

The World Socialist Web Site and the crises of 2020

David North

19 December 2020

On January 3, 2020, in its first edition of the new year, the *World Socialist Web Site* posted a statement titled “The decade of socialist revolution begins.” With a speed and to a degree that not even the WSWS could have predicted, the statement’s title has been vindicated. We are coming to the end of the most significant year of the still young twenty-first century. The Pandemic of 2020 will prove to be as great a historical turning point for this century as the outbreak of World War I in 1914 was for the twentieth. The First World War exposed in all their brutality the contradictions of the capitalist system and triggered the eruption of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary upheavals that defined the twentieth century.

The Pandemic of 2020 has revealed before the entire world the irreconcilable economic, social and moral chasm that divides the capitalist drive for profit from the most essential needs of the overwhelming majority of mankind. Since the beginning of the year, more than 1.5 million people have died after being infected with COVID-19.

Within the United States, the death toll has now passed 300,000. In the center of world capitalism, approximately 3,000 people are dying every day. The intensive care units of hospitals are being overwhelmed with patients, and in many parts of the country there is a real danger that fragile health care systems will break down beneath the strain.

Vaccines are now being produced and distributed that will protect those who are inoculated against infection. However, this protracted process will require months before it has any significant impact upon the rate of death. It is now predicted that within the United States at least another quarter million people will die of COVID-19 between now and April 1. But absolutely no serious emergency measures are being proposed to stop the spread of the pandemic.

The government, the corporations, the pandemic profiteers of Wall Street, and the Democrats and Republicans—maintaining their policy of “malign neglect”—still refuse to take the measures that are necessary to save lives—the shutdown of all non-essential workplaces, the closure of schools, and emergency financial aid to all working people and small businesses whose income has been impacted by the pandemic—because the capitalist system prioritizes profits over lives. The financial and corporate oligarchs, whose vast fortunes have grown massively due to the rise of share values, oppose all life-saving policies that would impact negatively on the stock market, corporate profits and, above all, their personal wealth.

And while the pandemic has exacted its terrible toll, American democracy is breaking down beneath the pressure and strains created by massive social inequality. With substantial support within the corporate-financial oligarchy, Donald Trump has utilized the

presidency to suppress the Bill of Rights and set up a fascistic dictatorship.

During this year of unprecedented social and political crisis, the *World Socialist Web Site* has demonstrated its critical and indispensable role in providing the working class with unequalled coverage of global events. But it not only reports on events; it analyzes them and explains their significance. The WSWS provides a perspective and a program of action.

There is not a single publication in the world that can compare its coverage of the pandemic to that of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Its first substantial report on the outbreak of the pandemic was posted on January 24, 2020.

On January 25, it warned, “The Coronavirus emergency places in focus a health crisis which is the expression of the failure of the capitalist system to provide solutions to the most basic needs of the population.”

The Trump administration and the media have claimed, in justification of their failure to respond quickly and effectively to the pandemic, that the scope and lethality of the pandemic could not have been foreseen.

But this outrageous lie is exposed by the numerous warnings and calls for emergency action posted on the *World Socialist Web Site* in the earliest days of the crisis:

On March 6, 2020—when the total number of deaths in the entire United States was only 15—the WSWS already recognized both the disastrous potential of the pandemic and the criminal inadequacy of the government’s response. We wrote:

The indifference of the Trump administration to the health of the population is no better, and perhaps worse, than the attitude of the pharaohs to their slaves. The media has spent far more time bemoaning the fall in share values on Wall Street than the loss of human life.

On March 13, 2020—when the total number of deaths in the US due to COVID-19 was just 47—the WSWS posted a statement, titled “Capitalism is at war with society,” in which we warned: “The coronavirus pandemic is developing into a social, economic and political crisis on a scale that is without precedent.”

On March 17, 2020—when the total number of deaths in the United States had just passed 100—the WSWS published a “Program of Action for the Working Class” issued by the National Committee of the Socialist Equality Party, which stated:

For the past two months, all of the White House's actions in response to the pandemic have been aimed solely at propping up the financial markets. ...

An enormous amount of time has been lost, but the impact and extent of the pandemic depends on urgent responses that can be taken now. ...

The essential principle that must guide the response to the crisis is that the needs of working people must take absolute and unconditional priority over all considerations of corporate profit and private wealth. It is not a matter of what the ruling class claims it can afford, but what the masses need.

These statements, and dozens more that have been posted in the course of the past year, demonstrate a level of social and political insight that is not to be found in any other publication. They testify to the extraordinary power of the Marxist method that is employed by the *World Socialist Web Site*. If the warnings of the WSWWS had been heeded, hundreds of thousands of lives could have been saved. But far from heeding our warnings, the corporate media continued to censor the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The response of the WSWWS to the political crisis in the United States has been no less perspicacious than its coverage of the pandemic. In the beginning of June 2020, the WSWWS correctly assessed the significance of Trump's threat to invoke the Insurrection Act and his mobilization of military police to violently suppress citizens' protests. In a statement posted June 4, 2020, the *World Socialist Web Site* declared:

The White House is now the political nerve center of a conspiracy to establish a military dictatorship, overthrow the Constitution, abolish democratic rights and violently suppress the protests against police brutality that have swept across the United States.

And, further, in a warning that appears, in light of subsequent events, extraordinarily prescient: "Nothing could be more dangerous than to think that the crisis has passed. It has, rather, just begun."

The pandemic is not only a tragedy. It is a warning. The subordination of the planet to the pursuit of profit and personal wealth leads to fascism and the ultimate cataclysm of nuclear war. But a mood of resistance is developing throughout the world. The criminal response of the ruling elites to the global pandemic is evoking ever greater anger within the international working class. The year 2021 will be marked by the intensification of political crisis and the escalation of class struggle.

Every great historical crisis tests political movements and their programs. The *World Socialist Web Site*, the voice of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its affiliated Socialist Equality parties throughout the world, can justifiably state that it met the many challenges of 2020.

The correctness and clarity of its political analysis and program, combined with its growing involvement in the daily struggles of the working class, has led—despite the persistent efforts of Google, Facebook, Twitter and Reddit to suppress access to the WSWWS—to a substantial growth in the readership of the *World Socialist Web Site*. There has been an enthusiastic response to the October 2 relaunch of

the WSWWS.

In 2019, the WSWWS recorded 17 million page views. In 2020—with nearly two weeks remaining until the turn of the new year—the WSWWS has recorded 21.7 million page views, an increase of 28 percent.

The total number of readers of the WSWWS increased by 41.7 percent. We are especially gratified by the substantial growth recorded by the WSWWS throughout the world. In Britain, the readership of the site has more than doubled. In Australia, there has been a 93 percent increase in readership. In India, a 67 percent increase. In Sri Lanka, a 235 percent increase. In Brazil, a 103 percent increase. In Turkey, the number of WSWWS users has increased 152 percent.

The growth of our readership and the total number of page views is a significant achievement of which the editorial board and our many comrades throughout the world who write for and contribute to the production and posting of the site can be justifiably proud.

But we also recognize that the increase in readership reflects a growing militancy in the working class, which, in turn, will confront the *World Socialist Web Site* with new and even more daunting political, technological and organizational challenges.

The WSWWS is determined to meet these challenges. But we need your support. As the production, technological maintenance, and global coverage of the WSWWS grow more complex, the scale of the financial resources required to sustain and develop the site grows as well.

That is why I am asking you, on behalf of the editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, to make the largest donation possible to the 2021 New Year's fund. This fund drive, which begins today, will continue until February 15, 2021. You can make your donation now or make a pledge payable by February 15.

The money we receive will be used to enlarge our staff, expand the range of our coverage and to keep pace with the rapidly developing technology of the internet.

You can also contribute to the success of the fund drive and the growth of the readership of the web site by circulating this video and material posted on the WSWWS to your friends and co-workers. We do not expect that the corporate media platforms will give up their efforts to censor and suppress access to the WSWWS. But your efforts to win new readers to the site can counteract these measures.

And, finally, as you make your financial contribution to the *World Socialist Web Site*, I urge you to take the most important step of all. Apply for membership in the Socialist Equality Party. Take up the fight for the unity of the international working class and a world without inequality, political oppression and war. Join the struggle for socialism in 2021.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact