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AURORA



Against Imperialist War! Against Capitalist Peace!

These are dangerous times. The post-War boom ended half a century ago. With it went capitalism's last promise of a relatively better life. In the 1970s and '80s workers resisted the first attempts to make us pay for the crisis. Yet despite the militancy, this only provoked industrial shutdowns in capitalism's heartlands.

Mass unemployment followed and working class communities were destroyed as jobs went to China and other low labour cost places.

So began the decline in living standards where wages as a share of GDP have dropped continually since 1979. But this did not solve the capitalists' problems.

Their next dodge was deregulation, especially of finance. Banks created "new financial instruments" to disguise speculative dodgy loans. This all came crashing down in 2007-8. States bailed out banks "too big to fail". We got "austerity" while tech billionaires and big finance blossomed on the back of cuts for everyone else. The 2020 pandemic only underlined the growing inequity of the system. Whilst two thirds of the world's population sank into deeper poverty, the five richest men in the world doubled their wealth. Now the top 1% of the world's population own more than 95% of all the wealth. Warren Buffet, one of the super-rich, summed it up two decades ago "there is a class war and my class is winning it".

Imperialist War

But if capitalist peace is increasingly unbearable, the war in Ukraine and the mass murder in Gaza and Lebanon (not to mention the other "forgotten" conflicts around the world), show where the crisis of a decaying capitalism is taking the world. Over 125 years of imperialist rivalry have already brought us two World and countless proxy wars. They are not fought by armies alone.

They demand massive destruction of the enemy's economic infrastructure and their populations. Today it is no secret that the US world order, established in 1945 and based on the domination of the dollar is being challenged, not least by the rise of China. The one thing Democrats and Republicans do agree on is "the China threat". Biden's rhetoric during the Ukraine War has been against China as well as Russia, and everyone knows that Trump will step up the tariff war against "the strategic enemy" in January. History tells us trade wars end in "shooting wars". A war between the USA and China would have dire consequences

for us all.

Not quite yet. War in Ukraine has shown that weapons and supply lines have to be honed. But the war climate already exists. Decades of capitalist stagnation would, you might assume, turn most people against the system. But it's much easier to blame falling living standards and shit jobs on something, or rather someone, more concrete.

And who better than migrants? For racists and nationalists they are "the other" to be demonised. As life becomes more difficult "they" become "the problem". Attacking the foreigner morphs into defending "our country". Nationalist ideology is growing everywhere, as can be seen with Brexit and the racist riots after the Southport stabbings, to the rise of the xenophobic far right conspiracy theorists across Europe, America, India and beyond.

"National identity" is a necessary part of war preparations. When our rulers ask us to fight for "the country" they are talking about fighting to defend their capital and their property. But workers have no capital and, as Marx noted, have no country to defend. Of course the propaganda media plays on our ties with friends and family and where we happen to be born, but capitalist wars are not about that – they are about defending what the capitalists own. Flag waving, military commemorations, disparaging of 'misfits' always accompany mobilisation for their wars.

So How can Imperialist War be Stopped?

Not through pious calls for peace nor by individual actions. We applaud the hundreds of thousands who have deserted the war in Ukraine and Russia but that does not end it. We applaud those who try to sabotage the war machine. These are exemplary actions but are unlikely to stop war. The working class – the only class which is united globally by its common experience of capitalist exploitation – is capable of putting an end to the system but only if it wakes up to the power it has. A class conscious mass movement like the one which ended the First World War in Russia, Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria can not only end war but also the capitalist system that spawns wars.

Today, after decades of class retreat we are not starting from a great place. However, start we must.

We do not know how long we have, but we must use the time to prepare

a response. Thousands of workers already understand that the system is failing – capitalism's peace fails them every day. Internationalists everywhere have to reach out to them to give a lead in building a movement capable of achieving enough critical mass to reach every section of the working class in all lands.

We can only do this by drawing together all those who can see the need for a world without states, without borders and where the satisfaction of every human's basic

needs replaces the drive for profit. Here we need to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us.

This is why we have relaunched the *No War but the Class War* (NWBCW) committees to work with others from different political traditions across the world. It is still in its infancy but is open to the ideas of others (as we stated in our address to the participants of the Prague Action Week). NWBCW's basic positions have recently been taken up by internationalists in Sweden. We have a world to save as well as win.

No War But the Class War A Statement from Sweden

Capitalism today is a global imperialist system and war is a means of redistributing the world and its resources among the major powers. In times of economic crisis, when competition between capitalist states intensifies, military solutions become the preferred method for this. Today, around fifty armed conflicts rage around the world.

50 years after the end of the post-war economic boom, the ruling class is now running out of options and capitalism must consider all possibilities to try to increase profitability and ensure profit - and thus the survival of the system. It is from this perspective that we should look at the formation of 'alliances of convenience', behind which the larger conflict between the US and China over world domination is playing out.

No national project can escape this framework. As Rosa Luxemburg already put it: *'The small nations, whose ruling classes are complicit appendages of their counterparts in the big states, are merely pawns in the imperialist game of the great powers and are used, like their working masses, as tools to be sacrificed to capitalist interests after the war.'* Thus all talk of national liberation, of the right of nations to self-determination, now becomes a historical contradiction. Revolutionary defeatism, by which we mean opposing imperialist war with class war, is as relevant today as it was a century ago.

The war in Ukraine, and subsequently in Gaza, has put the question of a revolutionary response to war on the agenda. For us, the answer is crystal clear: proletarian internationalism, revolutionary defeatism, no war but the class war!

The No War But the Class War

(NWBCW) initiative aims to encourage the formation of local committees of genuine internationalists from different political tendencies and groupings. The hope is to create an example of how we can relate constructively both to each other and to the working class at large. We have proposed the following five principles as a basis for joint activity:

- * Against capitalism, imperialism and all forms of nationalism. No support for any national capitals, 'lesser evils' or new states in formation.

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

- * Against the economic and political attacks to which the present and future war will expose the working class.

- * For the independent struggle of the working class, for the formation of independent strike committees, general meetings and workers' councils.

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

The first committee was formed in Liverpool (UK) in 2022 and since then groups in Italy, USA, South Korea and others have followed. These committees have sought to bring the internationalist message to protests and picket lines wherever the working class takes up the struggle. Do not hesitate to contact nwbcw@liverpool.protonmail.com or info@leftcom.org (to ICT who helped launch the project) if you agree and find it interesting!

The Real Scandal is Capitalism

After winning one of the dullest elections in history, where less than 60% bothered to vote, Labour has quietly slipped into office to carry out the task of managing UK incorporated. The main job is to reassure international capital markets that their investments are safe — no more Liz Truss profligate spending announcements based on unsecured borrowing or energy price guarantees. So, even before the Budget Chancellor Reeves cancelled the winter fuel allowance in one swipe. (Of course, if you're really 'poor', you can go through the official rigmarole of applying for another state benefit.)

Labour's turn to do the political managing coincides with a batch of results of public enquiries over scandals that go back years. The trick is to prolong the whole process until the original issue is out of the public eye and there are other, more pressing matters to hit the headlines.

The government might claim that most of these scandals occurred outside of its watch. But the proof of the pudding will be how far Starmer and crew implement any recommendations for redress.

"The System Isn't Broken It was Built This Way"

Let's start with the enquiry into the fire at the Grenfell Tower block of flats which occurred on 14th June killing 72 people (18 of them children). By public enquiry standards the first part, called by Theresa May the day after the fire and charged with establishing what happened, was pretty quick. It reported the basic facts in October 2019. The second part took almost five more years.

Contrary to the impression given, Grenfell was not the first cladding fire to claim lives. Already in 2009 six people had died in a fire that engulfed Lakanal House in Camberwell. Here too the danger from extremely flammable cladding was compounded by dilapidated fire safety equipment and totally unsuitable procedures for a situation where, since the sweeping aside of hundreds of safety rules in 1984, anything goes. Basically a profits maximisation method of refurbishing using the cheapest components, regardless of the dangers involved, has created human tinder boxes whose inhabitants cannot move because they have nowhere else to go or because they can't sell, and where for the most part they can't afford to redress the damage. Meanwhile the National Audit Office reported in November that the official target of 'remediating' problems of building over 11 metres high by 2035 is unlikely to be met. Especially as 60% of the buildings in question have yet to be identified!

The three worst companies named by the report: Arconic, the US supplier of external cladding, Celotex and Kingspan, suppliers of insulation who were able to deliberately "manipulate the testing process, misrepresent the data and mislead the market", are still trading. That's capitalism for you.

As for the victims, a paltry £150mn compensation for some has come via

civil cases involving 900 bereaved family members, survivors and local residents. But when it comes to official recognition of responsibility, never mind compensation for the victims ... still waiting. As Karim Hussain, one of Grenfell's inhabitants whose uncle died in the blaze, told the inquiry:

"It's always the same thing everywhere — we suffer and they prosper. The system isn't broken, it was built this way."

Little Joy on Horizon

In 1999 the Post Office introduced Fujitsu's Horizon software for accounting and stocktaking. Sub-postmasters quickly complained about bugs in the system after it falsely reported missing revenue — often for many thousands of pounds — but they were ignored. Between 1999 and 2015, more than 900 Post Office branch managers were wrongfully convicted of crimes including theft, fraud and false accounting. Some went to prison and many more were financially ruined, often with tragic personal consequences. Almost a quarter of a century later it is finally officially recognised that the real culprit was Fujitsu's faulty software. Yet, of the 700 cases the Post Office itself took to court, by April just 37 had received compensation settlements.

Legislation (applying to England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to overturn convictions and pay compensation became law in May. In September Rachel Reeves announced alongside the budget that £1.8bn would be allocated for subpostmasters who were wrongly convicted by the Post Office. Still, the new government has seen fit to launch a parliamentary inquiry to look into delays in compensation settlements. ... Expect more delays.

Meanwhile, although Fujitsu said in January that it would "voluntarily pause bidding for future public sector contracts" while the public inquiry was ongoing, the group has won six public sector contracts worth over £1.4mn. You couldn't make it up!

This is by no means the end of the delayed compensation bills the new government is now facing. Alongside the Budget, Reeves also promised to set aside £11.8bn for the victims of the infected blood scandal. In the 1970s and 1980s about 6,000 people with haemophilia and other bleeding disorders were treated with contaminated clotting factors containing HIV and hepatitis viruses. Some of them unintentionally infected their partners.

It took until 2017 before PM Theresa May called a public inquiry which opened in 2018 and lasted until January 2023. Of the 1,250 people originally infected with HIV (including 380 children) fewer than 250 are still alive. By the time the final report was published in May 2024 at least another 710 people who had become infected had died. Nothing like procrastination for reducing your liabilities!

Luckily for Labour, the mother of all enquiries — the probe into what went on in the corridors of power and beyond during the Covid epidemic, will last years. The public

hearings alone are expected to continue until 2026 and there is no specified end date. Still there are plenty more scandals brewing for future enquiries and delays. Thames Water, for one, has been doing nothing for years except use customers' payments to speculate and generate fine bonuses for shareholders (see our website for more details on this one).

Meanwhile, it's the mixture as before. Following Rachel Reeves' neither here-nor-there budget (apart from increasing military spending), Starmer had to spend his time "reassuring the markets" that his government wasn't intent on taxing big business in order to spend on public services.

The Condition of the Working Class

It's not getting any better for the working class. 'Disposable income' is still lower than before Covid. More people are loading up with personal debt, made easier by pay later options with your credit card.

The UK has the highest level of homelessness in the 'developed world'. One in 200 'households' are dumped in emergency lodging. This can't be helping people's psychological state. Again, there's an uptick here with an increase in young people's 'inactivity' due to mental health problems.

Just another strain on the poor old NHS which has been underfunded for decades and is now grappling with its longest ever waiting lists. We're all living too long (though that's becoming less true) and getting too fat. Obesity stops people from working and is a drain on the NHS and public finances. Solution: not a serious banning of junk foods, nor education about a healthy diet, never mind the means to pay for it. No, the answer is medication, with the weightloss drug Mounjaro: another lucrative money stream for big pharma. (The first death has already occurred: another scandal in the offing.)

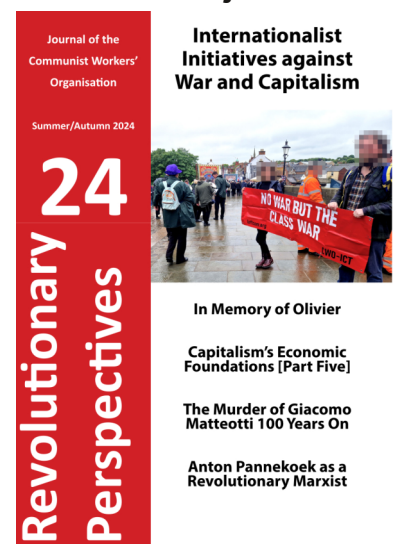
AI, electric cars, smart phones notwithstanding, post-modern Britain sometimes looks remarkably

Dickensian. Take prisons. They are so overcrowded that some prisoners had to be released early in order to accommodate the recent race riot criminals. Suicides are up of course. But there's going to be no Elizabeth Fry. Meanwhile local councils are facing the government's famous black hole — a £22bn shortfall in the public finances. ... We could go on. The key question is "what to do?"

The reformist Left who think they can jolly-on Labour simply do not get it. When they are not advocating antediluvian cure-all policies like 'nationalisation' or recipes for capital flight (a la Liz Truss) such as higher capital gains taxes, they keep on peddling the notion that with the right policies (usually state intervention) capitalism can be fine-tuned to bring prosperity for us all. After more than fifty years of the opposite it's no wonder they are hardly a force to be reckoned with or even recognised within the working class.

No, the truth is there is no chance of workers in general prospering under the present system. And that goes for everywhere in the world because world capitalism is in crisis. As capitalism's long-running profitability crisis speeds up the race between environmental disaster and the prospect of global war, the only force which can yet save the planet by overthrowing the whole rotten system is the world working class. Time is running out. Why not join us?

Read our journal:



What We Stand For

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO), which is the UK affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT).

The CWO stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organisation — a 'party' for want of a better word — not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to 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.

We are not in competition with other organisations but seek 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.

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