

## Summaries

**Peter Alexander. Thomas Piketty and the Marikana Massacre.** Thomas Piketty opens his bestselling *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* with the spectre of South Africa's 2012 Marikana Massacre. He uses the example to illustrate the awful realities of contemporary inequality, the way these throw up "distributional conflict", and the threat that is posed to democratic societies. This article responds to Piketty's "telescope of historically grounded economics" with the "microscope of forensic sociology". What Piketty finds is a conflict over production of value, not just its distribution, and the way this is rooted in a capitalist crisis. Moreover, the massacre arose from a commonality of interests linking the victims' employer, a major mining corporation, and South Africa's social democratic government. Despite loss of lives, workers continued their struggle and won a significant victory. It is proposed that, in keeping with Piketty's account of historical reversals in inequality trends, and in contrast with his latest proposals, the creation of egalitarian society will involve massive social struggles, of which Marikana is a small yet important example.

**Peter Waterman: The International Labour Movement in, against and beyond, the Globalized and Informatised Cage of Capitalism and Bureaucracy.** This article presents and discusses five questions: 1. To what extent has the international trade union movement responded to the challenges of neo-liberal globalization? 2. Given the restructuring of work/labour, informalization, migration etc. is there any real basis for international labour solidarity? 3. What has the experience of networking on work/labour issues in the World Social Forum been like – has it led to any concrete international action? 4. How effective are alternative cross-border/transnational worker initiatives in countering the power of global capital? 5. How can we move beyond trade union internationalism, which remains trapped in the "iron cage", and see new forms of labour self-articulation going beyond "the capitalist canon", which could lead to the emergence of a new labour movement internationalism? The answers to these questions address the present crisis of the hegemonic, Europe-based and Western-centric international trade union organisations: 1. the impact of globalisation, neo-liberalisation, informalisation and informatisation on labour internationalism; 2. the experiences and possibilities of informal/alternative kinds of labour internationalism; and, 3. the significance of labour solidarity with Palestine.

**Kees van der Pijl: Towards Global Oligarchy? Authoritarian Convergence and Conflict between the West and the Rest.** This paper argues that we are in the midst of a conflict-ridden convergence towards oligarchic, authoritarian rule across the globe. Today's global power structure is the result of very different processes of class formation on both sides of the historic divide between a liberal West and a series of contender states. This structure is itself dissolving as a result of the demise of the Soviet Union and the conversion of China to state capitalism and the mutation of liberalism to authoritarian oligarchic capitalism. The paper argues that

corporate liberal capitalism, based on class compromise in the 1980s, was displaced by neoliberalism, which initially intended to restore systemic market discipline but increasingly degenerated into speculative, predatory forms which undermine the forces of stability in the global political economy and foster oligarchic enrichment. A contradiction is identified between global oligarchic convergence on the one hand and conflict at the level of political (governing and state) elites on the other, which explains the current turbulence in the global political economy.

**Jörg Nowak: Mass Strikes and Street Protests in India and Brazil.** This article provides a post-2008 comparative perspective on mass strikes and street demonstrations in India and Brazil and looks at the relationship between the different forms of protests in the two countries. While the street protests gained considerable international attention, in contrast, the strikes received relatively little media attention beyond the national contexts, even though the mass strikes were going on for years and followed a coherent agenda. Following this, the article argues that the street demonstrations were politically diffused and dominated by the middle classes, which quickly shifted their political positions from left to right. The different protest dynamics of the working and middle classes reveal the enormous challenges that coalition attempts face. Subsequently, different definitions of the middle classes and their relationship or congruence with urban working classes are discussed.

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Abo & Versand · versand-argument@t-online.de  
Reichenberger Str. 150 · 10999 Berlin  
Tel: 030-611-3983 · Fax: -4270

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Redaktion DAS ARGUMENT · I. Schwendtner  
Aug.-Hecht-Str. 33 · 63067 Offenbach  
Tel: 069-27244151 · [argument@inkrit.org](mailto:argument@inkrit.org)