

# Aurora

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Broadsheet of the CWO, affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency

## Don't Vote Prepare the Resistance

### What the Politicians are Not Saying

Politicians will usually say anything to get elected. The difference in this election is that they are saying nothing to get elected. Faced with the biggest crisis since 1931 **none** of the political parties is telling us what will happen after 6 May. Faced with a £167 billion deficit which will get bigger as interest payments pile up all three major parties have a £30 billion hole at the heart of their manifestos. This is equivalent to 50% of the NHS budget for a year or a tax increase of £1,100 for every household in the UK. The parties are united because our capitalist ruling class is united. Once the election is out of the way, whoever wins will begin the attack on the living standards of the millions of workers who just voted.

The ruling class are trying to pretend that "recovery" is on the way. What they don't tell us is that their **recovery** can only be sustained by more unemployment, more wage freezes and more job insecurity for millions of workers. And if you vote that's the limit of your participation. The "democratically elected" government will do what the ruling class want anyway.

### Vote for Lower Living Standards

And that is the aim of the game. Voting reduces us to individuals who have no voice. In the isolation of the ballot box you vote for one party which is scarcely distinguishable from the next. The "choice" has already been pre-arranged by those who have control of the means to finance parties and media. In short this means the capitalist class. Once the capitalists realised that voting would not harm their interests they gradually began to allow universal suffrage (although it was only in 1970 that every single individual over 18 had one vote). They knew that the choice would always be limited to a capitalist one. They also knew that in the ballot box individuals are cut off one from another. In short class solidarity is absent.

### Revolutionary Perspectives

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Against a Global Capitalist Crisis, the Struggle has to be International

Journal of the Communist Workers' Organisation

Read our latest quarterly journal 'Revolutionary Perspectives' available from the group address.



### Our first struggles will be against the austerity policies of our elected leaders. Join us in the fight. We have a world to win.

But this is what is going to be needed in the months ahead since the real price of a crisis which workers have not caused will be dumped in our laps. In some ways we will just see an intensification of things that have been going on for some time. Pension schemes will be closed (and re-opened on worse terms), permanent job contracts will be torn up, and more of us will be turned into "agency workers" who have fewer employment rights. Wages will remain frozen or even reduced. And throughout it all the ruling class will trumpet the message that "we" voted for this government. We will be told we have to accept it as we have to obey the democratically-elected legitimate government in power.

### Some Votes are More Democratic Than Others

Any workers who strike to defend what is left of their conditions will be stigmatised as "selfish", "greedy" and a threat to the democratic way of life. We have already seen this with the postal workers, the BA strikes, and the RMT vote for a strike this year. Oddly enough the rules of democracy didn't apply when workers in these industries voted overwhelmingly (in BA's case it was 90%) to strike to fight for their conditions. Instead the firms could use the laws brought in by both Tories and Labour to challenge (on the flimsiest of grounds) the technicality of the vote. But then this will always be successful as long as we play by the rules of their democracy.

When the votes were declared void workers should have walked out immediately. And not just in the one threatened group but in all those who are in a position to support them. This happened in July 1972 when 5 London dockers were arrested for picketing and put in Pentonville Prison. Every docker downed tools immediately and sector after sector of the working class threatened to join them. Pentonville Prison

was surrounded by a mass demonstration of workers from various industries and even the union leaders were talking of supporting what was in effect an **illegal and political** strike. The Government was terrified and had to resort to an obscure civil servant called the "Official Solicitor" who turned up at Pentonville to release the dockers. It is no accident that 22 million strike days occurred that year, strikes which destroyed the Heath Government's plans to make workers pay for the crisis with unemployment.

### Solidarity and Unity

The moral of the tale is that solidarity and united action are our only defence. Much of this solidarity has been lost in the last thirty years. We have been told that "there is no alternative" to capitalism, that the Labour Party is very "relaxed" about the gap between rich and poor continuing to widen. We were told that, with the collapse of Stalinism "socialism had failed" and that we had reached the end of history. But Stalinism was never socialism. Workers in the USSR were exploited like workers here. The main difference was that the owner of the factories etc. was the police state. This is not socialism. Under socialism private property is abolished while the workers themselves run the economy and society. Under socialism there will still be voting but it will be for workplace committees, local councils and everybody elected will not be a permanent politician but subject to immediate recall if necessary. This is a democracy in which every vote counts. And this is a society which is worth fighting for.

### The Enemy Within

A number of barriers stand in our way. The first is that many workers don't really believe that we can achieve anything by fighting. Many still think that being a wage slave is about as good as we can

get. But the future which capitalism increasingly offers us is an increasingly bleak one. Not only will we see a long drawn out crisis in which living standards fall but we will also see more wars all around the planet. This is because the capitalist crisis has increased competition for control of raw materials and strategic routes. Already trade wars are intensifying (e.g. between China and the USA). However our first struggles will have to be against the austerity policies of our "elected leaders".

And here we will be faced with the unions. They are the enemy within. They want to negotiate with the bosses when an all out fight is the only hope we have. We saw this in the BA dispute when the union gave BA months to prepare its strike breaking tactics. It is the same with the RMT where the union leaders have called off strike after strike that workers have voted for. They have in fact simply used the vote as a negotiating tactic. And the victims of such negotiations have been the workers themselves.

### Beyond Abstentionism

To fight successfully we have to go beyond capitalist legality and the unions. We need to hold mass meetings to elect strike committees which must be kept accountable. We need to support each other with solidarity actions between one section and another. We need to challenge the limits the capitalists want to put on our right to fight meaningfully. Capitalism has failed. The collapse of the speculative bubble shows this. It cannot be reformed. It has to be abolished. Only the united working class can do this but it can only do it by organising. We need both an international political organisation to fight all the attempts by capitalism to divide us and we need class-wide bodies which involve everyone in the struggle. Not voting in an election is easy (more people abstained than voted for the government in 2005) but preparing the resistance is a lot harder. This is what the CWO, and organisations like us, will be doing in the months ahead. Join us in this fight. We have a world to win.

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## Internationalist Communist Tendency May Day Statement

### Capitalist Global Crisis Let's Organise to Resist!

#### An Insoluble Crisis

It's about three years since the sub-prime bubble burst shattering neo-liberal illusions that unlimited economic growth was possible on the basis of speculative financial games. Like a tsunami the mountains of speculative paper drowned out the real economy on which it was originally based, unleashing one of the worst crises in capitalist history. Now capitalist ideologues tell us that the worst is over but we can be sure that doesn't include the working class or the poorest in society. Not even the extortion of wealth through an exploitation intensified in a thousand ways can breathe enough oxygen into a rate of profit which, despite ups and downs, has been falling for thirty years.

The international capitalist class has largely responded to the fall in the rate of profit with a global attack on the living conditions of the working class. The intensification of their predatory instincts has driven them to financial speculation and uncontrolled indebtedness, and to the reduction of wages towards subsistence levels.

Workers in the West have faced a loss of purchasing power of wages and incomes, the closure or reduction in size of the great concentrations of workers, the shift of entire sectors of production to countries where wage levels are twenty times less, with no legal limit to working hours and where strikes are more or less banned. This has started a competition to find the cheapest labour force in the world even amongst the highly qualified. Finally we have widening job insecurity one of the major instruments for getting the work force to bend to the demands of the bosses and their profits.

#### More Misery for the Working Class

However all this has not been enough to revive the productive economy much less jobs or wages. Financial speculation is the only thing that has been strengthened by the oceans of money which governments have poured into the banks, insurance companies and industry. Thus the working class and the poorest in society are called upon to make more sacrifices to fill the hole in the state budget created by the need to salvage these financial institutions. Greece is the most dramatic case but it certainly is not, and will not be, the only one.

Between 2008 and 2009 unemployment levels increased everywhere, particularly in the advanced economies. According to official statistics, the numbers at work but "at risk of falling into poverty" rose to 215 millions whilst another 100 millions have been added to the one and half billion "vulnerable workers" i.e. those in insecure jobs earning minimal or even subsistence wages. This dark picture will not change and the few insignificant employment opportunities to be found in the world will not substantially alter the pattern. In any case, economic revival or not, this unemployment will not be re-absorbed. For those not thrown out on the streets, the future offers only more exploitation more tiring work, more social insecurity i.e. another turn of the screw which has been boring into us for decades.

Faced with all this the response of the working class has been until now largely inadequate. This explains, at least in part, the weak and sporadic signs of economic recovery; the intensification of exploitation has given a little more oxygen to the sick capitalist body.

#### The Class Response So Far

Sure, there have been noteworthy examples of class struggle – real mouthfuls of fresh air – but we're talking here of disconnected episodes which have failed to unite wider sectors of the class. Also when they have taken place struggles have limited

themselves to immediate demands against the firm, i.e. sectional demands of a purely economic type. In every case there has been no questioning of the capitalist mechanism, not least because the welfare state (so far, at least in the West) has softened the most ferocious blows of the crisis.

Even in the more unusual episodes of struggle compared with normal trades union practice (kidnapping bosses, climbing onto factory roofs etc) there has never been a radical critique of trades unions which so often play a major part in assisting the bosses in their attacks on the working class, and even now are peddling illusions about reforming a capitalism in crisis.

What is missing (at least in the West) is the old locomotive of the class struggle (the big factories). Today the working class is dispersed and has been deprived for some time of its class identity as well as any hope of an alternative to capitalism (since the collapse of the fake communism of the USSR). The working class is prey to confusion in the likes of populist movements of a racist character like the National Front in France, the Lega Nord in Italy, the Jobbik Party in Hungary, or UKIP and the BNP in Britain, which blame the weakest part of the class – the migrants – for all the social evils produced by ever more insecure living conditions thus reinforcing the social control mechanisms of capitalism.

Even when workers reject bourgeois politics by abstaining in elections they haven't done this in an organised way. Thus far abstentionism has not yet taken an anti-capitalist direction.

#### The Way Ahead

There is however a way out of this depressing situation. In Greece, for example, the working class has shown that it is possible to oppose the general worsening of living conditions imposed by the bosses and the government, as well as global capitalist speculation. The Greek workers have set in motion some basic – even noteworthy – forms of immediate resistance which even the capitalist media has not been able to prevent filtering out. Workers in every country should learn from the Greek example that opposition to capitalist attacks is possible by applying the lessons learned there to our own local reality. We need to take more steps towards class unity and the consciousness that we need an alternative to the capitalist system of production. We need to revive grass roots struggles, self-organised, outside of any deals with capitalism, outside of and against the union goal, beyond the suffocating confines of trades or firms disputes, and led by independent bodies based on direct democracy.

This revival of class struggle has to be guided by an international revolutionary party which doesn't limit itself to defensive demands but which goes beyond these to pose the issue in terms of the very nature of capitalism itself. This means also opposing its imperialist wars with our own revolutionary defeatism. In factories, in whatever kind of workplace, in local communities we need to struggle against the arrogance and barbarism of the capitalist class for a different and a better world.

ICT  
May Day 2010

## Greece

### The Shape of Things to Come

#### The Cuts

Although hardly reported in our media Greek workers are resisting the austerity which the Greek and European ruling class has planned for them. This is the same ruling class which hid from the world the fact that the Greek budget deficit has been 4 times higher than publicly admitted. Greece's public debt stands at almost twice that of the UK's as a % of GDP. Successive governments have been able to hide it thanks to some accountancy tricks advised by the crooks at Goldman Sachs. But this has been the trigger for the rapid collapse of the Greek economy. It has created a situation which the world working class will eventually have to face. In order to pay off the global banking bailouts the working class will be made to pay. In Greece they are already fighting back

They have a lot to fight for. On 3 March Papandreou, the "Socialist" Prime Minister bowed to more pressure from the EU and announced further austerity measures on top of the freeze on pensions (70% of Greek pensioners exist on less than €600 a month) and cuts in public sector pay. The new cuts amount to €4.8 billion and include the following:

- A 2% increase in value added tax, which is now at 19%
- A further increase in fuel tax
- Increase of 20% in alcohol taxes
- A 6% increase on cigarette taxes
- A new tax on luxury goods
- A 12% cut in add-ons to civil servant wages
- A 30% reduction in bonuses given to civil servants on holiday pay, which was worth two additional month's wages

#### The Resistance

Instead of waiting for elections to replace one set of capitalist gangsters by another they have gone on strike and taken to the streets. One day after the new cuts were announced workers



occupied the Finance Ministry. There have been three general strikes since 10 Feb with more than 150,000 demonstrating in Athens on 11 March alone. There were no planes, buses, boats, trams, or metros running, except for a special service which let people join the demonstration. Hospitals ran emergency services only and all other public services, including the police joined the strikes.

Similar marches took place across Greece. At Volos, union bosses were heckled and forced to leave the demonstration. Panagopoulos, the head of the public sector workers union, had to do the same after he was physically attacked at a rally last December (he was rescued by the Presidential Guard!). In both cases the workers have been quick to spot any attempt by union leaders to sell out to Papandreou's Socialist Government.

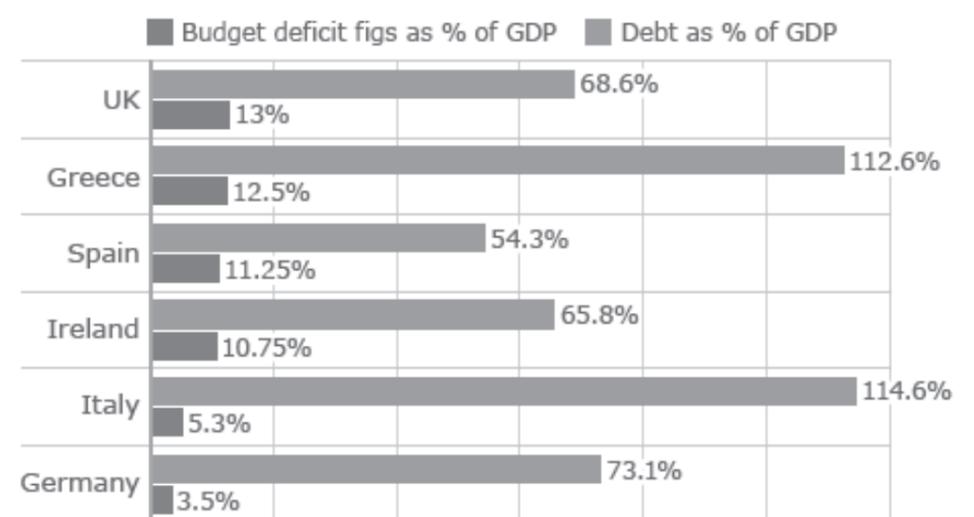
The huge general strike on 11 March was not the end of the mass struggle. A fortnight later, lawyers, doctors, and train drivers were all on strike, while Athens saw separate demonstrations by court officials, firemen, pensioners, and civil servants. There were also mass protests against austerity in other Greek cities including Salonica, Volos, Heraklion and Ioannina.

#### The Future?

With similar austerity measures planned throughout the capitalist world the Greek situation is a foretaste of wider struggles ahead. As yet Greek workers have only sporadically organised themselves independently of the capitalist state. To finally defeat the attempt to make us pay for their crisis we will have form our own alternative organisations, elected by workers and controlled by them. We will have to recognise that this is a political struggle and that as long as capitalism exists these struggles will not go away ...

#### How country debts and budget deficits compare

Projected budget deficit for 2009



Source: European Commission/Economic forecast autumn 2009

**The Communist Workers' Organisation** is the British affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (formerly the IBRP). Our Italian sister group the Internationalist Communist Party was formed in 1943, as the only organisation to oppose all sides in the Second World War in the name of working class autonomy. Today we have groups of comrades in several countries around the world.

We stand for a global society in which production is for need and not 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. 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 party to politically unite workers against the power of the capitalist state. This party is not a government in waiting. It does not rule but it does lead and guide the struggle for a new world. We are also not that party but only one of the elements which seeks to participate in its formation. As the working class more and more confronts the consequences of a decaying capitalist system it will have to unite and confront the system. The ICT is not in competition with other genuinely working class organisations but seeks to unite with them and 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.