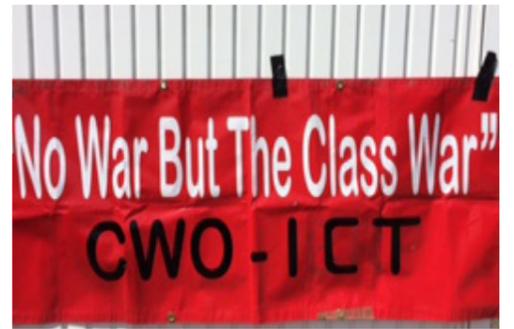


Bulletin of the  
Communist Workers  
Organisation

Affiliate of the  
Internationalist  
Communist Tendency

No 44 Summer 2018

# AURORA



## No War But the Class War

A decade on since the financial crash world capitalism's basic problem of low profitability remains. The only way the capitalists can revive 'growth' is by starting a new cycle of accumulation and this can only be done if a mass of existing capital is devalued.

This happened twice in the 20th century as both the First and Second World Wars led to the destruction and devaluation of capital allowing the system to once again accumulate. With no other economic solution in sight this is where the world is slowly drifting today. The reason it is slow is because capitalists know that devaluation is bad for business. However if they can devalue a rival's capital they can emerge as the winner in a newly centralised capital, as the US did in 1945. War is thus not something they enter into lightly but they are impelled down that road by the need to defend their economic and strategic interests against all rivals. Before the shooting war though, comes the trade war. In the 1930s tariffs were raised everywhere as free trade ended further increasing tensions between the powers.

### Escalating global turmoil

Today we face new trade wars the outcome of which is highly unpredictable, but if past patterns are repeated then they will only increase the likelihood of war. In the short term these 'local wars' are likely to be more of what we have seen but with greater frequency and increasing involvement of the big powers.

The key to the situation is the US. It is by far the most powerful military power on the planet. However it is now faced with rising trade rival

China which it knows will one day have the financial, and perhaps even the military, strength to pose a challenge to US domination. The temptation must be at some point to use that US military power to crush a rival before it becomes too strong. In the longer term this is the big danger for the world.

China is playing a long game establishing networks of commercial ties across Africa and Asia and foreseeing the economic domination of all Eurasia in its "Belt and Road" strategy. It has had a few setbacks en route but it can weather the storms of a trade war already, thanks to its \$3 trillion "war chest of foreign exchange reserves". It is already thinking of using these to give aid to an Argentina which has seen capital drain from it due to the revaluation of the dollar.

In the meantime the US foreign policy has become obsessed with Iran in the Middle East, while the support it has given to Israel and Saudi Arabia over Gaza and Yemen indicates that they are not too squeamish about the human costs. What Syria has been experiencing for the last 7 years of unending war could be coming to more places as capitalist competition heats up.

This is not to say we are in the prelude to August 1914 or September 1939 when the most powerful capitalist states formally declared war on each other. There may never be another equivalent moment. All we are certain about is that the crisis is continuing and the trade wars, partly visible cyber activities and barbarous "wars without end" are part of it.

The only force that can stand in the way of this is the working class. After 40 years of retreat and fragmentation there are signs that workers

are beginning to regroup and fight on their own account. From workers in the so-called gig economy to the recent struggles of workers in various branches of education from County Durham to West Virginia; to the more desperate protests in Iran, Iraq, Nicaragua, Jordan against low wages or no wages, water shortages, and simply the absence of the necessities of life.

### No War But the Class War

Let's not exaggerate about our local scene. These are small straws in the wind but, in some ways, suggest a way forward beyond the many small campaigns over the last ten years against this or that aspect of the austerity cuts. They are small and divided because there is no central point around which they can rally. The idea of No War But the Class War [NWBCW] is that it would not only incorporate and support every struggle of the class, but it would unite that to a political purpose which is to create a new working class political movement. The dilemma history has posed for over a century is socialism or barbarism. Though global world war is not yet currently on agenda we don't want to wait until it is before we start to get organised. That is why we responded positively, despite our political differences, to the Anarchist Communist Group's appeal for revolutionaries to rally under the banner of NWBCW (see their website <https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/statements/>).

NWBCW is not another Stop the War coalition – we do not envisage a cross-class coalition with conservative religious bodies, nor do we conclude that because one imperialism is particularly criminal do we side with their

opponents. Working class opposition is to all imperialisms and their surrogates. There are no freedom movements based on nationality which can be supported by the working class in today's decaying capitalism. We can condemn the horrors of Israeli imperialism against Palestinians but to identify with "the Palestinian cause" is to identify with Hamas and the PLO or the local ruling class. This ruling class does not invest in its own people but instead in financial speculation on Wall St leaving Gazans with no work. Anyone who tries to openly raise the issue of class has been, and will be, summarily dealt with.

Similarly romantic notions about underdog nationalism, such as the current enthusiasm for Rojava, exhibited by some anarchists, need to be disabused. The Rojavan revolution is an imposition from above (or rather a dispensation to allow some form of local autonomous action whilst the real power lies with the YPG military commanders who have enjoyed success thanks to their alliance with US imperialism (and today are having to retreat as the US removes its air cover).

Socialism cannot be decreed from above. It can only be built when millions decide they can no longer go on living under this hellish system of death and decay. It can only be built when they start to create the organs of their own emancipation in such class wide bodies as workers' councils, communes, factory committees and so on. NWBCW seeks to give a focus for all who accept this conception of the way forward for the working class and turn our defensive struggles into a common, all embracing, struggle against a system which threatens the very future of humanity.

## Beware false friends!

Many working class people do not believe that their class has the potential to change the world. Indeed many of us do not even recognise the idea of class, let alone see themselves as part of the class of "women and men of no property".

This is not surprising. The ruling capitalist class have powerful tools to confuse and distract the working class. A whole web of deceit is woven to disguise and justify the power of a tiny minority. This is what Marxists call ideology.

The political set-up, built on the myth of 'democracy' and supposedly offering choices, is key. In reality the bogus options are all about maintaining power, ownership and control for the class of parasitic bosses.

A particular role has developed for organisations that pretend to be friends and allies of the working class but really help to keep us trapped in the bosses' system. Prominent in this villainy is the umbrella that takes in the Labour Party and trades unions, including the spectrum of front organisations including Momentum, People's Assemblies and sham

anti-cuts Campaigns which are all about drumming up support to elect Labour Party politicians.

### Labour Movement: Part of the Bosses' System

A big confusion exists over the true nature of Labourist organisations. Particularly regarding trades unions, militants are often told that they cannot be "against the unions" because they include millions of working people. There used to be a similar argument about the Labour Party although this is peddled less after decades of prominent Labour politicians having less and less connection with the working class.

The grain of truth in the argument is that the unions survive on the basis of subscriptions paid by their members, largely through bureaucratic arrangements with employers to take payment through the payroll system. But having working class people making payments does not mean that organisations are on the side of our class. Otherwise, religious organisations, loan sharks and even fascist grouplets would be our allies!

Once the trade unions have leached the money from workers where does it go? A significant chunk goes to the "full-timers" at various levels. These are people whose chosen career is to be paid a wage by a union. Their way of life depends on maintaining or improving their position in the bureaucracy, irrespective of the real conditions of the bulk of the members.

Over the years unions have increasingly turned to deals with other capitalist institutions. As workers have been hit by wave after wave of austerity, the unions have stepped up their offers of cut price health care, insurance and legal advice.

More fundamentally, the core role of mediating between workers and bosses around wages and conditions is aimed at keeping workers locked in to their role as "wage slaves". Many years ago revolutionaries recognised that the core union motto of "A fair day's pay for a fair day's work" is a slogan that ties workers into an endless cycle of exploitation.

Alongside their negotiating role, the unions carry out another important

job for the bosses by restricting our ability to organise for ourselves in our own interest. They willingly accept legal restrictions, for example replacing the open and transparent decision making of mass meetings with prolonged and demoralising individual balloting.

The unions also do their best to prevent solidarity by refusing any decision-making involving workers from other unions, let alone workers who are not union members.

Of course, there is also the "living link" between the trades unions and the Labour Party. Having lined the pockets of the union careerists and windbags, a portion of the money paid by members is transferred to the Labour Party and its MPs. Here Labour shares the task of blinding workers to the fact that "A better world is possible" without bosses and their wages system. There should be no surprise that Corbyn's pre-election "Build It in Britain Again" speech is taken right out of the Donald Trump handbook. The only difference is that Jeremy doesn't want trade wars: but he does want to save capitalism and that agenda is not the way to a

better world. As the old saying goes, "If elections changed anything they would have abolished them years ago".

Against these false friends, workers need to strengthen their own solidarity and self-organisation. We also need to start building a political organisation of the most clear-sighted who see the need to sweep away the rotten capitalist system that the "Labour Movement" depends on.

### JUST OUT



### Back to the 1930s?

US Power and the New Course Towards War

Critique of H. Tiktin's concept of decline and transition

N Bukharin and A Lomov: from *Kommunist* (April 1918)

Review of *Back to the Future: Rebranding Social Democracy*

# A New World Has to Take Shape

The post-war boom melted away decades ago. It produced a mass consumer society unheard of in history. This society was based on the colossal destruction and devaluation of capital in the Second World War.

### Post-war Boom

Today's waste society, where most people are immune to the dire environmental consequences of simply throwing away, or using up irreplaceable natural raw materials, is a direct consequence of the tremendous upsurge in commodity production after the war. This boom could not have happened without the war-time capital write offs. The destruction of value allowed a revival in profit rates and the start of an unprecedented period of growth and expansion of consumption (especially in the so-called Western heartlands of capitalism.) Yet, capitalism remains capitalism. Almost everything used and consumed would not be produced at all if it could not be sold at a profit, largely to benefit the relatively few, but increasingly mega-rich. It is hardly surprising that most people who need to earn a wage in order to live, whose unpaid labour is the original source of all capitalist profits, but who have no control over anything except what they can afford to buy, should accept their role as consumers and ask few questions about the wider frame which is beyond their control. That is, so long as they are able to earn a wage; so long as that wage does hold out the prospect of being able to buy into a better "standard of living". For a couple of decades or so, when unemployment was at an all-time low and workers were able to win real wage increases the working class, not just in America, could share this 'more of the same' dream.

But we are talking 'capitalism' and that inevitably brings economic crisis due to the inbuilt tendency for profit rates to decline. It's a crisis with a long history which we've touched on many times before in *Aurora*. This crisis didn't start with the financial crash a decade ago. The world's post-war boom ended at the start of the 1970s.

### Crisis and Globalisation

Way back then British industrial capitalism was slow to adopt the new technology needed to revive falling profit rates. This was due in no small part to resistance from the working class.

Sector by sector, iconic battles were fought by workers desperate to hold on to what they had. They were not alone. Across the whole of the advanced capitalist world the crisis of profitability demanded radical restructuring in order to raise productivity per worker. If this was not sufficient within a given national boundary (as with the bulk of UK shipbuilding, for example), then new technology existed to be employed in another part of the world where labour power was cheaper. In the United States whole cities, once the backbone of US industrial capitalism, were relegated to the rust belt. So, on the back of mass unemployment, de-skilling, lower wages and reduced job security, the post-war trend towards workers taking a larger share of GDP went into quick reverse.

By the 1990's, after the Russian state capitalist bloc imploded, we were told that 'globalisation' was the future, with the USA – the one remaining super-power with its currency dominating international trade – standing to benefit above all other states. Millions of assembly workers, and others, in China and beyond joined the ranks of the global working class. They now produced cheap consumer goods for the rest of the world. 'Globalisation' thus changed the shape, and arguably, the composition of the working class in the old capitalist heartlands.

With the biggest – and growing – part of the labour force now working in services of one kind or another, many wage workers were not even sure they were part of a class with different interests from shareholders, directors, managers ... Plenty bought into the idea that the working class (traditionally defined as males who did heavy industrial work) no longer existed and began to believe that 'home ownership' and property speculation would provide them with a secure future, even as they were mortgaged up to the hilt and steeped in credit card debt. The financial crisis put paid to that. The state bailed out the bankers and financiers, and imposed an onslaught of austerity measures on workers to pay for it.

Real wages are still lower than they were a decade ago. No surprise to find then that workers now work longer hours than they used to. Moreover, massive state cutbacks in social services and welfare spending, postponement of the retirement age, and the prospect of declining pensions coupled with wage freezes and outright

pay cuts, translate into a steady decrease in the quality of life. Meanwhile, capitalism's global debt pile is higher than ever before (\$247.2 trillion by March this year.) As for finance capital, the world's top investment banks made more money in 2017 than in 2007, before the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

### The Alternative

So this is where we are. Workers today should have no illusion that things are going to get better. The fact that they say 'millennials' are paying the price for the "riches" enjoyed by a previous generation of 'baby boomers' is really an admission of capitalist failure. Now the ominous international situation, with the threat of growing trade wars, and the possibility of worse to come, is fuelling more disenchantment with the present system. With no solution to the economic crisis it is no surprise that trust in established political set-ups is waning. Our rulers are losing their grip as witnessed by the British political establishment's mess over Brexit.

On the world stage, the rise of Trump, Salvini and numerous other populists is the result, not the cause, of the crisis of world capitalism. Far Right supporters are deluded into thinking that kicking out immigrants or abandoning the Euro will lead to a shiny future. But pledges to revamp the existing set-up by the likes of the Labour party Left are equally deluded. Jeremy Corbyn's speech to anti-Trump demonstrators recently was long on wind-baggery but short on any alternative beyond defending the United Nations, the Paris Climate accord and mealy-mouthed swipes at Trump whose name he did not mention. Of course we can't disagree that the problem is "also about our planet, our world, and how we relate to each other" but to imply that there is a solution within the frame of the system that is responsible for the situation is absurd.

But the alternative is not to do nothing. The positive aspect about the present situation is that the idea that there must be a better alternative to capitalism is gaining ground. Sure, there are all kinds of confusions about what that means but more and more 'ordinary people' are recognising that progress means more than consumer capitalism. Yes, a new world is possible; a world where human beings freely relate to each other as equals in a human community where they are

not just wage workers whose main decisions are what to buy or not to buy.

Instead we will be in a world-wide community of associated producers who take part at all levels in informed decision-making of what and how to produce, in the long term interests of humanity and the survival of the planet. Let's imagine how the problem of plastic waste might be dealt with in such a world. After the scandal of whole islands of the stuff emerging in the Pacific Ocean, China stopped pretending to recycle other people's plastic. So this year most of Britain's plastic waste has been sent to Malaysia, Indonesia or Vietnam to be dumped in the sea by them instead. The bulk of the population in Britain, i.e. the working class, has no say in this matter: their role is just to feel guilty as consumers for buying stuff in plastic containers. How different would the solution be if there was a global community organised from the bottom up to decide on what, how and whether to produce on the basis of human need, optimum allocation of resources (including labour power) and environmental sustainability, where profit did not enter the equation.

This revolutionary alternative will not morph gradually from the decaying frame of crisis-wracked capitalism. While working class readiness to organise and fight on their own account is vital for the overthrow of capitalism, it is equally vital that the struggle avoids the tragic defeats of the past and takes up the communist programme. This programme has nothing to do with what passed for "socialism" in the old USSR. Its vision is of a world of 'freely associated producers' which has to be explained and fought for politically. This is why we need a revolutionary political organisation (ultimately international) which is clear and united about what it stands for, which will coordinate our scattered struggles and challenge the capitalist power structure everywhere. The CWO is committed to finding ways to work with other like-minded working class organisations in order to reach the wider working class. If you agree with the principles outlined here help to turn it into reality by joining in the fight. We have a world to win and a world to save before capitalism destroys the basis of sustainable human existence on the planet.

## Working Class Holds the Key to a New World

### Our "Democracy"

Workers can run things differently. They carry the seeds of a new society within them every time they decide on collective action. In real independent struggles we organise from the bottom. Mass meetings elect strike committees to coordinate the strike and link up with others in the same boat. The committee is responsible to the mass meeting and can be immediately recalled by it. Committee members can be replaced if necessary. Compare this to capitalism's offer of a vote every 5 or so years for one or other party backed by the millions of capitalist money.

Our system will be based on delegates from local level going to regional level and electing delegates to go to higher bodies beyond that. These are not like MPs who are "representatives". In fact MPs don't even represent the voters who elect them but only themselves or their parties. And they cannot be removed for years. A delegate system is entirely different. At every level the

delegates can be quickly recalled if they fail to carry out their mandates.

### Production to Meet Human Needs

This would be more "democratic" than the current set up. But that is only half the story. You cannot have political "democracy" without corresponding control of the means to live. Beyond a new grassroots-based political structure we have also got to get rid of the system of producing things to be sold at a profit and replace it with production to directly meet individual and community needs. At the same time money will become redundant and a new system of accounting will have to be introduced based on the allocation of labour and resources and collectively agreed priorities. This does not mean the abolition of work, but it does mean sharing it out evenly so that we would have meaningful work for all, without drudgery and wage slavery.

Such a world will be organised

according to the original motto of Karl Marx "from each according to their ability; to each according to their need." This has nothing to do with the nightmare of state capitalism that emerged in the USSR. That model was copied – most notably in China – and directed by parties which stole and totally misrepresented the title 'Communist'. These monstrous distortions have no part to play in any movement aimed at reaching Marx's vision of communism – a world without classes, nations and states: a global human community.

Some will argue that "human nature" will prevent us arriving at such a society. This forgets that human nature is not a static factor. It is shaped by the kind of society you live in. We have had 300 years of capitalist competition, war and greed but it can be shaken off. Revolutions have always altered people's perceptions. They allow them to "get rid of the muck of ages" (Karl Marx). The next one will be no different.

### What We Stand For

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 proletarian 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 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.

Write to:  
BM CWO  
LONDON  
WC1N 3XX

email: [uk@left.com.org](mailto:uk@left.com.org)  
website: <http://www.leftcom.org>  
Facebook: Communist Workers' Organisation  
Twitter: @CWOUK