



# AURORA

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May Day 2012:

## Empty Ritual or Working Class Celebration?

Over the years the significance of May 1st as a day of international class solidarity has been lost to the majority of workers in Britain. We don't even share the same day for celebrating as the rest of the world's workers. Ever since the introduction of the May Bank Holiday way back in 1978 local May Day parades are spread over the holiday period and rarely occur on May 1st itself. Michael Foot (as left-wing Labour Employment minister) brought in the May Bank Holiday as a sop to the working class at a time of growing discontent over job losses and the rising cost of living. He was criticised for 'copying Russia' and introducing a 'communist' measure although the TUC's brass bands and Labour Party flotillas were hardly equal to the grotesque military parades which went under the name of celebrating International Workers' Day in the Soviet Union. In truth, though, the ritual parades of the Labour Party and the TUC had already killed off May Day for most workers.

What began as a defiant celebration of the sacrifices workers have made in the incessant class war between capital and wage labour, a war which the world's working class would surely win by overthrowing capital and introducing

the working class. Yet there has never been more need for the working class to unite and fight for a totally different world.

### Capitalism: The Worst is Yet to Come

Every day we are told there is no alternative to the society we have now. We are asked by tax-dodging multi-millionaires to make sacrifices for an economy that exploits us and pushes many of us into massive debt and unemployment. It's a system of environmental destruction, wars to control raw materials, famine and genocide, but we are told over and over that this is the best we can hope for, that this is the only democracy there can ever be, that anything else would be madness (even though the 'democratic rights' we do have are being attacked at an almost weekly rate). We're told to sit tight, accept what's coming to us and wait until the worst is over, but the truth is that the more hardships we endure the more they think they can get away with. In any case, we can forget about the post-war years of steadily increasing living standards. From now on each generation will be worse off than the last. As the cuts get deeper people's lives are starting to change, not just here in Britain. All over the

need to keep up some credibility with their members, but all the time they search for an option that is acceptable to the bosses and which will reduce the chance of solidarity across union boundaries. (Look how public sector workers have been split up, with teachers left high and dry, after millions came out last November.) When the bosses cite the need to get rid of workers to keep afloat, that's exactly what they'll do. Time and again they limit strikes if it looks like they might be too 'damaging', or they reach some solution in secret talks with the bosses before a strike has even started, (like the current talks in the tanker drivers' 'dispute') usually resulting in a call for workers to make sacrifices as 'there is no alternative'. When workers in one sector are undermined and isolated like this, it impacts on us all.

### Campaigns and Protests but No Prospect of a New Society

Outside of the workplace there are countless campaigns against aspects of the cuts. The unions are working out how to use the media, enlist support from all sections of the community and in short, become efficient campaigning organisations ready to claim a victory if a hospital ward is 'saved' from closure. Nothing wrong with saving hospital wards but it's not going to prevent the overall attacks. At this level there is absolutely no possibility of a more class conscious resistance to the damage being wrought by capital. Many militants sense this and prefer to join more direct action groups, such as UK UnCut, whose campaigns gain media attention and who have been particularly effective in getting retailers like Tesco, who want to avoid bad publicity, to withdraw from the state's obnoxious workfare programme. However, there is no coherent political vision behind this kind of radical reformism which cannot offer a way forward to the working class in general. Of course the highest profile of all has been achieved by the Occupy movement, with its evocative slogans and its 'anti-capitalist', or at least anti-bankers' bonuses, stance. Occupy is a genuine expression of popular resentment and as such a very wide umbrella which can cover anyone from company shareholders demanding more democratic meetings, to low paid workers battling to get a living wage and — in their discussion forums — there is even the possibility for some to develop a more revolutionary perception of what it means to be 'anti-capitalist'. As the article in the latest issue of our magazine, *Revolutionary Perspectives*, puts it "this would inevitably mean going way beyond Occupy's confused and limited vision".

class, whose unpaid labour produces the value that is the basis of all profits, is in a position to put an end to capitalism. But this can only be achieved when the working class across the world acts as one to overthrow their exploiters and begins to implement the communist programme. As yet that programme remains a broad outline based on lessons from the past. In the coming period it is up to the small, but growing, number of revolutionary groups — who broadly go under the banner of international left communism — to make it the concrete base for developing a genuine anti-capitalist struggle. This cannot be done in isolation from the working class as a whole. The alternative is not either fight the cuts or stand on the sidelines as a revolutionary. Nor is it a matter of forming a left front with social democrats and self-seeking opportunists of various political organisations who equate nationalisation with socialism and are ready to support Arab nationalism and worse. Much less is it about joining in the calls for a return to 'old Labour'. For us, communism isn't an idealist utopia which has to be sacrificed in the real world. On the contrary, the revolution to overthrow capitalism and replace it with communism is the only civilised solution to the world capitalist crisis which has reached seismic proportions. In this globalised world the material conditions exist to establish a community without classes and national borders, where the questions of who gets what and how are determined not by money and profit but by administrative decisions taken by vibrant democratic organs of 'freely associated producers'. For anyone who shares this view there is only one political option: join the struggle to win the working class over to the only really anti-capitalist programme: communism. As the possibility for a revolutionary new world gains ground perhaps May Day will be celebrated with real hope for the future. Get involved!

### It's a Fact:

According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies:

- \* This year's tax changes mean the 'average family' will lose £511 per year.
- \* A nominal increase in the minimum wage will leave it lower in real terms than it was in 2004. The government has taken the Low Pay Commission's advice to freeze the minimum wage for young people from October. [£4.98 per hour for 18-20 year olds, £3.68 for 16-17 yr olds above school leaving age but under 18. The 'apprentice rate', for under 19s or 19+ and in the first year of apprenticeship will rise by 5p to £2.65 per hour.]
- \* Inflation has also outstripped average income growth, leaving workers worse off in real terms. The Institute forecasts that real net income of the average household will be lower in 2015-16 than in 2002-3.

Meanwhile the TUC estimates:

- \* By April 2013 families on working tax credit may lose more than £4,000 from changes to the credit system while 1.6m council workers will have their pay frozen for a third year in a row.

Consumer Focus estimates:

- \* 4 million people have a Pay Day loan. A 'typical' monthly repayment on £100 is about £130 but higher interest rates, up to 5,000% p.a. are far from unknown. Tony Hobman, chief executive of the Money Advice Service, a government agency to help people in debt, is paid £250,000 a year before bonuses.

The 'Institute of Health Equity' at UCL reports:

- \* The gap in life expectancy between the richest and poorest has widened in most areas of England. The largest gap is for males in Westminster where average life expectancy of the richest is 84 but for the poorest the average is 16.9 years less.

The ONS latest employment figures show:

- \* The drop in unemployment is entirely due to the growth in part-time work.

socialism or communism, was emptied of its original meaning. The vision of a classless society without borders, without profit or money, where production and distribution would be organised directly to meet society's needs was sidelined. Instead it was replaced by the myth that socialism = nationalisation and communism = nationalisation plus state control over every aspect of life. Under the combined weight of the Labour Party, Social Democracy, Stalinism, Maoism, the idea grew that more and more state control is a step towards 'communism'. The current discussion in government circles over moving the May Day Bank Holiday to a date that emphasises nationalism: say October, to be a 'UK Day' or 'Trafalgar Day' (21 October), or else St David's day or St George's day ... only emphasises how confident the capitalist class feels about its position and how little it sees the threat of a serious challenge from

'developed world' the outlook is the same. Wage workers are facing reduced living standards, lower wages, slashing of welfare benefits, shutdown and rundown services, shambolic healthcare and increasingly deferred but lower pensions. On top of all that the pool of unemployed is deepening. Yet the attacks will keep coming because the ruling class has no alternative; it has to make the working class pay for this mess.

### Unions Stymie Resistance

It's not that there is no will to resist. Workers traditionally look to the unions for help and support, but the unions are part of the problem and not the solution. The unions, with their paid officials and extensive bureaucracies, are a well-integrated part of capitalism. They'll put up a fight if their own existence is threatened and when they

## Revolutionary 60 Perspectives

Winter 2012

### No Future Within Capitalism



Beyond Protest  
We Have to  
Organise  
For a New World

Journal of the Communist Workers Organisation

### Winning Over the Working Class to the Only Anti-Capitalist Struggle: Communism

Which brings us back to the fact that fighting capitalism means more than fighting the worst of its effects, it means fighting for another society entirely. Only the working

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## Capitalism and the Cuts:

# There is an Alternative But We Need to Fight For It

### A System in Crisis

Even the ruling class admits that capitalism is in deep crisis. Their speculative bubble has burst and the consequences of the crisis are obvious to everyone. They cannot hide from us the fact that the working class everywhere will have to pay for years in order to get them out of the hole the capitalist order is now in.

Job insecurity, layoffs, cutbacks in social provisions, spiralling youth unemployment, tax rises for the poor and pensioners, as well as pension and welfare cuts for everyone. It does not matter where you live in the so-called “advanced” capitalist world the recipe is the same. We are experiencing — and even the ruling class admits that worse is yet to come — a brutal deterioration of our living and working conditions. It will go on for years if we let it.

Meanwhile the grand coalition of all those who exploit us are slowly restoring their bank balances, property prices for the very rich are on the rise and naturally they are voting themselves tax cuts as they are the deserving “wealth creators” and philanthropists of society. For them “the recession” is over.

But the crisis is far from over. This is not just a crisis about bad debts or bad banks. This is a structural crisis which has been with us for decades (since the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 in fact). Capitalism is at the end of one of its cycles of accumulation and it can only get out of the mess by devaluing existing capital values. In the early days of capitalism a few bankruptcies here or there could do the trick. The successful capitalists would buy up the losers at knock down prices and the system could start again. Despite all the industrial restructuring that went on in the 1980s and the easy way capital nowadays shuts down businesses as soon as they are unprofitable, the mass of capital in the world today is so large that only a gigantic devaluation of real capital (not just bursting the balloon of fictitious

financial capital) could allow capitalism as a whole to return to “healthy growth”. Unfortunately such a devaluation today requires the massive destruction which can only be accomplished by the physical destruction of a global war. Although the political and diplomatic conditions do not yet exist for such a war ultimately that is capitalism’s “final solution”. In the meantime the world working class will pay an even heavier price than it has already.

### The Working Class

The only force that can end the crisis and prevent war is the collective power of the international working class. For the last three decades the international working class has been on the retreat. It has become a piece of mere variable capital which has globally seen its share of global wealth reduced. With the shipping of jobs to the Far East where sweatshop conditions are the norm, workers in traditional capitalist centres have been displaced from production and gradually forced to accept lower wages and worse working conditions. On top of that the working class has become less organised and less cohesive; and haven’t the capitalist class enjoyed it!

Now, though, the situation is beginning to change. The working class — everyone who depends on wages for a living — is under an unprecedented and concerted attack. So far, for the reasons already outlined above, workers have been slow to react.

However something is stirring. From the Arab Spring to the Occupy movement it is clear that the crisis itself is provoking responses which go beyond the limits of these experiences and some sections of the working class have gained confidence from this. In the worst affected countries like Greece and Spain resistance is beginning to appear. Even so, in relation to the impending disaster for the working class it has been inadequate. There are several reasons for this. Years of defeat have taken their toll

of working class self-confidence. However, this is not just a question of confidence. Many workers have bought into capitalist individualism and are waiting and hoping that somehow the worst of the crisis will not hit them. But hit them it will and when it does workers will need to respond in two ways.

### What Will Have to be Done

In the first place they will need to unite whatever their age, their employment situation, or trade. The form of this unity will have to be through autonomous bodies such as strike committees which are controlled only by mass meetings of all the participants in the movement. They will need to go beyond the trades unions and capitalist political parties who call for negotiations with the existing order.

In the second place they will have to recognise that the struggle has to become political. So far many have come to recognise the need for “anti-capitalism” but this means different things to different people. Some think it just means anti big business or anti-bank as if small-scale capitalists are nicer exploiters. Others think it means bringing in the state to nationalise everything to keep the system going. The fate of workers under the former Soviet Union shows the limits of that vision.

There is no half way house. Anti-capitalism if it has any real meaning has to be about setting up another way of producing things. The only option is a system which abolishes money, exploitation, profit. In fact we need a completely different society which produces to satisfy human needs; a society in which the means to produce and distribute are socialised and not managed by a handful of capitalists (whether of the private or state variety). It is a society where the environment is not looted and devastated (in an almost irreversible way) but respected by present and future generations. It is a system based on everyone having a say

through elected and recallable delegates to coordinating bodies of the whole population. To achieve this requires the overthrow of the democratic capitalist state in which parliament acts as a fig leaf for the rule of the capitalist class and the taking of power by the proletariat. Its aim will be to establish a society of “freely associated producers” who plan for need and not for profit. It will have no nations, no states, no frontiers and no wars.

This is the kind of communism we envisage. It will not come about overnight. We have a long struggle ahead of us both to convince our class comrades of the real alternative to capitalism and to organise to defeat the ruling capitalist cliques. In the course of this those who can already see the need for a new society will need to join together in a communist minority, an international revolutionary party. This is not a question of wanting to create an instrument of domination, a government in waiting or even another parliamentary project. What we need is an international and internationalist organisation capable of participating in the class movement, of debating and illuminating the perspective for the overcoming of capitalism and another way of living together: an association of free and equals, in which the “free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.

The Internationalist Communist Tendency is not “the Party”, and is not even the sole core of such an organisation. Having said that, we have given ourselves the goal of working together with serious working class activists and revolutionaries to further the construction of a new international revolutionary organisation. We invite everybody who can identify with this perspective to get in touch with us and to enter into discussion.

**Statement of the Internationalist Communist Tendency  
May Day 2012**

*This piece, produced as a bi-lingual leaflet in German and Greek, is being distributed to workers in Greece by internationalists there, and in Germany by our comrades of the GIS*

### Letter To Fellow Workers in Germany

*“Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur” (“Change the names, and the story is about you”)\**

This is probably something you suspect, and maybe already know. If you haven’t thought about it already, consider it now.

What happens here in Greece, also concerns you.

What happens to me here will happen to you there.

We are both working men and women.

We work hard and flexible hours (if we still have jobs). We are not paid much.

They threaten us with wage cuts and dismissals.

Every day you are told that I am to blame for the economic crisis.

Every day I am told that it’s your fault that my living situation becomes worse.

But the facts show a different picture.

#### **Here in Greece:**

Wages are falling.

Purchasing power growth is far below inflation.

Unemployment is rising.

Poverty is growing.

One million people are already unemployed (20%) and currently have been abandoned to their fate. And this number is continuously increasing.

Already both parents are unemployed in 10% of families.

Youth unemployment is over 45%.

At the same time, tax rates on capital and high incomes are being lowered.

#### **There in Germany:**

The other side of the German “economic miracle” of the last decade are the shrinking wages of the population dependent on employment, because they have paid and are still paying the price of “improving the competitiveness” of the German economy.

Real wages of German workers are falling year by year and companies’ profits “inflate” constantly.

Purchasing power is now well below inflation.

7 million (about 20% of the workforce) work part-time under fixed-term contracts (“mini-jobs”), with monthly earnings below 400 euros and without insurance.

While real wages have declined over the last 10 years, banks have increased their profits by 39%.

The prime reason for the external debt is commercial rather than fiscal deficits. This drives countries into financial speculation.

And one last thing: the loans that Greece gets do not come from Germany’s state budget, but come from the financial system itself, which multiplies its profits on its loans. However, the public current account budget (the so-called “tax-payers”) has to take the risk of these financial transactions.

It is obvious. The ruling classes of our countries — using unimportant differences and our fragmentation — are trying to split us.

They are trying to turn us against each other.

While you and I are at loggerheads, we cannot defend ourselves against their oppression.

The idea of the “nation” is their important weapon because it hides the class character of the capitalist system. It gives the impression that the existing state of things is an expression of common interests of the “people”.

We have nothing between us to make us divided.

They are united, let’s be united.

We are class brothers and sisters.

We will not pay for the crisis they created!

We resist as far as we can, but we need your solidarity.

Let’s fight together for our class liberation!

In order to shake off all oppression and discrimination!

**Proletarian Internationalists from Greece**

\*In the preface to the first volume of Capital Marx says to the German reader, even though England is used as the main example, de te fabula narratur (the myth is talking about you)! Anyone who feels that England is a special case hasn’t realised that social forces are now operating on an international scale. According to Marx, England showed the future of Germany and the world.