

Letters from our readers

12 December 2013

On “David Edward Hyland: March 7, 1947—December 8, 2013”

Dear WSWS,

Allow me to express my sincere condolences to the Fourth International and his family on the news of the passing away of comrade Dave Hyland.

He was an extraordinary brilliant political representative of the working-class of Britain and of the world proletariat. Reading his articles, and listening to his speeches was a historically significant milestone in my personal political education. What an extraordinary Trotskyist he was. Great oratory skills, superb power of analysis combined with a very intelligent gifted ability to raise workers to the highest levels of political class-consciousness. What a Marxist teacher and fighter he was! His successful struggle against opportunism was a historical milestone for the working-class, and for me in particular.

It is with stunning surprise and great sadness that I have read the news this morning on the website WSWS.

Regards,

Joseph

10 December 2013

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A very sad day. Dave, always calm, resolute and determined, was the leading voice in the UK in opposition to the WRP’s degeneration and betrayals. Without Dave, the struggle to defend proletarian internationalism would have been so much harder. Because of the historic role the British section had played in the defence of Trotskyism his lead has special significance. His struggle strengthened world Trotskyism.

John U

10 December 2013

On “Why imperialism mourns Mandela”

As I watched the program on Mandela on TV, one question stood out for me, which you have rightfully

brought to readers’ attention, viz., did the end of Apartheid have any bearing on the power of corporate capitalism in South Africa to maintain its economic privileges?

Richard L

Florida, USA

9 December 2013

On “Novelist Doris Lessing (1919-2013) and the long retreat”

My thanks to Sandy English for this piece on Doris Lessing, a writer whose name I’ve heard many times but with whose work I am not personally familiar. I find the specifically Marxist analyses of such figures invaluable in placing them in the context of their place and time, and much superior to commonplace psychoanalytic methods in getting to the bottom of the attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives that informed their work. A number of such pieces have appeared in the WSWS recently on various artists of the 20th century, all of which I have found extremely valuable to my personal quest to make sense of a century that seemed completely inexplicable before I found my way, late in life, to Marxism. It is work such as this that puts flesh on the bones of a “working-class education,” in contrast to the bleached and desiccated bones of the “skills-oriented” workers’ education being hatched all over the world by the ruling elites.

I involuntarily caught my breath at the next-to-last paragraph: “The French left-wing poet André Breton once scathingly suggested in an interview that a ‘truly clinical study’ be made of the ‘specifically modern malady’ which makes repentant intellectuals ‘radically change their opinions and renounce in a masochistic and exhibitionist manner their own testimony, becoming champions of a cause quite contrary to that which they began serving with great fanfare.’”

This phenomenon did not only affect Doris Lessing. It has been seen over and over again among Western intellectuals in the twentieth century, and it often—in

fact, usually—is strongly connected with the multiple Stalinist betrayals of the working class that took place from the mid-twenties until Stalin’s death in 1953. What caught my attention in Breton’s statement is the odd parallel of such renunciations to the forced confessions, retractions, and self-criticisms of members of the Left Opposition seated on the dock in Stalin’s show trials of 1937-38, facing immediate execution upon their certain conviction for their “crimes” against the Soviet Union. It is almost as if the Western thinkers were suffering a sort of sympathetic reaction to the pains of the victims of those trials.

The “odd” part, to me, is this: whereas the victims of the trials were forced to confess to all sorts of false charges in the wan hope that they might so be able to escape execution, our Western intellectuals had no need of the executioner’s bullet to cause them to “renounce their own testimony.” The fact that they had no need to do so in order to see their next sunrise perhaps is testimony to the power of social opinion.

CH

Texas

9 December 2013

On “How a great many people live today”

Inconsistent, a great summation of this work and many of his others.

The portrayal by Dern and the others of a family dealing with alcoholism was spot on. Unsentimental but not without artistic compassion in trying to understand who these people are. Dern's nose hair and neck beard deserve consideration for best supporting actor roles.

The cousins you mention were indeed an abortion. Were they meant to be a sort of comic relief in a "heavy" movie? Not needed by someone who can draw out real comedy and who did it quite well throughout the rest of the film.

I thought the other big miss was the Keach character. It looked like it was going to be an interesting gray area of "he said, he said" in Woody's past. What part of Keach's character's greed or need to move an alcoholic partner out vs. guy with a big heart being taken advantage of. It was all settled by putting the old Hollywood black hat on Keach and being knocked out by Woody's son.

There was at least some material to chew on in this film, much of what you covered in your review. One

point; the way he portrayed the media. In the son's taking of the anchor role in local "news" that has little in the way of any substantial reporting, more an arm of the entertainment industry. Also the way the local paper has decayed to little more than an extended obituary section with some "good news" social activities circular. Far cry from a day when such outlets had some real democratic content.

Coley O

11 December 2013



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