



AURORA

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Against the "Class War" of the Rich: Time to Fight!

"There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning"

... declared billionaire Warren E. Buffett to the *New York Times* in November 2006. That was two years before the outbreak of the so-called "sub-prime crisis", which burst the financial bubble and with it so much neo-liberal self-assurance. The bankruptcy of a few financial institutions (some with funny names like "Fannie Mae" or "Freddie Mac") proved to be the prelude to a gigantic mess. Billions-strong "rescue packages" and state guarantees of liabilities had to be served up to prevent a total collapse of the financial system.

Since then one expert after another has declared the crisis over and done with. Predictions which a series of events have proven wrong time and again. The problems are getting worse. The "sub-prime crisis" became a "banking crisis", the "banking crisis" became a "financial crisis", the "financial crisis" became the "sovereign debt crisis" which threatens to blow the Eurozone apart — with unforeseeable consequences for the world economy. By contrast with previous recessions, this crisis is not limited in time or space, it has penetrated into the deepest innards of the system and it defines our lives. It turns career ambitions into a utopian dream, jobs into treadmills, finding somewhere to live into a struggle for survival, pension contributions into a gamble on an uncertain future, the search for work into a lottery. The crisis has intensified on all levels, and, with it, the "class war" against the poor that Warren E. Buffett spoke about.

Every day we acquiesce in the various "rescue packages" of our rulers. One programme of cuts

quickly follows another. Their solution to the crisis is the simplest possible and is everywhere the same: cuts in pensions, in welfare and education, more work, less wages, sacrifices and belt-tightening for the "good of the country".

Crisis? What Crisis?

"Banking crisis", "debt crisis", "financial crisis", "credit crunch", there were and are many names and descriptions for misery. We are not facing a series of accidents to individual firms, but a structural crisis of the whole system which has developed over decades. When, at the start of the 70s the post-war boom came to its end, an accumulation cycle without parallel was exhausted. To compensate for the low rate of profit, capitalism turned to restructuring the production process (e.g. through the introduction of microelectronics) and massively increased the rate of exploitation. Production facilities were shifted to low-wage countries and the core sectors of the industrial working class in the metropolises were thoroughly reduced. Through the spread of 'flexible' and casual employment capitalism tried to reinvent itself as a "service economy". At the same time, the wealth created by wage labour has been shifted to the financial sphere, where money miraculously "works" (without, however, creating new value), and speculation flourishes.

This attempt by capitalism to meet the crisis through the creation of fictional sources of profit brought handsome returns for a few super-rich, but nevertheless leads, in the long run, to growing indebtedness, enormous speculative bubbles and increasing instability. Today we can see the results. In the crisis, it's everyone for themselves. Across the world, imperialist rivalries and conflicts are sharpening. The struggle to dominate areas and zones of influence is becoming more serious, arms races and armed conflicts are taking on more and more drastic forms. Of course, war is no solution, but it is the only one capitalism has to offer, in order to emerge from its valorisation crisis.

Fear No-one!

Mounting job insecurity, unemployment, poverty, hunger and social exclusion are becoming the daily reality of life for more and more people. These are the anxieties which dominate our daily life. Anxiety about work, anxiety about coming off the rails and falling out of society, anxiety about being unable to escape the competitiveness of this society. Instead of the happy bourgeois promise of the "end of history" in "freedom and well-being", a resigned hope has appeared.

There is the "hope" of at least not being the first to be brought down, the "hope" that the crisis somehow will pass one by, the "hope" of an individual solution, of a bolthole. This "hope" is irrational and treacherous, it divides and isolates, it makes you ill. Some flee to alcohol and drugs and the manifold virtual worlds of the capitalist spectacle. Others compensate for their weakness with aggression against those who are weaker, getting bogged down in the racist and nationalist ideologies of our rulers and thus make themselves bulwarks of the bourgeois order. Reactionary ideologies are gaining ground and in them sexism finds an outlet in daily violence against women, gays, lesbians and all those who do not adapt themselves to the ruling sexual morality. To many, bourgeois order seems untouchable. The bourgeoisie has perfected the art of division, the manipulation of repression and social exclusion. For them, any means is justified if it maintains their domination. They have a lot to lose. We, on the other hand, must learn how to overcome our anxieties, to unite, to talk, to say 'No'.

For Class Autonomy!

Capitalism can only work so long as we fall into line. Social relations are made by people and can be changed by people. Every struggle, every strike, no matter how limited, shows — at least in embryo — the capacity of the working class to

turn this society upside down. The bourgeoisie know this only too well. It has developed a comprehensive repertoire of methods to isolate and split struggles, tame them or send them down blind alleys. If we are going to defend our immediate and vital interests we have to free ourselves from this pincer grip. We need to find ways and means of overcoming the lines of division and to assert solidarity and resistance just where this system draws the line. This demands a political break with the unions and parliamentary parties, which are without exception ensnared in the logic of this system. The dream of a socially-tamed capitalism is exhausted, having been dreamt too long.

Time and again those political bodies which claim to represent our interests through negotiations and compromises with the ruling class unmask themselves as especially perfidious defenders of this system. We must take up the struggle from below, in a self-organised fashion and against any compromise with the capitalist system, outside and against the logic of the unions,

uniting beyond the borders of firms and branches of production, and on the basis of independent bottom-up democratic structures. No matter whether in factories or offices, at the workplace or in residential areas — it is a question of resisting the arrogance and barbarism of capitalism and taking up the struggle for a different society.

The Freedom We Mean

None of humanity's global problems, like hunger, poverty and the destruction of the environment can be solved, or even alleviated, within the framework of the capitalist social order. It is not a question of "controlling the banks", "taxing the rich more heavily" or "nationalising industries". A capitalism organised on the basis of the state is just as little a possible alternative. The experience with Stalinism in the Soviet Union and elsewhere should be sufficient proof of this. Without breaking with capitalism's logic of profit, without taking power away from the ruling class, without a completely

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers Organisation (CWO)

The CWO is the British affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (formerly the IBRP) which now has groups of affiliates and sympathisers in several countries round the world. This May Day statement has been agreed by the ICT and is being published simultaneously wherever we have members and sympathisers.

We stand for a global society in which production is for need and not profit, where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers councils.

Such a society can only be created through the activity of millions of human beings. We call it communism but it has nothing in common with the Stalinist state capitalism of the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world proletarian political organisation: a 'party' for want of a better word. This organisation is not a government in waiting. It does not aim to rule and it cannot replace the organs of direct democracy that the working class must create for itself. However, it will lead and guide the struggle for a new world. The ICT makes no claim to be that party but only one of the elements which will come together in its formation. As the working class is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system it will have to unite and confront capitalist power. The ICT is not in competition with other genuinely working class organisations but seeks to unite on a clearly agreed political programme to prepare the way for the majority of the world's population, the exploited of the earth, to overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites.

different mode of production, no new society will be possible.

The only solution is a society where production is for the satisfaction of human needs, and not profit. A society in which production stands in harmony with humanity and the environment. A society in which the means of production are socialised and not in the hands of private or state capitalists. A society based on social equality. A society in which human beings can be different without anxiety. Such an "association of the free and equal" is not a state institution! It is not a condition or programme which can be put into practice from above, by a party or state decree. Social liberation can only be fought for from below, through taking our own initiative, self-activity and solidarity, in a social movement for the conscious overthrow of relations of domination. The communism we mean, is not a social indoctrination programme, but, in its aims and its methods a struggle for the realisation of freedom. It will not take shape by itself. It is up to us!

Time to Organise

The traumatic experience of Stalinism and social democracy have left their mark. Resentment and confusion are as great as ever. But those who want to defend themselves against capitalism must first undertake organisational steps to overcome their isolation. We have to reflect on our weaknesses, learn from each other. We reject the Stalinist model of a monolithic apparatus of order-takers just as much as the reformist concept of a *parliamentary party since the net effect of both is to act in the service of the state*. We are communists! We have no intention of hiding our positions and views. *We are neither "tactical" nor instrumental in our approach to people*. We reject all politics of representation. The ICT is an organisation of people who have decided to oppose capitalism on the international level. Controversies and critical debates are our lifeblood and, to the same extent, a pre-condition for reaching our aims. The task of revolutionaries is to keep the overall class interests of workers in view whilst developing and supporting their struggles, criticising their limitations and trying to strengthen consciousness of their own power. This demands an organisational framework, an indispensable weapon of the class struggle: an internationalist organisation with an international structure and implantation. We do not pretend to be "the Party", or even the sole nucleus of such an organisation. Rather, we seek discussions and common work with serious revolutionaries across the world, in order to encourage the construction of a new international revolutionary organisation. We are conscious that this will be a long-term and difficult process. But it is necessary to give an adequate response to the "class war" of the rich. It is time to wake up! It is time to organise! It is time to struggle!

For the stateless and classless society!

The Internationalists

(Internationalist Communist Tendency)

Here in the UK

the most optimistic economic forecast is for a year of stagnation. The 'jobs recovery' has fizzled out and even the IMF is calling on the government to slowdown its austerity programme.

The latest welfare cuts are devastating. Millions of the poorest households who depend on benefits — 60% of them with someone earning, but on wages so low they are (or were) entitled to top-up benefits — now find themselves facing instant penury. Under the heading of 'welfare reforms' the government's well-aimed and divisive attacks — such as the bedroom tax, increased council tax, etc. — have overnight made it impossible for many people to survive as they did before. If it wasn't clear already, it's now very obvious what the government's *Make Work Pay* message is all about. It's about driving down the minimum wage and forcing people onto a lower standard of life. At the same time inflation is eroding the real value of workers' take-home pay as the cost of basic necessities goes up: food, fuel, water and other utility bills. All this as 'pension pots' are dramatically reduced and the retirement age is perpetually postponed.

Alongside the incessant propaganda, the dubious opinion polls revealing that 'most people' are in favour of cuts to the welfare budget, the divisive 'debates' about well-off pensioners not deserving bus passes and heating allowances, the swingeing attacks on public services and amenities continue. As we know, most of the recent cuts are being implemented by local councils on the grounds of necessity since central government has dramatically reduced funds to the localities. This is grist to the mill of die-hard Labour supporters who realise that the poorest and most deprived areas are being hit by far the hardest and like us to believe that this wouldn't happen with a Labour government. Targeting local authorities is also an easy way

of fragmenting opposition to the cuts. In a similar way the NHS has been subdivided into trusts and starved of funds as the service is whittled away on spurious 'efficiency' and 'specialism' grounds. An A&E Department here, maternity ward there ... It's been going on for years but now it's clear: "We're going to have to pay for some medical services". As if we don't already: since 1945 we've been made to pay for prescriptions, dentistry, eye-tests and glasses. But this is in another league.

In fact, just as everywhere in the Western world, the working class is being cajoled into paying indefinitely for the revival of capitalist profits. As a few millionaire bankers resign or take a pension cut, the civilised level of human existence — freedom from unemployment, ignorance, squalor, poverty and disease — that workers were promised in return for their sacrifices in the Second World War is rapidly being swept away. Now, in the wake of every cutback all we get is a demand for more belt tightening, more 'austerity' ... while the rich get even richer and search for more and more outlandish ways of *How To Spend It*.

How To Fight?

The question is how to fight. When we say 'We reject all politics of representation' we mean that workers have to rely on their own self-organisation because organisations which are part and parcel of the established order are always looking for a solution that is satisfactory for capital. In other words no parliamentary party, not least the Labour Party can defend the working class. Neither will the unions or their paid 'campaign organisers' do anything to rock the capitalist boat. So far the only positive aspect of the present round of cuts is that pockets of workers are beginning to organise for themselves. By their nature grassroots bodies will have a fleeting existence but the experience of combining to resist, especially where people have got together to form



assemblies with re-callable delegates, helps to show there is an alternative to capitalist parliaments and putting your trust in paid representatives.

This is a far cry from those who think the answer is to make capitalism more democratic or who simply want Labour to win the next election. (For example the calls for a 'People's Assembly Against Austerity' by celebrities and Labourites who are fed up with an 'uncaring government'. The Assembly is due to meet in London in June and is open to anyone who **buys** a ticket to attend.) In the meantime the iniquitous programme to replace Disability Living Allowance for around 1.8 million working age people with something called PIP (Personal Independence Payment) is being rolled out. Of course Duncan Smith, Work and Pensions Secretary, promises no-one will suffer even though the scheme aims to cut spending on disabled benefits by 20%. It's worth noting that PIP depends on the same kind of notorious 'fitness for work assessment' administered by private companies that was the brainchild of the previous Labour administration under Tony Blair. Never mind, we can rest assured that 'modern Britain' is on the way to becoming great again. A new report by Unicef puts the UK in 16th position — below Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Portugal — in a league table of child well-being amongst the world's richest countries. A previous report in 2007 put the UK at the bottom of 21 developed countries for overall child well-being, which includes teenage pregnancy rates (high), the numbers of young people under 19 not

in education, employment or training ("fewer than any other major developed country") and alcohol abuse rates in 11 to 15 year olds (the highest). Maybe, however, you don't have time to think about such reports if you are desperately trying to find a smaller place to live because you can't afford the bedroom tax; or if your house is jam-packed with relatives because they can't afford to rent or buy. In this situation you may also not have time to reflect on how the Bank of England's policy of providing the banks with 'Funding for Lending' has helped to keep mortgage interest rates down: a boon for anyone with their own homes (or at least their own mortgage) and for the political parties who woo the votes of 'middle England'.

All these divisions, and many more, are played on by capital. But this crisis is not going to go away. We are all being hit more and more. Eventually the working class will have to make a clear political choice to fight against capitalism itself in order to create a totally different world: a rational society where production is organised to directly meet human needs. It is not inevitable. Unless there is a political organisation, rooted in the life and struggles of the working class, putting forward the communist programme, there will be no halting whatever capitalism has in store.

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