

Letters from our readers

14 June 2008

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “The world food crisis and the capitalist market”

I think the articles on the food shortage are excellent. No one in the bourgeois media is covering speculation. Nor would I expect it. I am passing the articles along to friends and co-workers.

AF

10 June 2008

I read your analysis with great interest. As you note, while hunger is spreading throughout the world, small farmers are driven to the wall by forces beyond their control, only the huge multinational agribusinesses and speculators are benefiting.

I am from Ukraine. Ukrainian nationalists used to blame collectivization and control by Moscow for all the ills of Ukrainian agriculture. As you make clear, since the collapse of Stalinism, agricultural production has actually declined both in the republics of the former Soviet Union, including Ukraine, and in the rest of eastern Europe.

There was an interesting article about Ukraine’s agriculture in the *Wall Street Journal* on May 12. It described some of the mechanics of this decline, but it did not, of course, identify capitalism as the root cause. The breakup of the collective and state farms throughout the Soviet Union resulted in splitting the land into tiny and uneconomic family plots. The individual farmers have no means to buy equipment, seed, or fertilizer. Irrigation, roads and other infrastructure have been neglected and are decaying.

All of this resulted in actual shrinkage of land in production and drops in productivity, just the reverse of what was forecast by anticommunists 20 years ago.

The *WSJ* article described another phenomenon, which demolishes all the nationalist theories about the great future of the Ukrainian peasant. There are international investors—the article talked of one company, Landkom from Great Britain and another

conglomerate from Serbia, MK Group—who come in, lease adjoining plots of land from individuals and set up sizable farms, which they direct. As the newspaper explained, if you grease the hands of the right bureaucrats and set up some highly visible charities (orphanages and churches are always good for public relations), you can make some extraordinary profits. Of course, the agribusiness that results is an integral part of the world market. Equipment, fuel, fertilizer, seed, etc., need to be bought internationally; the harvested grain must be exported.

But independent family farms and a Ukraine of freedom-loving peasants? That is just a pipe dream.

FK

Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

11 June 2008

On “A reply to supporters of ‘humanitarian’ intervention into Burma”

Thanks for this cogent argument as a reply to the range of opinions expressed on the “humanitarian intervention.” It demonstrates that the WSWs is read (and responded to), by a wide section of the community, not just Trotskyists, and that’s really a positive sign.

Of note is the crucial and leading role played by the print and electronic media in driving the elites’ agenda, in the interests of capitalist exploitation and the suppression of individual rights. The media is just fulfilling its class role as a part of capitalist establishment, where any disaster (natural or man-made) is “naturally” viewed as an opportunity to advance the imperialist agenda. So it was with the Katrina disaster and the 2004 tsunami, and apparently that’s the case with the devastation caused by Nargis in Burma. Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine* traces this most egregious trend, where a population under extreme stress caused by a disaster or armed conflict will agree to almost anything. This is when a “real change” can be made and neo-liberal “solutions”

imposed.

Whilst on the subject of Katrina, a comparable disaster, it is instructive to note the role of the mainstream media then, and the attitude of the Western governments to the slowness of the US government's response, its militarisation, and the effective ethnic cleansing of New Orleans. It just points up the crass hypocrisy of the current rhetoric vis à vis the Burmese dictatorship. Of course, on top of this is the maintenance of economic sanctions that the US has imposed on Burma and its people.

MS

Queanbeyan, Australia

9 June 2008

On "United Nations conference offers derisory level of aid for millions hit by food prices"

As an avid reader of the WSWWS, I just wanted to commend you on such an informative, well-written article, which I wish were available in the elite-controlled mainstream media for the largely ignorant masses to understand the level of control held by corporations such as Monsanto! I am going to forward your article to all my contacts, to provide them with some "food for thought" when considering investment options. It seems that the capitalist group of international bankers who have gained control of humanity's resources are fulfilling their New World Order ambitions without much hindrance, and our only hope of preventing the ensuing genocide is going to arise from global social unrest and a total collapse of their debt-based financial system.

JW

Gold Coast, Australia

9 June 2008

On "Canada: GM seeks discussions with CAW to end Oshawa 'blockade'"

I have been following these events faithfully for several years. My brother-in-law works at the Oshawa truck plant as a floor supervisor. He is mandated to work Saturdays. He's even pulling a double this weekend! He has lost benefits and job security since starting there about four years ago (never on a 'regular' contract). I just spoke with my sister tonight about the "new deal" forced through after the May long weekend, and about the closure for 2009. They are having their fourth child next week, and as she is a supply teacher on maternity leave, they are both

climbing the walls with financial concerns.

Apparently at the plant, CAW personnel are attempting to rally the floor workers into striking, and using some of the mentioned tactics to get people riled up. They are also using the recent "awards" presented to the Oshawa facility as reasons that workers should strike. GM itself is currently offering positions to "people they like" (my sister's words) with international plants, to keep some workers more motivated to keep working perhaps, under the guise of altruistic notions. Many of the "regular" employees want to just keep working to make money to support their families, afraid that a general strike would incite GM to close the plant earlier. Not that they are wrong, but as an outsider I can see how GM and the CAW are working hard to create more dissension between workers, and furthering the gap between the white- and blue-collar workers (which is an illusion; neither are part of the elite corporate monsters). Thank you for allowing me to keep up on this disgusting display of greed and lack of regard for human dignity, while living on the other side of the country.

LM

11 June 2008

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>