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 financial 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 “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 the “banking crisis” becoming a “debt crisis” or “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 metropoles 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 will not solve the crisis, it is only the 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 bourgeoisie 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 boathole. 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 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 pernicious defenders of this system. We must take up the struggle from below, in our own 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 new destination, the so-called “socialist state” is nothing but an illusion.

There is no solution, but it is the only one for the working class. The problem can be solved only through the working class seizing power, and this can only happen through a workers’ confederation of power, a direct democratic and self-managed organisation of the working class, in which all members have an equal voice. The ICT is not a government in waiting. It does not aim to take over society but only to be one of the elements which will come together after a crumbling capitalist system it will have to be prepared for. We stand for 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 utopian solution or a programme which can be put into practice from above, by a party or state decree. Social change 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. Racism, sexism 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 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 "factual" nor instrumental in our approach to people. We reject all politics of representation. The ICT is an organisation of people who have decided to organise on an international level. Controversies and critical debates are our lifeblood and, to the same extent, a permanent feature of 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 having an adequate 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 coming into being of a new 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)

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 millions of working 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 swinging 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 local authorities. 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, the privileged level of human existence — freedom from unemployment, ignorance, squaller, 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" initiatives. It is such a get even richer and search for ways to spend 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 still 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 you 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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