This is a Capitalist Crisis Not a Migrant Crisis

Today capitalism faces a global economic crisis without precedent. This crisis began long before 2007 but the bursting of the speculative bubble has created a new economic paralysis in the so-called advanced states. Despite profits, running into record trillions of dollars for high-profile companies like Apple, these are far outweighed by capitalism’s ever-increasing debt mountain (based on fictitious capital created by central banks’ ‘quantitative easing’ and multiplied by financial speculation) and a formidably low profit rate – which in turn is cause and consequence of the recent collapse in commodity prices. The capitalists are doing their utmost to boost the rate of profit in the ‘real economy’, where new wealth is created, by making workers do more work for less pay and generally reduce the cost of upkeep of the wage slaves. Spending on social services, education, health and welfare for the needy, and much more is being constantly slashed – all under the banner of ‘austerity’. Very few workers in Europe can now dream of a “beautiful life”.

For the European states, including the UK, more or less maintained a two-faced policy. Anti-racist legislation and opening up of borders sat easily with the gutter press and far-right politicians thundering against ‘asylum-seekers’ taking jobs, lay-about Roma jumping housing queues and living off benefits, whilst bosses quietly welcomed illegal migrants who can be exploited so much more viciously without being able to fight back. Today, thanks to austerity, there is a bigger pool of local unemployed and a generally lower-cost workforce. At this point in the economic crisis the bosses have less need for all but the most skilled of migrant labour.

Unfortunately for the political class, who have the job of guarding the vested interests of capital, the flow of migrants cannot be turned on and off like a tap. Global economic crisis means increased imperialist rivalry which has created hell in many areas of the planet. The destruction of existing state structures by Western imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq has opened up a Pandora’s Box which is now dovetailing into the debris of the Arab Spring of 2011. This was itself a consequence of the collapse of the financial system in 2008 which has had repercussions around the world.

The UNHCR estimates that in the last 5 years around 60 million people throughout the world have been displaced due to war. This is the biggest number since the Second World War ended. Over half the migrants to Europe come from Syria and most of the rest from Afghanistan, Entea, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan. Syria, now in its fifth year of ‘civil war’ has become the ominous emblem of what imperialist rivalry has in store for the rest of the world. More than five major powers are vying for their own imperialist interests – the US (supported by the UK, Germany and France), Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, with no concern for the terri-ble destruction of human lives or cities. Around 12 million people, more than half the population, is “displaced”. While 4 million Syrians are refugees, most are in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. (http://www. humanitas.org/news-stories-videos/syria-war-refugee-crisis央thehot/)

Racism and Nationalism On the Rise

Of course if you read the Daily Mail or Daily Express etc these are not human beings fleeing for their lives. They are just a ‘horde’ of outsiders aiming to steal what we have: our jobs, benefits and houses. On the European mainland the EU’s open border policy is breaking down (the Schengen zone) under the weight of sinister racist responses to “choke off the flow” and keep out certain migrant workers. In Germany support for the populist Alternative for Deutschland party is growing as are attacks on refugee shelters. Out and out racism is more and more part of the politi-cal mainstream. Capitalism’s most desperate victims are being made the scapegoat for the economic crisis.

Politicians have always turned to nationalism and racism to prevent what capitalists fear most, that workers should recognise their common enemy in capitalism and unite against their exploiters. The truth is that the way of life of “hard working families” is threatened, not by impoverished newcomers to the labour force, but by the constant attacks from the system that suppos-i-ly represents them.

Brexit: No Concern of the Working Class

When it comes to politicians peddling racism and nationalism Britain is no exception. All the main parties agree that immigration must be curbed. Little English UK Independence Party (UKIP) go one step further and blame the EU for admitting migrants who are blamed for every-thing from the housing shortage to high unemployment. Originally the Conservative leadership thought up the idea of a referendum over breaking from the EU as a way to halt the rise of UKIP and keep their own right wingers quiet. But all this is just ruling class infighting. Like the Scottish independence pantomime, media hype around voting ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to Brexit will distract workers from the further economic misery Osborne has in store.

The EU may be in danger of implod-ing but this is of no concern to the working class. It just shows how serious capitalism’s crisis has become and how much it is beyond the control of the representatives of the capitalist class.

Stand Together Against Nationalism

As world capitalism’s economic order implodes and its political order crumbles, the prospect for humanity is bleak. We are at a critical histori-cal juncture. Increased destitution, unemployment and wars stoked by imperialism is in the pursuit of profit are all the current system has on offer. The only way out is for the world’s workers, the people who produce the real wealth, to join together to get rid of capitalism itself. This may sound like an impossible dream. But daily life itself is dispelling the illusion that there is a beautiful life ahead under the present system where 62 people reportedly ‘own’ as much wealth as half the world’s population. It’s time now for workers everywhere to stand together against capitalism. It’s time for an international political organisa-tion to revive the vision of commu-nism that once shook capital to the core. Not Stalinist work camps and endless drudgery for party dictator-ships. Our struggle is for a new world – without war, without unemployment, without profit which causes wars; a world without checkpoints and borders which know no distinc-tion between race, creed or colour; a world without social classes where human beings decide collectively how and what to produce to directly fulfill human needs.

Find us at: http://www.leftcom.org
email: uk@leftcom.org
write to: CWO, BM CWO, LONDON, WC1N 3XX

“...I want to finish my education. My dream is to go to Europe and have a beautiful life.”

[19 year old Somali woman stuck in Libya, trying to find means to get on a boat to Europe.]

Bulletin of the Communist Workers’ Organisation
Affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency
No 37 March 2016
Junior Hospital Doctors Take up the Class Struggle

Junior hospital doctors are refusing to back off in their fight against the government’s latest offensive in its anti-worker war of attrition. The BMA has announced strikes for March 9, April 6 and April 26. Each will last for 48 hours — double the length of previous action. As always, the doctors will continue to carry out emergency care on those days. Jeremy Hunt, the Health Secretary, is pretending that the issue at stake is state of the art sabotage plans for a seven day health service. In a blatant propaganda ploy against the doctors, he’s tried to imply that they are refusing to work extra hours and are therefore responsible for the extra load on the system. This is just an outright lie. The figure has been plucked from the air. The doctors are not refusing to work. They are not blocking plans for better hospital care. They are opposing Hunt’s arbitrary attempt to make them work longer hours for less pay. Essentially the government’s plan is to redefine what constitutes normal working time. Under their current contracts junior doctors are paid a basic salary of around £22,600. At the moment they are paid extra for working after 7 p.m. on weekdays and at weekends. The new contract will extend ‘normal’ time to 10 p.m. on weekdays and 7 p.m. on Saturdays and the doctors could be obliged to work more nights and weekends without being able to object. In terms of take home pay it means a wage cut of around 30% to 40% on top of that, they will only be entitled to one 20 minute break every six hours.

These are formidable bosses’ tricks which workers in other jobs will easily recognise. No wonder the doctors are turning to strike action: withdrawal of labour is the ultimate weapon for wage workers everywhere. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen to the class struggle!

As one retired doctor recently wrote: “The mass of junior doctors has learned and organised, and for the first time in history they are identifying themselves as working class.”

This is not the first time junior doctors have been moved to strike. In 1975, in the early stage of the economic crisis when there had been dogging capitalism ever since, junior hospital doctors struck for the first time. During the winter of 1974/75 the working class was seething. With inflation around 25%, more and more workers were striking just to try and keep up the real value of their wages. Airline workers, lorry drivers, steelworkers, engineers, fire workers, teachers, bus drivers, were just some of the groups who went on strike to the streets over their wage claims. In the NHS the taboo on strikes had already been broken when ancillary workers struck against a pay freeze in 1972. Nurses and radiographers followed suit in 1974.

By 1975, in a remarkable parallel with today, junior hospital doctors were resisting the introduction of a new contract by Barbara Castle (the Labour Government’s Social Services minister) which would have reduced their overall pay. Then, however, their struggle was tangled up — at least by the BMA and the gutter press — with the consultants’ campaign to maintain their lucrative private practices at the same time as work for the NHS and the GPs who threatened mass resignation if they didn’t get a 30% per cent pay rise.

In the early years of the capitalist crisis the working class did not imagine the scale and depth of attacks it had to engage in. There was massive anger and willingness to fight, but, as always, this was corralled by the unions into a section by section fight with no larger aim than for each group of workers to hold on to what they had. This was impossible. The capitalists were now ready to attack workers head on in their bid to raise profit rates. Sectional divisions and the low level of political consciousness within the working class allowed the bosses to get away with an unprecedented economic restructuring which ushered in the era of globalisation and digital imperialism. Over the last 40 years the shape of the working class has changed as the old heavy industries have gone. But far from the working class ‘disappearing’, new classes have been made and new opportunities opened up for the working class.

A New World is Necessary ...

This is not the only one of Marx’s predictions that is being borne out. Today the capitalists themselves admit their system is facing a bigger economic crisis than ever before. Marx argued that capitalism’s drive to increase profits leads to ever-wider and deeper economic crisis where wage workers are driven down and unemployment rises has passed the reality test.

And Possible ...

Above all, Marx recognised that capitalist economic development in itself would not lead to a golden future for the majority of humanity. Yes, capitalism has created the material foundation for a world without the threat of poverty, war and famine. What’s more the majority of people in each and every country are the working class of wage workers with no property interests of their own to get in the way of organising together to produce directly for human needs. But the capitalists are not going to let go without a fight. One of the most important insights of Marx today is the lesson he drew from the Paris Commune, way back in 1871, which is that the working class cannot simply take hold of the existing state machinery and reorganise society on a communist basis. Yet the social democratic illusions remain, if not in the possibility of communism through parliament, more often in the possibility of reorganising capitalism to the benefit of the working class. But no amount of momentum for Corbyn or any other left capitalist party can solve the capitalist crisis, much less perceptibly modify the attacks on the working class. There is no way in which the future will only improve when each group of workers under attack recognise that their battle is part of wider class struggle for a new world.

The working class needs to have a vision and see the possibility of a new society: the only civilised and progressive response to the world capitalist crisis. The Communist Workers Party and the Communist Workers Group is the political organisation whose militants aim to bring a wider revolutionary perspective to those new groups which are opposing Hunt’s arbitrary attempt to turn the NHS into a golden future for the majority of humanity. If nothing else, the last few decades have shown that the future will only improve when each group of workers under attack recognise that their battle is part of wider class struggle for a new world.

In order to get there we are working to build a communist organisation or ‘party’ for want of a better word. This is not a government in waiting. It doesn’t do rule but it will lead and guide the struggle for a new world. We do by no means claim to be that party, only one of the elements which will come together in its formation. As the working class becomes more and more conscious, a new communist party will begin to take shape. We aim to unite on a clearly agreed programme and the Communist Workers Organisation stands for a global society where production is for need and not for profit.

We aim to unite on a clearly agreed programme and the Communist Workers Organisation stands for a global society where production is for need and not for profit.

The Communist Workers Organisation stands for a global society where production is for need and not for profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers councils. This is the only way to break through the array of billions of human beings. It will rid us of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war. We call it communism but it has nothing in common with Stalinist state communism of the old USSR.

This is a shameful, bare-faced piece of anti-working class legislation aimed at disbanding and subsidising the groups who need it most. It’s pushing workers out of London and ‘socially cleansing’ vast areas (teachers are only one group of workers already being priced out of London). But these are fighting back. Last year, protests occupied empty flats on an estate in Elephant and Castle. They were evicted using riot police. Another example is the NHS. The National Health Service is typical of what’s happening now. The politicians are forcing those out of their homes for the sake of better word. This is not a government in waiting. It doesn’t do rule but it will lead and guide the struggle for a new world. We do by no means claim to be that party, only one of the elements which will come together in its formation.