

Why I read the WSWS: February 20

20 February 2013

Below is a selection of letters from readers on the 15th Anniversary of the World Socialist Web Site. For additional essays, or to send in your own contribution, click here .

As a citizen of Romania I grew up in a country that for many years fed its population with the lie that people were working to build “socialism” for the good of us all.

Having the chance to travel to Western Europe before 1989 and see life behind the Iron Curtain, I was happy and full of hope when the Ceaușescu regime ended. Being confronted as a teenager with life in countries where the free market was at home and where life seemed careless, and having no deeper insight into world politics or economy, I lived for years with the belief that socialism was a system that cannot work, one under the control of rich and corrupt politicians, with no hope for the rest of the population.

It was only after I was introduced to the WSWS, almost 5 years ago, that I started to put things together. Suddenly, events with global significance I was wondering about, and questions about the direction that the world and my country was heading towards, started to open up and have a different meaning. The WSWS was my ticket to entering a totally unknown part of history.

At first I simply couldn't believe that history can be altered that much, and that so many of us were told lies that, not knowing otherwise, we ended up believing. I became curious about what the “socialism” I grew up with actually was and what/how genuine socialism should really look like. The WSWS archive was very helpful in providing articles in which I found explanations for the questions I had. The site offered an insight not only into the real events and the historical falsification, but also revealed to me the truth behind the history of my own country, helping me understand the past. At the same time, it brought along the moment when I realized that the hope for equality and a good future for mankind is possible after all, with an international socialist program.

I am reading now comrade North's *The End of the USSR*, and the lecture helps me understand even more the nature of Stalinism disguised as “socialism” and all the damage it has done to the affected countries. It also points out to me once again the fact that even now, almost 24 years after the fall of Ceaușescu, my country is still governed by former Stalinists

and bourgeois parties that will never be committed to the working class. Together with their allies, they are doing everything in their power to hinder a revolution, a progressive perspective and the fight for genuine Marxism in Romania.

During the last several years, I have witnessed many predictions made by the WSWS. To mention only some: the fate of the Egyptian revolution and the dead end that the protests in Greece are reaching without a proper leadership; the aggravation of the ongoing financial crises as long as the world is ruled by the defenders of the profit system; the true reason for the many wars started by imperialist powers; and, most recently, the dangers societies all over the world face due to the rise of nationalist and extreme right movements (a proof of the accuracy of the WSWS analyses occurred recently through the actions of such a movement against the Roma living here). These predications became real in every respect.

So right now, I am confident that the mounting social anger all over the world will find its expression in an international working class struggle against capitalism, and I await the revival of socialism, this time of a genuine socialism, in Romania.

I first stumbled onto the *World Socialist Web Site* eight months ago. At the time, I was a member of a Philippine national-democratic organization, searching for perspectives on the death of the country's former president, Corazon Aquino.

My search led me to a feature article written by Joseph Santolan, a correspondent of the WSWS. My entire world was rocked by what I read. According to the article, not only had the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines written a glowing eulogy of the thoroughly reactionary former president, but it had also played a crucial role in helping her claim the presidency in the aftermath of the hated Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship.

It was the first time I'd ever read a critique of the left from, well, the left. I closed that browser window immediately after reading, like a child who'd just seen something he wasn't supposed to. It was too late though. That article left a burning impression on me.

Perhaps egged on by that initial brush with the truth, I began leafing back through decisive moments in recent Philippine politics, trying to connect the dots between my organization's actions and the outcomes of those events. It seemed as though the potential for serious offensives by workers and the rural poor had always run out of steam. What was keeping them from perceiving their true enemies and sustaining the attack for liberation?

I asked my former comrades in the movement. I was answered in conciliatory tones and appeals for patience, pragmatism. It was a statement to the effect of, "Have faith in our leaders, they will not steer you wrong."

The WSWs had another answer. Guided by Nick Beams' comprehensive exposé titled "The Way Forward for the Philippine Revolution", supplemented by the most relevant articles from the web site, my eyes were slowly opened to the cesspool of confusion that was and is the Communist Party of the Philippines. Continuously prostrating themselves before the country's ruling elite, they had betrayed the Filipino workers and rural poor since the party's inception. Their political allegiances changed with the season.

These were not lapses in judgment, but the logical and necessary outcomes of the Stalinist and Maoist theory of two-stage revolution, which necessitated an alliance between the working class and the supposedly progressive sections of the bourgeoisie. Never mind the past experience of the Philippine Revolution of 1898, which had exposed the inability of the bourgeoisie to carry through a democratic revolution. Never mind the bloody experiences of the 20th century in China and Indonesia. The CPP was determined to realize its deluded vision. This continues to be carried out on the backs of young men and women, conscripted from among the urban and rural poor and used as fodder against the bourgeoisie's roaming paramilitaries. The CPP leadership has nothing but contempt for the fallen, exemplified by the extent to which they heap praise upon the murderers themselves. In eulogizing former President Aquino, the CPP failed to condemn the massacre of 13 peasant activists carried out at her behest.

I've since become an avid reader of the WSWs. In questions of political theory, it is unashamedly and unmistakably Marxist. In matters of principle, it is unwavering. It is the sole beacon of truth in an otherwise murky gloom. The legacy and great revolutionary traditions of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, among others, are a living, breathing tapestry within the pages of the WSWs.

My education continues unabated with the help of my new comrades in the IYSSE and the SEP. I giddily anticipate our next discussions and readings, this time like a child on Christmas morning.

Three cheers for the WSWs. Long live the ICFI!

In 2010, I was a 20 year old student who had just arrived in Baltimore, Maryland from one of the wealthier suburbs of Washington, D.C., to complete a degree in English literature. I was shocked and appalled at the level of poverty and lack of basic services I encountered on a daily basis in Baltimore, which I clearly understood to be failures of the capitalist system. I was also disappointed to discover firsthand that the higher education system is increasingly becoming a debt trap for graduates like myself and a means of increasing inequality between the classes, in addition to limiting knowledge to vocational skills. No publication, online or otherwise, has given such an accurate analysis to these and other ideas I intuitively know to be true like the *World Socialist Web Site*.

After reading *Revolution Betrayed* during the summer of 2006, I considered myself a Trotskyist. I had the idea—not totally unjustified from a quick survey of publications—that genuine Trotskyism was a thing of the past and had been abandoned by modern "Trotskyist" parties in favor of identity politics and the like. When I discovered the WSWs, I was pleasantly surprised by the quality and depth of the articles, as well as the clear orthodox Trotskyist orientation.

After some time and constant reading, I came to recognize that Trotskyism was not dead, but was living a very vibrant life in the pages of the WSWs. I delved deeper into the history of the SEP and it soon became clear to me that the ICFI represented the continuity of the Fourth International founded by Trotsky. My education as a Trotskyist was aided immeasurably by articles on the WSWs and books provided by Mehring Books, such as *The Heritage We Defend* by David North. Through all the tumult of the late 2000s and the early 2010s, the WSWs was my constant companion in interpreting the momentous developments of the past six years.

The WSWs time and time again helped me avoid feelings of demoralization and isolation amid the relentless drive against the working class prosecuted by the ruling elite. The web site opened my horizons to new philosophy, political issues and historical events. The WSWs is an irreplaceable resource and authority for workers everywhere. Let us hope that in the coming years it will find an ever-widening audience.



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