

Fifteen Years of the World Socialist Web Site: 1998-2013

13 February 2013

Today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the daily publication of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Since February 14, 1998, the WSWS has appeared without fail five days a week, and six days a week beginning in April 1999. During the first several months of publication, its daily readership numbered in the hundreds. Fifteen years later, the WSWS is, by far, the most widely-read Internet-based socialist publication in the world.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is accessed by approximately 40,000 to 50,000 individual hosts every day. There are many days when the readership is substantially higher. Even more significant than the number of readers is the immense scale of their geographical distribution. The WSWS is accessed in dozens of countries on every continent. Posting articles in no less than 19 languages, the *World Socialist Web Site* is, truly, an international publication.

The publication of the *World Socialist Web Site* spans the final years of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first. In 1998, the first year of its existence, 1,540 articles were posted on the site. In 2012, the number of articles reached 4,580. The on-line archive of the WSWS now consists of approximately 45,000 articles. This is an impressive number. But what is truly extraordinary has been the vast range of subjects covered.

The last 15 years has been a period of continuous and intensifying political, economic and social crisis. The defining political events and socio-economic processes have been 9/11, the ensuing imperialist “War on Terror” and resurgence of neo-colonialism, the decay of bourgeois democracy within the United States and internationally, the growth of international geo-political tensions centered on the mounting antagonism between the US and China, the series of global economic shocks beginning with the Asian debacle in 1997 and culminating with the Wall Street crash one decade later, the increasingly brutal austerity policies implemented by the capitalist class in response to the 2008 breakdown, the eruption of revolution in Egypt and the initial manifestations of militant working class resistance to the world-wide capitalist social counter-revolution.

All these events and processes have been recorded and

analyzed, with an unequalled degree of accuracy and insight, by the *World Socialist Web Site*. It has sought, day in and day out, not only to cover and record what is happening, but also to reveal, utilizing the incomparable tools of Marxist dialectical and historical materialist analysis, *the truth* in what is happening. That is, it has analyzed events with a consciousness of the unfolding history of capitalism, the class struggle to which it gives rise, and to the world socialist revolution, which is its inexorable outcome.

From the first day of publication, the aim of the *World Socialist Web Site* has been to develop socialist class consciousness within the working class. This has required unrelenting concentration on the major political events of the day. But the work of its editorial board and dedicated writers around the world has not been confined to the coverage and analysis of politics alone. During the past 15 years the WSWS has written widely on questions of art and culture. Inseparably linked to its writings on movies, music, art and literature has been the elaboration of a critical revolutionary attitude toward all aspects of contemporary capitalist society. The WSWS has followed with care significant developments in many areas of scientific research, welcoming the opportunity created by these advances to promote a materialist understanding of nature and society.

During the course of its 15 years of publication, the *World Socialist Web Site* has been the authoritative voice of international revolutionary socialism. It has served as the indispensable political and intellectual guide for workers, students and youth all over the world who are seeking to make sense of events in a time of great crisis and human suffering, and to find a genuinely progressive—and, therefore, revolutionary—alternative to a dysfunctional capitalist world that is collapsing into barbarism.

Wherein lies the great strength of the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has made possible its publication day after day, for 15 years? What has enabled the WSWS to produce political, economic and social analysis and commentary of the highest caliber, which, as an examination of its archive substantiates, stands the test of time?

The strength and integrity of the WSWS is derived, first

and foremost, from the fact that its work is rooted consciously in the great theoretical and political traditions of the revolutionary Marxist movement. The WSWS was the outcome of the decades-long struggle waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International to defend and develop the program of international socialist revolution. When it initiated publication of the WSWS, the financial resources of the International Committee were very small indeed. But in terms of political and intellectual capital, the resources of our world movement were incomparable and virtually limitless. In making its analysis of world events, the international editorial staff of the WSWS was able to draw upon the enduring scientific foundations of the Marxist analysis of capitalism and the political thought of the greatest twentieth-century strategists of world socialist revolution, Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

The *World Socialist Web Site* was founded in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, amidst unrestrained bourgeois reactionary triumphalism that proclaimed the final death of socialism and the irresistible historical victory of capitalism. There were countless demoralized middle-class radicals who accepted this false version of history. But the International Committee, grounded in the political and theoretical work of Leon Trotsky, had for decades insisted upon the reactionary role of Stalinism and foreseen the breakdown of the Soviet Union. It was Stalinism and, along with it, all forms of anti-Marxist nationalist opportunism, that had failed.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is polemical and unapologetically partisan. It makes no secret of its revolutionary ambitions. Its aim is not the reform of degenerate capitalist society, which is, in any case, impossible. The WSWS speaks the truth, and, therefore, is revolutionary. The WSWS is blunt, uncompromising, and unforgiving in its intellectual and political condemnation of all forms of anti-Marxism and anti-socialism.

The International Committee, as it elaborated in the 1990s its plan for the launching of the *World Socialist Web Site*, identified three factors that would work in favor of a new revolutionary upsurge.

First, the economic and political consequences of the globalization of capitalism, which would inexorably intensify the essential contradiction of contemporary capitalism—the conflict between the international development and integration of the productive forces and the economic obsolescence of the capitalist nation state.

Second, the ICFI noted the immense growth, arising from the global expansion of capitalism, of the international working class and, therefore, of its revolutionary potential.

Third, the emergence of new communications technology,

especially that associated with the Internet, which would make possible an historically unprecedented strategic unification of the international working class in the struggle against world capitalism.

The success of the *World Socialist Web Site* vindicates the analysis that formed the basis for its launching in 1998.

During the past 15 years, the WSWS has established an incomparable political record. In celebration of this important anniversary, we are mounting special exhibits within the site that will assist our readers in navigating its vast archive. The first exhibit will consist of a chronological review of the key postings. We urge our readers to study the response of the WSWS to the great events of the past decade and a half. Judge for yourselves whether the site analyzed correctly these events and met its political responsibilities to the working class.

Later exhibits will present in greater detail specific subjects and issues that were extensively covered by the WSWS during the last 15 years.

As part of our celebration of the anniversary, we invite our readers to submit statements explaining how your views of society, politics and culture have been influenced by the WSWS. During the last 15 years, the *World Socialist Web Site* has laid down a powerful theoretical and political foundation upon which a new revolutionary working class movement, of unprecedented power and international scope, will grow.

David North, Chairman of the International Editorial Board

To visit the WSWS 15th anniversary page, click here.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact