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AURORA



Resisting Capitalism's Road to the Next World War

The global economic and political crisis is gaining momentum. We are often told that this crisis started with the financial crash of 2007/2008 or even with Covid. But these were just the latest episodes. The entire capitalist world economy has been limping along for decades. And today, US hegemony is threatened by the rise of China.

World War Two was the deadliest conflict in history. Between 70 and 85 million lives were lost. In 1945 politicians promised 'never again'. But here we are again. With all other options exhausted we are back in the same situation of rising tariffs and global arms race as before the last two world wars.

50 wars are going on around the world right now. None have more strategic consequences than those in Ukraine and Palestine. And these war fronts are becoming increasingly connected. With nuclear threats looming in the background this is the most dangerous time since 1945. There has been no shortage of alarm calls.

The boss of JP Morgan warned last October that "World War Three has already begun". British Army boss, General Sir Roly Walker predicted last year that World War Three would not really start until 2027 (coincidentally a week before a new defence review!). That Strategic Defence Review, published on 2 June, confirmed the UK was "already at war" against Russia in the cybersphere so military spending will rise to 2.5% of GDP. The Labour Government has promised it will eventually become 5%, in order to reach the new NATO targets.

"Guns not Butter"

This all comes at a difficult time for UK state finances. With an already massive borrowing bill (a hangover from the 2008 bank bailout and Covid), and tax rates as high as they have ever been (except for the mega-rich) they have given themselves only one option – a further attack on the working class.

Everywhere in the world workers have been getting a smaller and smaller share of the national 'pie' for decades. Yet politicians have to 'maintain the confidence of the markets' and cut social spending. Starmer's Labour Party is no exception. Cuts to Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) for the disabled will save £2.5 billion and a halving of the foreign aid budget by 2027 will save around £6 billion, which is bad news for those (for example) in Africa facing starvation as a result of climate change. The UK is the sixth richest country in the world yet cannot even look after its vulnerable citizens. On top of that "1 in 7 people in the UK face hunger and hardship" (Trussell, the food bank charity). That's 10 million people, including the 4.5

million children who are now living in "Dickensian poverty" according to the children's commissioner. Meanwhile, **everywhere in the world the capitalist rich are getting richer and the very rich are becoming mega-rich, including those in the arms industry.**

Arms production is waste production in economic terms. Weapons cannot be eaten, nor do they create new value. If they are sold abroad they do, of course, create profits for arms manufacturers but for capitalism as a whole they represent a total waste. However, in the expectation of a major war our rulers always find the money for rearmament. We have reached that point now. **It is the same old choice of "guns not butter" that Goering posed in 1936 when the Nazis started their Four Year Plan for war.** According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

"Estimated global military expenditure rose for the 10th consecutive year in 2024, to reach \$2.7 trillion, driven by the Russia-Ukraine war and other armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions. The 9.4 per cent increase in total military spending in 2024 pushed estimated world spending to the highest level recorded by SIPRI." (2025 SIPRI Yearbook)

Whilst the US remains by far the largest military spender in the world (\$997 billion in 2024) or 3.2 times greater than second placed China, the Ukraine War has brought about a massive U-turn in Germany. The Merz government not only has signed up in principle to the 5% of GDP figure but is even claiming that rearmament will revive the ailing German economy. In the short term he may be right. Rheinmetall AG which supplied the German government in two world wars has tripled its market capitalisation as a result. It is not alone. Arms manufacturers across the world are rubbing their hands. But Merz has gone further, citing the Russian threat to Europe, he is now calling for compulsory military service for young Germans.

Britain, as an island not successfully invaded for a millennium, is relatively safer, but Starmer stated that the latest "defence" review was not just about how "to survive in this new world but to lead".

This means military adventures across the world (under the umbrella of US imperialist aims). Just look where "British power" has been most seen in the last 3 years – supporting Israeli and US attacks in Iran from the RAF base at Akrotiri (Cyprus), and sending ships to the Red Sea to support the US fleet in intercepting Houthi attempts to disrupt shipping in solidarity with the Gazans. That is not all. At the BAE systems shipyard in Glasgow Starmer promised to build as many as 12 new nuclear-powered submarines to expand the nuclear weapons programme (with help from the US).

Repression and Resistance

Part of the drive to war is the crushing of opposition to it at home. This can already be seen in Ukraine, Russia and Israel, but state clampdowns on anti-war dissent does not have to wait until war begins, as Trump is demonstrating in the US. In the UK, so far, the state clampdown has assumed an element of farce. The proscribing of Palestine Action (which has killed no-one and destroyed no building) as a terrorist organisation after they got into an RAF base and spray-painted fighter-bombers (just as they had Elbit arms factories earlier) is a sign of what's in store. And it's no joke. People who were peacefully demonstrating against the ban while not necessarily supporting Palestine Action's politics were also arrested. And even the comforting sound of the "Online Safety Act" may not be all it seems since sharing videos of police brutality can now be blocked as "violent content".

Such actions are the thin end of a very thick wedge. Once a full blown war breaks out the repression and suppression will increase. Everyone who opposes this drift to imperialist war needs to start to organise in the working class now before it is too late. The world's working class is the only class which has a common interest in putting an end, not just to war, but to the system that causes it.

The capitalist class maintains its position of exploitation over us by many means, all of them based on the "divide and rule" policy to break up our only weapon – our collective strength. When they are not reducing us to isolated individuals in the workplace through zero hour contracts or fake "self-employed" status they exploit our different "identities". The capitalist rackets of both the Left and Right play on differences of race, gender, religious origin or citizenship status to undermine our common cause. Moreover, they always play the nationalist card to divide wage workers who share the same interests the world over. You have to fight for "your country", they tell us. But what is this country, other than the territory where one or other set of bosses exploits us? As Marx noted long ago *"Workers have no country, you cannot take from them what they do not have"*.

In this context we salute those who have refused to participate in imperialist slaughter in Russia, Ukraine, Israel and Gaza. More than that we can only praise the courage of those who have gone further and openly taken action to incite desertion from the war fronts. The young conscripts in Israel who refuse the draft into the IDF because they do not want to commit "genocide" or those who did fight originally until they discovered what it really meant and now face gaol. Courageous too are those Palestinians in Gaza who have demonstrated against the disaster that Hamas has brought upon

them. We also salute the clandestine oppositions in Ukraine and Russia who send out information on what is really happening, and those who have publicly demonstrated against the slaughter on all fronts. They are, of course, denounced as "traitors" by the powers that be.

The Need for an International Political Organisation

Admirable though they are, we have to go beyond protests and the actions of small groups. For millions around the world capitalist peace is hardly more endurable than capitalist war.

What we need to do is change the system before it brings us all to destruction. Unless the various struggles against war become more general struggles against the system that causes it, nothing will change. If we are to create the basis for sustainable existence, a new international and internationalist organisation needs to arise out of the resistance to war and its consequences. After years of working class retreat this will not be easy but already there are signs (see accompanying article) that many have had enough of declining wages and worsening working conditions.

Some internationalists, including ourselves, have already come together in "No War But the Class War" (NWBCW) groups around the world. This is not a new International – that will only arise out of wider struggles – but it is a place for internationalist workers to cooperate. It not only shares information and advice but the affiliated committees seek to take part in various forms of class resistance to all existing states and their drive to take us into another war. Their guiding principles are:

- **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.**

Why not get in touch and we can put you in contact with the nearest committee? Better still form one yourself and join the fight! We have a world to save.

Against Worsening Conditions and Redundancies, Workers are Starting to Fight Back

As the bosses' crisis of profitability deepens, so too does the exploitation of those creating profits for them – the world working class. In every country and every sector, the same arsenal of attacks is being used against us. In the UK wages share of GDP has fallen from 63% to 52% since 1980.

but also within the same one. Elsewhere, Mitie's cleaners have been on strike at health centres across East Lancashire, and are set to strike at Sellafield nuclear site in Cumbria.

At Heathrow, cleaners working at British Airways offices through another outsourcing giant OCS are paid only the legal

everywhere: to reduce the labour costs that cut into their profits. Our involvement so far has been to encourage workers to create an independent strike committee together with the local *Brewdog* workers (who face similar conditions and have previously failed with their strikes). Hospitality workers, rarely organised, have also been striking at Rock City in Nottingham and Village Hotel in Glasgow where they cite unpaid breaks, low wages and inadequate health and safety.

Private employers are not the only ones attacking workers of course. In Birmingham, refuse workers employed by the council have been on strike since March. They are facing devastating proposed cuts, which would slash £8,000 annually from each worker's salary. Lorry drivers are being systematically demoted. These savage measures stem from council funding cuts imposed by successive Conservative and Labour administrations. Long-standing friends, the Unite leadership is now appalled to be fighting a Labour council. Refuse workers have been striking in Sheffield too, but while workers take to picket lines, GMB and Unite argue among themselves over which trade union the bosses should recognise.

In July, tens of thousands of resident doctors joined a five-day nationwide strike over the NHS's infamous conditions and pay, which has been cut by a fifth in real terms since 2008. Several invoked the strike waves of 2018 and 2023, demanding a return to more aggressive industrial action, and criticised the British Medical Association's spineless approach.

Across the UK, 40% of universities are running at a loss after continuous defunding and marketisation since the '80s. The bosses respond with low wages, job cuts, heavier workloads and rent hikes. Redundancies mean staff lose their livelihoods, and a hellish job market awaits them. The remaining staff will be overworked, their pay falling in real terms, and students will be expected to pay more. Academics and auxiliary service staff have been out on strikes across the country, but as usual, UCU and Unison keep their actions separate despite sharing a workplace. The University management get away with it.

Self-organised Unity

We are entering a period of renewed

class struggle. So far, however, these strikes remain fragmented. This is not least thanks to unions dividing workers in different sectors or even in the same workplace. Furthermore, playing by the law – as unions must do to secure their permanent existence in capitalist society – means playing by the bosses' rules. At *Draughts*, kitchen staff have not been involved after the UVW submitted the legally required strike ballot notice, which had to include worker numbers by position, where one kitchen worker was immediately identified and then sacked.

At Hinkley C Power Station, construction workers walked out against both bosses and unions over management bullying. They won. The offending manager was sacked within a few days. Working-class self-organisation coordinated by mass assemblies, open to all workers, to coordinate our struggles and wrest control from union negotiators *can* win.

The Way Ahead: Let's Get Political

Wherever internationalists are, we work to encourage the unification of nearby workers and for the revolutionary perspective that will take us beyond mere survival to fighting for a proper life.

The cleaners' strike wave is only the latest since the last in 2016-2020, over the same threat of redundancies. Even if we stop them from making our lives even more miserable for a while, the bosses will come back for more eventually! There can be no escape from these relentless assaults and inhuman existence under capitalism which is in desperate crisis. The solidarity in workers' struggle organs will be the foundation of any new society. That different society is only possible on a global scale. To shatter our chains and achieve true liberation, we must abolish the capitalist system. Disconnected uprisings can unite and expand, but they need to pose a political question about what kind of world we want to live in. Without an international political organisation armed with a revolutionary political programme the working class is fighting with one hand behind its back. That organisation does not yet exist but steps are being made. We call on every militant who wants to take a step forward in the fight for a new world community of 'freely associated producers' to get in touch with us.

What We Stand For

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

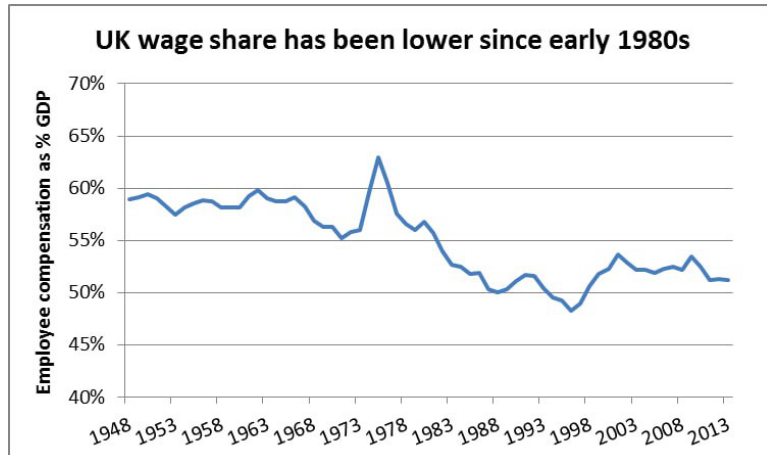
The CWO stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, 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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The so-called 'gig economy', which reduces us all to individuals and weakens our ability to collectively resist, has been the most pernicious. Two years ago, the Resolution Foundation published a report which found that 900,000 British workers had no paid holidays (once a statutory right) whilst 1.8m didn't get a payslip, and almost one third of workers on minimum wage had been underpaid. Evidence suggests the situation has only worsened. Little wonder, then, that workers in some sectors are refusing to accept the bosses' latest attempts to worsen their already brutal conditions. CWO militants have joined these workers at picket lines, and here are some of our observations.

At 'Big Four' accounting firm Ernst & Young, outsourcing giant Mitie is trying to sack 37% of cleaners, making the rest pick up their workload. The cleaners, on zero-hour contracts, are already forced to do this when their co-workers are sick (no sick pay, naturally) under threat of disciplinary action. Constant 'evaluation' is used to generate excuses for sacking and whip them into higher efficiency, with inhuman indifference (one cleaner with a disability was penalised for not filling in an online portal). They've been on strike since 15 June, with only a handful of cleaners crossing their picket lines. Not bad, since due to IWGB doing all the organising, most cleaners have never even spoken to other workers. We saw other staff leaving work unconcerned about what the ruckus outside meant. Not only are unions separating workers in different workplaces,

minimum wage, far below the London Living Wage of £13.85. Despite this, OCS is accredited by the Living Wage Foundation, which conveniently masks the reality of their workers relying on food banks and struggling to survive. OCS is a huge cleaning agency used by numerous retail and corporate spaces, where many workers do not get enough hours to survive, so there is a high turnover rate and it is very easy for the firm to neutralise the effect of strike action by using scab labour on speed dial.

At City University, cleaners have gone on a series of one-day strikes and protests, organised by IWGB and UNISON. Cleaners, porters, security guards, and catering workers are all being outsourced, as is the case with many universities. Many workers are from marginalised communities and already face a brutal reality. They receive harassment in place of sick pay. Holiday entitlements are ignored and pensions slashed. Wages withheld for no due reason; zero-hours contracts hanging over their heads like daggers. Often scheduled for unsociable hours, they receive none of the support mechanisms to which directly-employed staff have access. Some are left unemployed for a third of the year. However, there are three recognised unions, and no talk of a united fightback, never mind one where workers on the ground are involved in organising. At UCL, the IWGB recently carried out a few pre-strike protests on behalf of cleaners and security guards, but instead of affected workers, only IWGB professionals and activists were present. This is how to weaken a collective fight before it even gets going. In London and Leicester, CWO militants have helped in initiating student-worker agitation groups to promote self-organisation and the unification of the struggle.

It's the same story at the London board game bar chain *Draughts*. On zero-hour contracts, striking workers complain that their rotas are changed without notice, leaving them financially insecure and disrupting their lives, while they are rarely able to request days off. They are also demanding paid on-site training and professional security in the evenings. As *Draughts* expands to a new venue in Stratford, it prepares to cut its floor staff by introducing QR code menus to de-skill them (and consequently cutting their access to tips). Even a business like *Draughts*, advertising itself as 'progressive' and pitching its staff's expertise as an asset, cannot escape the same age-old imperative of the capitalist system

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