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AURORA



The Unaffordable Price of Capitalism

Not so long ago internationalists were ridiculed for insisting that capitalism threatens not only our livelihoods, but the very future of humanity. Nobody laughs now. Ever since the financial meltdown of 2007 revealed a system living on borrowed money it has become increasingly obvious it is living on borrowed time. The number of zombie (unprofitable) companies has grown while states have taken on even more debt to keep the tottering system afloat only for a litany of disasters to unfold. Environmental degradation and CO2 emissions have continued apace, leading to killer pandemics and relentless global warming which in turn is bringing increasing floods and famines.

With no solution to the profits' crisis, imperialist competition for the world's resources has brought war

and devastation to an increasing area of the world. The Ukraine war has added around 10 million people to the number of 'displaced people' in the world (more than 1 in 80 of the world's population).

And if all that were not enough, even before the war in Ukraine, broken supply chains and financial speculation following Covid have created the biggest global inflationary crisis in half a century. Inflation in the UK and US has now reached 10 per cent. In Turkey, however, the official rate of inflation is close to 80 per cent. Venezuela, Sudan and Zimbabwe's price increases are likely to be higher this year. One-third of emerging market countries are already in "debt distress". That number is set to rise. There have already been demonstrations and uprisings across the globe from

Ecuador to Sri Lanka including Cuba, Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq and Iran to name but a few.

The bosses (oligarchs, fat cats or whatever you like to call them) offer the same old solutions. These involve more wage cuts, more job insecurity, more hunger for the world's real wealth creators — the working class. And it is only the world working class who can prevent the descent into this vortex of war, inflation and climate change. Only they can create a new world without borders where production is for the needs of all, not the profit of a few. However this can only happen if workers organise across all national boundaries in a political movement which is aiming not to reform capitalism but to build an entirely new society. In its own small way, this is what this Aurora is all about.

Cost of Living Goes Through the Roof

In a world of rising prices, the UK's 10% inflation rate is higher than any other 'rich' country and from all accounts set to rise. Domestic gas prices have gone up by 95% in the last 12 months, and electricity by 54%. Both will rise further in the autumn, when millions of families will once more face the dilemma of whether to "eat or heat". Almost a quarter of adults are now reporting it's difficult for them to pay their household bills. Food costs are up and rising, with more and more families using food banks. Child poverty is up. Rents are up. Wages and benefits, however, are not.

Changes to Universal Credit mean 35% of claimants will now get less money. The worst hit are those with disabled children and those with the lowest incomes. Nine million households on means-tested benefits will suffer a £500 cut per year. Couples with children will lose £720. Little wonder that there is so much demand for food banks. Many are reporting that their stocks are low and some have run out of food to give.

Official figures and the financial press point to 'market forces' driving up wages in sectors with labour shortages following the upheaval of Covid. The truth is earnings as a share of GDP have been falling for decades

but today they are falling at their fastest rate this century. For most workers there is no prospect of their wages matching inflation. Despite all the lip service paid by the government in the pandemic, NHS staff have seen all the applause turn to a kick in the teeth. Nurses now get 7% less than they did twelve years ago. Midwives get 10% less, hospital consultants 12% less, while ambulance workers face "real term" pay cuts. Other sectors are also worse off. The most experienced teachers have seen their pay fall in real terms by 9%. They're also dealing with crisis levels of kids in poverty. Many report having staff-room collections to feed hungry kids in their class.

Not everyone's in the same boat of course. Aside from our exploiters on their luxury yachts there is also a discrepancy amongst wage workers. The highest paid are enjoying bumper pay rises, largely due to a bonus boom, especially in finance and real estate. For most of us, though, the coming months will be tough. And as ever, those at the bottom of the heap will be hardest hit. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has warned that poorer households face an overall inflation rate of 10.9%. Already the price of lowest-cost food has increased, in some cases by 10%. In other words, the poverty gap that's been widening for years is now set to increase dramatically.

That said, there is no doubt that the overall quality of life for most of us is rapidly declining. Apart from the 2 million people now living with long Covid, millions more are facing delays to medical treatment. Less than 10% of men will reach retirement in good health while one in five women pensioners already live below the poverty line.

For some, it's all down to Tory greed and mismanagement. It's true that the Tories are staggeringly unfit to manage anything except lining their own pockets. Their policies amount

to viciously attacking workers while pretending to defend them so they can bash away at the 'red wall.' So far, Levelling Up has amounted to nothing beyond a few trite slogans from successive ministers spouting empty promises.

The government itself blames knock-on effects of the pandemic. Or the war in Ukraine which has affected petrol prices and is causing global food shortages. Some even whisper about the own-goal effects of Brexit (the Brexit divorce bill has just jumped by £10 billion). All of these have played their part. But none of it fully explains why the crisis is so deep. Or why it's global.

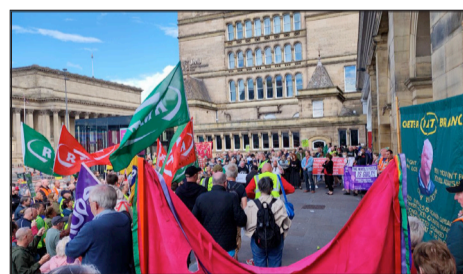
The truth is, the ruling class don't control their own system. Capitalism is like a runaway train heading for the void over a cliff. And no one in the whole capitalist spectrum, from far right to far left, has an answer. All they can do is come up with ever more inventive ways of blaming our class while making us pay for it all. And when we refuse to do so, they are already preparing for how they'll fight with the gloves off. Along with many other restraints, the massive Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act allows the police to shut down and criminalise public demonstrations for being too noisy, including even a protest by a single individual. Meanwhile Priti Patel has quietly empowered special constables to carry tasers for the first time. And whatever else this government has failed to do, they now boast embarking on the largest prison-building programme for a century. This is the future capitalism has in mind for us.

Time to get serious about our alternative: a world without profits and dividend payments but where everyone's basic needs — and more — are guaranteed.

Workers Respond to the Bosses Class War

For decades workers have paid for the capitalist crisis in declining real wages, austerity and job insecurity. Now all over the world price rises of basic goods are at last triggering strikes and protests. In the UK, BT workers have been on strike for the first time in more than thirty years. More strikes by rail and tram workers, airport and airline workers, barristers, bus drivers, tube workers, baggage handlers, postal workers and refuse collectors are planned, or already underway. Ballots are in the pipeline for teachers, doctors, nurses and civil servants and even junior barristers. The working class cannot stand the onslaught any longer. For workers in their 30s, who have lived through more than a decade of austerity and falling real terms pay, the inflationary crisis threatens to eat up their already pitiful savings. Many are at a breaking point.

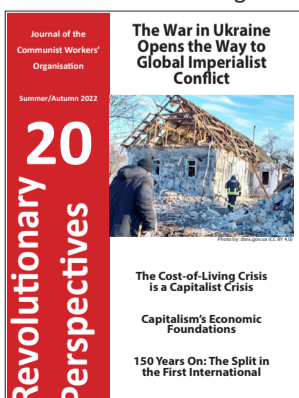
The bosses know it, but they are preparing for the new stage in the class war. Their policies have created inflation but if workers demand wages to meet its costs then they become the villain of the piece. Our rulers (of all parties) blame inflation solely on the war in Ukraine and tell us it is our patriotic duty to accept "sacrifices" to "defeat Putin" (whilst awarding the captains of industry and finance multi-million pound wage rises). And they promise yet more laws against striking. In short, the class war has reached a critical point. Our strength as a class lies in our numbers, and our response has to become a collective fight across the entire working class.



RMT Union demo, Liverpool 25th June

In this many are naturally looking to their union for leadership. What are they paying union dues for if they get nothing in return? All of the strikes and ballots alluded to above are being organised through the trade unions, and the rail strikes in June have pushed some union heads to centre-stage in the media. Yet, as we said, the working class as a whole — employed, unemployed, white collar or no collar — is under attack, yet a union struggle, by definition, is a sectional one. And as is evident today, a variety of simultaneous union actions does not make for building a serious class-wide resistance. A one day strike by one group of union members here, a half-day walk-out by another group there. Sure, this is a sign of discontent and a readiness to 'do something'. But, truth to tell, when it comes to showing the bosses that their members are not ready to back down and are massing for a real fight, a few pickets standing around in statutory union bibs is not much of a warning signal to the bosses, much less an encouragement for broader working class solidarity.

But why are the unions so bad at what they're supposed to do? Many on the left will say that this is due either to a lack of solid leadership within the unions, or because of the draconian nature of the trade union laws introduced



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The Ukraine War is a War Against Workers Everywhere

The war in Ukraine has already lasted about six months. Like earlier wars (Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Congo ...) it already has the “never-ending” stamp on it. But there the similarity ends. Although the others involved the major imperialist powers (enough to increase the death toll) they were not direct super-power conflicts. But with massive NATO weaponry enabling Ukraine to hold the Russian advance, the war in Ukraine is just that. It is opening the way to an even wider imperialist war involving the two real contenders for global domination, USA and China.

Ukraine has been a zone of rivalry between Russia and the West since the fall of the USSR. Ukraine’s 30 or so rival monopoly capitalists (aka oligarchs) have fought over control of the state. In this fight they sought to get support either from Russia or the West (EU and NATO). This made it a pawn in the imperialist game. It brought its leading capitalists bigger yachts and London mansions, but made its population poorer, or forced workers to leave the country en masse. Today Ukraine is the scene of a more direct conflict between major imperialist powers. It is not a world war, but like many such conflicts in the past (the Balkan Wars 1912-13, the Spanish Civil War 1936-9), it is laying the grounds for one. These earlier wars were accompanied by propaganda preparations, based on patriotism or defence of democracy against fascism.

The War Beyond This War

A similar process is now underway to mobilise populations for the next slaughter, and it takes some courage and resolution to oppose it on both sides. Russian propaganda can point to NATO aggression since the fall of the USSR. With that collapse came the end of the Eastern bloc, the Warsaw Pact. Even though NATO’s foe was gone it carried on extending eastwards. Having “won” the Cold War Western hubris demanded some material gains – even if only in arms sales to the ex-USSR satellites. From the Russian point of view, if Ukraine joins NATO its encirclement is complete. And fear of what the West is up to gives it support at home for an aggressive response in Ukraine.

The fact the Russia attacked Ukraine is NATO’s greatest propaganda asset. You could not invent a better enemy than an authoritarian regime run by ex-KGB “hard men” (siloviki) which murders its opponents, at home and abroad, or

locks them up on trumped up charges. And of course, natural sympathy for the victims of war like the 10 million or so Ukrainian refugees can easily be manipulated by the West into support for the Ukrainian military and paramilitary. The ubiquitous blue and yellow Ukrainian flag is now the banner of a new-found Western unity.

Imperialist war clearly afflicts workers everywhere. We don’t just mean the obvious threat of famine or higher prices (which are products of the same economic crisis that is pushing the great powers to war) but in the way it imposes a war agenda on workers. Most absurd of all, is that both sides claim to be against “fascism” whilst making fascist thugs heroes in their cause. The fact is that ‘patriotism’, nationalism of all kinds is the stock response of the capitalist class when workers try to resist wage cuts, job losses and increasing repression.

The Meaning of Total War

In the present conflict both sides are using the power of the state to mobilise, or prepare, all men of military age to fight. Ukraine has banned all males between 18-60 from becoming refugees. Russia has told reservists that they are liable for service in the conflict. And, as in the early stages of all such conflicts, both sides have been largely successful in getting the bulk of the population behind them – even when those populations know both states are riddled with corruption. In March Ukraine used the war to push through anti-worker legislation first proposed in 2021. Workers can now be suspended without pay from work for no reason and for 70% of the workforce collective contracts are to be replaced by individual contracts. Class war takes many forms.

Workers are thus press-ganged and cajoled to fight for their ruling classes – the ones who can claim that the country is “ours”. They do, after all, own it. Workers, on the other hand, own only the labour power which they sell, and it does not belong to any country. But it is their labour that creates the wealth to pay for the war machines that are turned against humanity and, in the long run, it is only the world working class that can halt the course that the capitalist system is taking us on.

And it is important to know that the Ukraine war is just the opening battle for control of the planet’s resources. Behind Ukraine stands the USA, and behind Russia increasingly stands

(albeit discreetly for now), China. Throughout the Ukraine war both Biden and Blinken have repeatedly stated that defending Ukraine is part of the resistance to both “authoritarian states”, Russia and China.

No War but the Class War

Our fight is different. It is a declaration of war on a capitalist system which spawns pandemics, climate change, famines and starvation and even the potential extinction of humanity. This “war” is neither nuclear nor conventional, and our weapons are not bombs, artillery, drones and rockets.

Our weapons are our class consciousness which recognises that “workers have no country” and our capacity for collective organisation. We need to create an international political organisation to fight the war and the system which causes it. This means not only highlighting the brave acts on both sides of the current conflict to “desert the war” but also publicising as widely as possible the growing fight against a system in economic free fall which threatens all our futures.

Supporting Russia or Ukraine in this conflict means supporting war. For the working class there will be no winners on either side. The only way they could end this nightmare is by fraternising across borders and paralysing the war machine. Nationalist propaganda everywhere is a form of class war against workers. Our rulers will adopt patriotic messages to call on us (as they are already doing) to make sacrifices in terms of real wage cuts and if that fails repression will follow. The mounting cost of permanent war is being paid by workers everywhere and we have to fight back on all fronts, starting now. There is no quick fix – the struggle will be a long one, but we have to start somewhere. We have joined with others to form “No War but the Class War” groups both locally and internationally. We do not expect instant success but so far support for the initiative across the planet is encouraging.

NWBCW basic positions were outlined by the first group formed in Liverpool.

- Against capitalism, imperialism and all nationalisms. No support for any national capitals, “lesser evils”, or states in formation.

- For a society where states, wage-labour, private property, money and production for profit are replaced by a world of freely associated producers.

- Against the economic and political attacks that the current war, and the ones to come, will unleash on the working class.

- For the self-organised struggle of the working class, for the formation of independent strike committees, mass assemblies and workers’ councils.

- Against oppression and exploitation, for the unity of the working class and the coming together of genuine internationalists.

The way ahead will not be easy but, given the seriousness of the situation, revolutionary minorities have to act now to prepare the way for the wider international class movement of tomorrow. If this matches your view get in touch.

No War but the Class War Newcastle Public Meeting

**Saturday 1st October
2.00 p.m.
Bar Loco
22-4 Leazes Park Road**

Internationalism and the War in Ukraine

People in Ukraine today, like those in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere previously, are suffering the consequences of a system in freefall towards generalised global war. As if the threat of climate change were not enough, the world capitalist system is bringing us famine, massive inflation and greater job insecurity — all for the profits of a few. Only the exploited of the world can halt this descent into the abyss but we need to begin to organise before it is too late. Come along to join the discussion on how to stimulate a collective fight back to defend both our living standards and our lives.

Workers Respond to the Bosses' Attacks

... continued from front

in the 1980s, stifling the unions into weak action. But really, it is due to the nature of the unions. Their role within capitalism is as a negotiator of the sale of labour-power, and that this position as negotiator has been codified into law. In other words they are part of the problem, not the solution.

What’s needed now is real, practical class solidarity based on our shared situation in life: the necessity to work for a wage, or else exist on a government handout. Despite our various life experiences, and never mind our personal identities, we are united by our shared condition as an exploited class. It is the ‘extra’ work we do — the unpaid effort put in over and above what covers our wages, which creates capitalist profit. It is this profits system which is rotten to the core. We have to get rid of it before capitalism completely destroys life on the planet.

We Can Make a Start

To break free of our current conditions, we must organise beyond the unions and the rules imposed by capitalism. We need to organise directly to express our interests and overcome the isolation and divisions we

face. We need mass strikes not sectional ones. Strikes which are coordinated by struggle committees made up of delegates elected at mass assemblies and recallable at any instant. If workers take control of their fight back, they have a chance of winning in the short term, and above all



gaining valuable experience in organising for themselves.

Ultimately, we must move our aims beyond mere survival and take control of production and distribution so that human beings can

provide directly for society’s needs. The experience of struggle committees and mass assemblies based on working class direct democracy will be the basis for human social organisation in the post-capitalist world. But, let’s make no bones about it, before that world can come about there has to be a political struggle to overthrow capitalism. That means political organisation, and since capitalism is global it means we have to have a world revolutionary organisation with a clear programme to present to workers of the world. That programme, of course, will not be the product of some sort of revolutionary ‘think-tank’. In fact the basis for it already exists in the lessons drawn from the whole history of workers’ struggles and the historical dead-end which capitalism itself has reached.

In line with this approach, the Communist Workers Organisation shares a common platform with the Internationalist Communist Tendency. We cannot claim to be the world revolutionary party, but that’s what we are working towards in the confidence that from the struggles which surely lie ahead new political elements will emerge to join forces with those on the revolutionary political path. Never a better time to join us!



What The CWO
Stands For



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. It is a society which can only be created through the activity of millions of human beings. Only such a society can rid us of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: 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 rule but it does lead and guide the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but only one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation.

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