

Welcome the relaunch of the World Socialist Web Site!

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With today's edition, the International Editorial Board is initiating the relaunch of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The WSWS has undergone a complete and fundamental redesign. The changes in the appearance of the site have been motivated not only by important technical and aesthetic considerations, though we certainly hope that our readers will appreciate the many improvements in the functionality and appearance of the site. But as significant as these advances are in themselves, they are secondary to the essential issues of theory and political perspective that have guided all aspects of the relaunch project.

It is nearly 23 years since the *World Socialist Web Site* was launched on February 14, 1998. The International Committee of the Fourth International appreciated at a very early stage in the development of the Internet the revolutionary potential of this immense advance in communications technology. We seized the opportunity to utilize a technology that would make possible a more favorable alignment between the power of our Marxist-Trotskyist ideas and the size of our audience. The old barriers imposed by the physical demands of circulating a printed newspaper were transcended with a technology that enabled the instantaneous transmission of information and ideas all over the world.

It was especially the global character of this technology that convinced the International Committee, almost a quarter century ago, that it should transfer its publishing efforts to the Internet. Not only could we reach a world audience, but it would be possible to politically integrate and unify, to an extent unprecedented in the history of the Marxist movement, the political work of all the sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International. Here, too, the new technology made possible a far better alignment of the daily practice of the International Committee with its international strategy and program. With the founding of the *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Committee of the Fourth International could respond to daily events, wherever they occurred, with a single political voice as the World Party of Socialist Revolution.

During the first decade of its publication, the *Socialist Web Site* achieved an immense expansion of the audience for authentic revolutionary Marxism, that is, for Trotskyism. In its response to the events of the first years of the twenty-first century—dominated by the nightmarish crimes committed by US and world imperialism under the bloody banner of the War on Terror—the *World Socialist Web Site* provided the essential critical revolutionary orientation for, at first, tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, and, by 2008, even several million readers throughout the world.

After 10 years of publication, not only had the growth of the readership placed demands upon the WSWS that could not be met within its original structure. It was evident to the International Committee and the International Editorial Board that the rapidly intensifying crisis of American and world capitalism was confronting the *World Socialist Web Site* with challenges that required a significant advance in both its technical infrastructure and presentation. We did not have to wait for the assessment of the objective situation that motivated the redesign of the WSWS to be proven correct. The first edition of the redesigned *World Socialist Web Site* appeared on October 22, 2008, in the midst of the greatest economic breakdown of the global financial system since the Wall Street crash of 1929.

In the statement posted on October 22, 2008, explaining the political conceptions underlying the redesign, the WSWS made the following points:

- The global financial crisis, centered in the United States, marks a decisive turning point in the historic crisis of the world capitalist system.

- The deepening economic crisis will exacerbate the already substantial tensions between the major imperialist and capitalist powers ... The efforts of the United States to offset the deterioration of its world economic position, dramatically exposed in the ongoing crisis, will assume an increasingly reckless and unrestrained militaristic character.

- The worsening economic situation is leading to a renewed upsurge of class struggle on a world scale. The working class will resist with mounting determination the efforts of the old and corrupt bureaucratic organizations—political parties and trade unions—to block and betray its struggles.

- A new audience for Marxist theory and the perspective and program of revolutionary socialism advanced by the International Committee of the Fourth International will emerge among newly radicalized workers, students, youth and intellectuals. Only a party that is based firmly on Marxist theory and defends unambiguously the heritage of Trotskyism will meet the challenges of a new revolutionary period.

The events of the last twelve years have completely substantiated the assessment upon which the redesign was based.

In light of the most recent developments, it should hardly be necessary to argue at great length that world capitalism is confronted with the specter of a full-scale political and economic breakdown. The crisis is so far advanced that no intelligent bourgeois commentator can state, with any reasonable degree of certainty, that the United States will still have even a semi-democratic government in three months' time.

The 2008 redesign of the *World Socialist Web Site* was undertaken in anticipation of an intensification of the world capitalist crisis.

The 2020 relaunch of the *World Socialist Web Site* occurs in the midst of a global political and socioeconomic breakdown and emerging revolutionary crisis.

This situation has not taken the International Committee by surprise. In the first edition of the WSWS published in the New Year, on January 3, 2020, we stated that the decade of socialist revolution had begun. Even before anyone knew that the world would be struck by a pandemic, the WSWS predicted the eruption of a global crisis of historically unprecedented dimensions.

However, the International Committee was not content to simply make predictions and passively await their realization. The decisive issue was, and is, how the International Committee will respond to this crisis, how it will prepare the working class for conditions of revolutionary struggle.

The changes in the *World Socialist Web Site* that are being introduced with this relaunch are being made in the expectation that the global expansion of class struggle will

generate an immense resurgence of interest within the working class in socialist politics, history and theory.

The *World Socialist Web Site* will continue to provide, as it has since 1998, unequalled coverage and analysis of the major events of the day. But the changes in design and structure are aimed at creating a more direct and dynamic interaction between the coverage of the news and the historical experiences and theoretical foundations of the Fourth International and the socialist movement.

The site has been redesigned to provide readers far better access to the vast archive of essays, reports, historical documents and lectures on a vast range of subjects published by the WSWS since 1998. The material already posted on the site—close to 150,000 items—will be augmented by the inclusion of previously unpublished material from the archives of the International Committee and its sections.

The International Editorial Board has assembled teams that will create and curate online exhibits of political, cultural and theoretical topics that will provide greater depth to the understanding of contemporary events.

At the conclusion of the 2020 New Year statement, the WSWS declared:

The enormous historic foundation upon which this movement rests, the conscious repository of the experiences of the international working class, must be brought forward in the developing struggles of the working class and in the forging of the path to socialism.

This is the essential aim of the relaunch of the *World Socialist Web Site*. We are setting out to arm the working class with the theoretical understanding, historical knowledge and political insight necessary to wage a highly conscious political struggle against capitalism, smash the fascistic conspiracies of the corporate-financial oligarchs, and secure the victory of socialism.



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