

New issue of World Socialist Web Site Review now available

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The March-April 2000 issue of the World Socialist Web Site Review is now available. Produced by the World Socialist Web Site Editorial Board, the quarterly journal contains selected articles, reviews and commentary from the site, and is published in an attractive and durable magazine format.

The World Socialist Web Site Review assists our audience in retaining significant articles for future reference and discussion, and also serves to introduce new readers to the WSWS.

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Below, we reprint the editorial of the new issue.

The year 1999—and indeed the century—concluded with the eruption of significant conflicts between the major powers and the outbreak of sharp social tensions in the United States, the heartland of world capitalism.

The World Trade Organisation negotiations held in Seattle, Washington last December, intended as the springboard for the setting up of a framework for the development of global economy into the new century, broke down in acrimonious disagreements. The leading participants, the US and the European Union, blamed each other, while the poorer nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America launched a bitter attack on the wealthy nations, particularly the US.

Outside the WTO meeting tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered to protest the proceedings, in the face of a massive police mobilisation, and to vent their anger at the growing levels of social inequality, not only in America, but all over the world.

While the protesters enjoyed considerable public sympathy, a shocked official establishment, including the White House, the media and the local business elite, demanded forceful police action, including violent attacks on demonstrators, the imposition of a curfew and the calling in of the National Guard.

The *World Socialist Web Site* responded with a number of important articles assessing the complex social, economic and political issues surrounding these events. A selection of these articles is included in this issue of the *World Socialist Web Site Review*.

Two statements written by the WSWS Editorial Board make a detailed examination of the WTO protests. On the one hand, thousands of ordinary people felt compelled to demonstrate against the myriad of social ills produced by the domination of a few hundred giant transnational corporations. That they decided to join the protests, the biggest since the Vietnam War era, indicates how deep-going the polarisation of American society has become.

On the other, the demonstrations were characterised by the lack of a genuine alternative to the political and economic agenda advocated by the leaders of world capitalism assembled inside the WTO.

The statements review the nationalist perspective elaborated by the protest leadership—Democratic Party politicians, bourgeois environmentalists such as Ralph Nader and trade union bureaucrats—exposing its near identity with the chauvinist nostrums of extreme-right-wing figures such as Patrick Buchanan. The WSWS Editorial Board elaborates the political perspective—socialist internationalism—on which the developing movement against global capitalism must be based.

In the aftermath of the WTO meeting, in January 2000, the WSWS published a critique of the WTO and its economic agenda, *Seattle and Beyond: disarming*

the New World Order submitted by Michel Chossudovsky, Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa, and a long-time opponent of the “free market” program of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO.

In February, Nick Beams, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party of Australia and member of the WSWs editorial board, wrote a three-part reply to Chossudovsky's article, pointing to the fundamental differences between radical protest politics and the perspective of Marxism. The author of numerous articles and lectures on modern capitalist economy, including *Marxism and the Globalisation of Production* and *The Significance and Implications of Globalisation: A Marxist Assessment*, Beams begins his analysis with a summary of Chossudovsky's essential position:

“There is no question but that Chossudovsky is an opponent of the depredations of capitalism. But to the extent that his critique is not directed to the profit system itself, and the social relations upon which it rests, but rather to the process of globalisation as such, he necessarily winds up supporting the restoration of previous forms of capitalist economy.”

“The program advanced by the WSWs is oriented to the future and the necessity of the international working class—itself a product of the global character of modern economy—to harness the enormous potential of the system of globalised production to advance mankind as a whole. In opposition to this perspective, Chossudovsky turns his face to an idealized past, calling for the restoration of these Keynesian-style policies of national economic regulation and social reforms that formed the basis of capitalist rule in an earlier period.”

In the course of his reply Beams subjects the development of the globalisation of production to a detailed historical and theoretical examination. He establishes that far from being inimical to the interests of the majority of the world's population, globalisation “represents the maturation with in the framework of capitalism of the material pre-conditions for the development of a planned socialist economy.” The productive forces, he argues, must be liberated from the constrictions imposed on them by the outmoded social relations of capitalism—not cut down to fit into the old nation state framework.

Taken together, the articles published here on the WTO meeting and its aftermath, elaborate a revolutionary socialist alternative to the economic rationalist agenda of government, the banks and transnational corporations, as well as to the “left” apologists of capitalism in the radical protest milieu.

Also included in this issue is a broad range of material dealing with the mounting global political crisis: from this year's presidential elections in the United States to Russia's war against Chechnya; from the scandal shaking the political establishment in Germany, to the growing conflicts between South Africa's working class and the ruling ANC.

Behind these developments lies a growing social polarisation between the mass of urban and rural workers, experiencing deepening poverty and social misery, and the wealthy few, wallowing in almost unimaginable luxury. The social and political consequences of this social divide are explored in articles on the plight of two children in the US, and the situation confronting Tamil refugees in the war-torn north of Sri Lanka.

This issue concludes with a moving biography of Giordano Bruno on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of his death at the hands of the Inquisition, and a selection from the widely-read and immensely popular WSWs Arts Review: two film reviews and an appreciation of French filmmaker Robert Bresson by arts editor, David Walsh, and a review of a recent work on poet W.H. Auden. Finally, we publish an appeal from the WSWs to all those determined to defend freedom of speech and artistic liberty to oppose the campaign of physical violence and political harassment directed against Indian filmmaker Deepa Mehta and her latest film, *Water*.

Presented in *World Socialist Web Site Review* is just a small sample of the material published every day on the *World Socialist Web Site*. We invite all our readers to visit the WSWs regularly and encourage comments, correspondence and contributions.



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