

Letters on the death of Pope John Paul II

13 April 2005

The following is a selection of letters received by the World Socialist Web Site on the death of Pope John Paul II.

On “Pope John Paul II: a political obituary”

Thanks for providing penetrating analysis in the face of the media smokescreen, this time regarding Pope John Paul II. It’s disgusting to see that even some progressives are praising him for mouthing a few platitudes about poverty or war. The man was a reactionary because the Church’s agenda is reactionary: obey, obey, obey your betters and you’ll get yours later. While I believe that we lefties must work with good-hearted religious folk, I don’t believe in falling all over ourselves accommodating the obscurantist, anti-democratic (since God and his representatives on Earth will always know more than us mere mortals) and diversionary character of religion. Thanks again for your refreshingly clear-headed analyses.

LM

Long Beach, California 6 April 2005

There is never a shortage of integrity or factuality found within the writings on the WSWS. For yet again, they have brought accurate insight on a story that has been used as a manipulative propagandist tool within the mainstream media outlets. I particularly enjoyed the historical placement of the Pope with that of the Solidarity movement in Poland. I personally have in-laws that live in Warsaw (they actually recently moved back to Poland after leaving in 1978 for the US—supporting the Solidarity movement—then and now) who are unaware of the influence that the elitist Roman Catholic empire had on this movement and on their country. Many still feel, out of false pretense, that the Solidarity movement in Poland was a pure holistic “people’s movement” brought forth to end the imperialistic Stalinist regime. It is extremely important, and you have done this within this article, to report the truth about the relationship between the fascist Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and the Pope/church, and the intended agenda to implement conservative Roman Catholic ideals (not to mention the complete annihilation of Poland through capitalistic

privatization)—for the mere sake of capital gain. Poland has seen a 5 percent growth rate in recent years. However, it’s mostly from isolated foreign endeavors that are destroying the cultural antiquity of Poland. Modern americanized shopping malls now replace local bazaars, bright incandescently lit supermarkets (with all the Coke and potato chips you could possibly want) are pressuring local farm markets out of business, high-end hotels and resorts have all but destroyed the future livelihood of small mountain towns such as Zakopane—the effects are endless. The working class on the other hand has seen an unemployment rate continuously rise since the mid-1980s to a stable 20 percent. Social amenities such as health care and education have deteriorated. Agricultural workers (agriculture has always been Poland’s largest industry) have become displaced. A movement for the people? Thanks again WSWS for the great writing. MH

I enjoyed reading your article, “Pope John Paul II: a political obituary.” It rightly illuminated the political aspects of his regime better than most other obituaries, which tended to concentrate on the mere historical threads of his life. However, there is one paragraph that stuck out like a factual sore thumb: “First, there is his cult of the Madonna and the saints. With 473 beatifications, he has created more than twice as many new saints as his predecessors over the preceding 400 years.” The problem is that you confused beatification and canonization. The former is a preliminary step to sainthood, while the latter is the elevation to the status of saint. Someone who has received beatification is referred to as “Blessed So-And-So,” and that person’s spirit, by tradition, must give evidence of miraculous intercession before elevation to sainthood. It’s a fine distinction, but Catholicism is riddled with that kind of thing. I was raised Catholic and left at an early age, but the Roman church’s absolutism and attention to detail stay with one for life. PT

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

6 April 2005

Thank you for your historical overview of Pope John Paul II. I turn to these and other essays by the WSWS

staff when I want some background on notable public figures and issues. Just a small observation on your article. I have very little knowledge of the historic personalities in the Catholic Church. However, I did come across a quote by Pope Leo XIII a few months ago, written in the late 19th century, that sounded like lip service to working class concerns about abuses by the wealthy towards the poor and capitalism in general. It seems clear that the Catholic Church has been functioning to curb revolutionary economic change since Marx/Engels published *Capital*. It seems like John Paul II is simply carrying on this cynical charade, as you've pointed out. Thanks again!

RR

7 April 2005

On "The US media and the pope—an assault on the separation of church and state"

I didn't need to read this article to have already arrived at the same conclusion. I was appalled when I read that the president was on his way to attend the Pope's funeral. Does he plan to do that for every church leader in the world or only for that of the Catholic religion, of which he is not even a member? I was further incensed to see the flag flying at half-staff—for a religious personage! Surely, there is protocol for this that does not include a pope or any other religious person. This must be an obvious ploy for Catholic voters, for, as we know, the Bushes do not do anything that is not for political reasons.

MM

6 April 2005

On Sirius Pure Jazz channel just this morning, the DJ said the pope's death was the most important event of this millennium, ignoring election frauds of 2000 and 2004, 9/11, the unconstitutional Iraq invasion, and Boston winning the World Series. This was typical and universal in the USA. Everything has been "over the top." On Monday, the *Chicago Tribune* headline was "WE HAVE LOST OUR FATHER." I nearly threw up, but it was so out there that I couldn't help but laugh. How could they possibly top that?

RH

Hinsdale, Illinois 6 April 2005

Thanks for this excellent essay on John Paul II. I've wondered if anyone else has noticed what I have, that there's nothing on the news but pope, for days. By now it's obvious the media is the propaganda arm of our fascist government. As I question what is the propaganda coming through, I see what you wrote. In conversations the last few days, occasionally somebody asks how I feel

about the pope's death. I answer, like I feel about the death of a CEO of a multinational corporation. Who cares? The response always comes: right. A friend who is 82 said a couple days ago that when somebody dies in Wilkesboro (a town nearby) he doesn't know, he doesn't even notice. Why should he care about the pope, somebody else he doesn't know? Thanks for lining it out in logical progression. That was helpful to me. I think the same way, but hadn't articulated it in such depth. I've always found this pope's contempt for the people extraordinary. I also find his alliance with Reagan and Bush rather extraordinary too, considering their contempt for we the people. It parallels the media's contempt for us. If you're rich, come on in, all others need not apply. How much further can capitalism go? I've asked myself this for years and it keeps on going further. We're in a Depression, and the news is telling us we're in prosperous times. And it's generally believed despite being strangled by the oil corps, insurance corps, and the rest of the corps that have spent over a century lobbying legislation in their favor and against us.

TJW

Sparta, North Carolina

6 April 2005

Thank you for your brilliant and entirely honest statement about the coverage of the pope's death. I have turned the corner finally and will vote for an SEP candidate in 2008. You make more sense than anyone else on issue after issue.

DGH

7 April 2005

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