Some figures, taken from studies and statistics, best explain the results of the poisonous mingling of right-wing polices implemented upon the Romanian working class with the help of BOR: after 1989, on average, Romania got 200 new churches per year, while the number of schools decreased by more than 1,000 per year and hospital beds dropped nearly 4,000 a year. Not to mention the fact that the church rests upon approximately 3 billion Euros, 70,000 hectares of wood and arable land, dozens of hotels, restaurants, farms.

BOR is probably the richest Romanian “company”,

one which has played an important—and not too often discrete—role of support for politicians in all spheres of political power. Thus, no wonder the church benefits from exemptions from fees and taxes, although the report of BOR from 2009 and 2010 shows that it has spent on “social and philanthropic work” only about 5 percent of the total budgetary subsidies it has received.

Diana T

Romania

17 March 2013

On “The Iraq War ten years on: A turning point for US imperialism”

Editors:

You toot your own horn at the end of this article, and well you should. This is what you wrote on the eve of the slaughter:

“The unprovoked and illegal invasion of Iraq by the United States is an event that will live in infamy. The political criminals in Washington who have launched this war, and the wretched scoundrels in the mass media who are reveling in the bloodbath, have covered this country in shame.”

All proven true. So please allow me to tell your readers, the most informed of any anywhere, of an extraordinary book I just read, called *Malvern*. (malvernthenovel.com) It is a comic novel composed entirely of emails that document (among other things) the taking down of the government over the 9/11 attacks, the government taken down the Bush administration. In addition to being perhaps the funniest and cleverest book I have ever read, in addition to Dick Cheney going to jail at the end, the book features what our rulers fear most: a redoubtable protagonist fighting back.

CW

19 March 2013



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