



Workers Have No Country: No to Nationalism, Yes to Class Unity!

The raid by Hamas militants which overran two military bases and various Israeli municipalities killing soldiers and civilians and taking hostages, has set off the predictable response from the Israeli ruling class: the murder of Palestinian civilians by carpet bombing (including of hospitals), tightening the siege on the enclave (which has been in force since 2007), cutting off power, water, food and fuel. It represents a type of medieval siege aimed at starvation, sickness and death for the 2.3 million who live in Gaza. Civilians ordered to move south have had their convoys bombed. The Gazans are all descendants of the Palestinians kicked out of their homes at gunpoint by Zionist settlers in 1948. The Israeli ruling class seems now to be trying to expel them to Egypt as the permanent solution to the Gaza problem. In other words, more ethnic cleansing. What we see today are the atrocities of Hamas fighters answered by further atrocities by the Israeli capitalist class. All this is a continuation of what imperialism has done in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere. These disasters are all the products of the global imperialist struggle which the current economic crisis of capitalism has intensified.

Neither Israel nor Hamas

Hamas is a pawn on the imperialist chessboard but so is Israel. Hamas was earlier funded and promoted by Israel itself, together with the US, to undermine

negotiations for a settlement and keep the conflict on the boil while Palestinian land was stolen, and settlements and outposts built on it. Today Hamas is funded by Qatar to the tune of \$30 million a month and provided with \$7 million of fuel, while it receives military support from Iran, which is now part of the Russia-China bloc. Israel came into being as a result of the victory of Allied imperialism in the Second World War and was initially supported by both the USSR and USA, but with the outbreak of the Cold War it became the massively financed and armed outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East. The Hamas raid was connected with the latest initiative of US imperialism, particularly its attempt to normalise relations between Israel and certain Arab states under the so-called Abraham Accords. This was leading to rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia and Hamas' raid was intended to throw a spanner into this process. Russia and China have both issued statements of support for the Palestinians while the US has moved its fleet with two aircraft carriers to protect Israel from a wider war. The war is clearly an expression of imperialist conflict and, like the Ukraine war, is paving the way for a wider global war. The massive US military buildup in the Middle East and threats to Iran are only the latest indications of this.

The war has, as usual, unleashed an orgy of nationalism demanding support for either

the Palestinian people or the Israeli people. The truth is there is no such thing as the Palestinian people or the Israeli people. All nations are divided into classes and talk of the Palestinian or Israeli people really means the states of the Palestinian or Israeli capitalist class. The working class have no interests in supporting their exploiters in either state, as the bitter class struggles in both Palestine and Israel demonstrate. In July there were economic protests against the Hamas government in Gaza, which Hamas crushed, and in Israel airport workers and public sector workers struck earlier this year, and there were huge protests against Netanyahu's judicial reforms. The poison of nationalism now drives workers into the arms of their exploiters under the flag of the nation and allows them to be led into the slaughterhouse. We die there for the profits and dividends of our oppressors. We are seeing this in Ukraine and now once more in Palestine. Any solidarity or fraternisation on the basis of class is prevented. But class solidarity is the only way forward in Palestine, in Ukraine and worldwide.

No Solution Within Capitalism

The Social Democrats, the Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists and even sections of anarchism urge us to support one side or the other in the name of "anti-imperialism" or "the lesser evil." But both sides are pawns in

a wider imperialist battle. Only the overthrow of capitalism and its product, imperialism, can provide a solution to this problem. No matter what fine words our rulers use to hide the real purpose of their wars, they are all imperialist wars for the division of the spoils derived from our exploitation. They are consequently wars against the working class and today they threaten to suck us all into the maelstrom of global war. The left wing of capital's political apparatus peddle ideas of a two state solution or a single secular state with equal rights for all. All this is a pipe dream. While capitalism and imperialism dominate the planet the conflict will keep going.

Despite the obstacles, class unity of all sectors of the working class regardless of national origin is the only route out of the upswing of wars which our rulers are already imposing on us, and which are a prelude to a wider conflagration that would engulf the world. This alone is the basis for a fight of the global working class for a new system of production where we stop fighting each other, abolish national borders and start producing collectively for human need instead of profit.

The only alternative to capitalist war is for workers mobilised on all sides to fraternise with their fellow wage slaves on the opposing side. No to capitalist wars, no to nationalism. No war but the class war!

Green Capitalism is a Myth

After the hottest September on record, the government of Rishi Sunak has recently announced broad reductions of the already tepid climate policies they inherited from the previous government. These include: pushing back the phasing out of petrol and diesel cars by five years to 2035, relaxing the phasing out of oil-powered boilers by the same timescale, and removing plans to introduce taxes for uninsulated properties. In addition, they have given credence to a smorgasbord of conspiracy theories, fearmongering about "15-minute cities", "meat bans", and 20 mph traffic zones. It is part of the Conservatives' electoral strategy to position net-zero commitments as anti-working class. And it certainly has been the case that carbon taxes and similar ways to disincentivise emissions have been attempts to shift the burden of combating climate change from the energy giants to working people. But any temporary respite from these costs can be massively outweighed by the impacts of climate change which are always felt most strongly by the working class. More worrying than anything announced at the conference has been the approval of the 300 million barrel Rosebank oil field off the coast of the Shetlands. The 800 million barrel Cambo oil field, developed by one of the same developers as Rosebank, but previously blocked, is also being reconsidered due to the war in Ukraine, which has made Western European countries prioritise energy security after facing a massive "energy shock" over the last two years. Although this has abated somewhat, the recent turmoil in the Middle East could make this worse. Israel is not a major oil or gas producer. However, the conflict has the

potential to spill over into nearby oil producers which use the Strait of Hormuz as a trade route. Iran, which arms Hamas and Hezbollah, can restrict trade through the Strait of Hormuz and ultimately lead to higher energy prices around the world.

The Labour Party, as representatives of the other half of the British ruling class, do not fundamentally oppose the trajectory of their political rivals on the issue of the climate. While they are planning to reinstate the petrol and diesel car ban from 2030, they are not planning to reverse the approval of the Rosebank oil field. The positive content of Labour's climate policy is a £28 billion a year "Green Prosperity Plan" which is modelled on Joe Biden's \$369 billion a year "Inflation Reduction Act". Both are massive investment plans for low-carbon energy and manufacturing projects such as "clean" steel mills and electric vehicle battery factories. Putting aside how "low-carbon" these plans really are, they are both blatantly protectionist and will only intensify global trade tensions. The aim is to provide security for British industry which is struggling to compete with Chinese production without Russian energy.

COP28: More Hot Air

This year's COP, the annual UN climate change conference where emissions targets are debated and set, is being held in the UAE. That this is one of the world's largest oil producers, is an excellent example of the blatant hypocrisy of the international political and economic ruling class. Oil and gas companies have an outsized presence at the COP events in order to show that the

petrochemical giants take the problem seriously – and also to ensure that no resolutions are taken which could seriously affect their bottom lines. Governments are of course well-represented as well and will try to paint their activity as climate-conscious. However, the reality is that current international policy is converging to what may be called "war ecology". OPEC have kept oil production low, bolstered by Russia's need to raise funds to maintain its war effort in Ukraine. Jens Stoltenberg, the head of NATO, has specifically stated that energy security is closely linked to the fight against climate change, and that as the West reduces its dependence on Russian oil and gas, it should not create new dependencies on Chinese rare earth metals.

The British government waxes and wanes on climate policy, but what it is steadfast on is shielding the profits of its capitalists through investment or imperialism. We should not let claims that the state is protecting the immediate living standards of the working class or our climate blind us to the fact that only international working class solidarity against the bloodthirsty ambitions of state and capital can preserve both. Capitalism is a system that requires continuous expansion of production for production's sake, without any thought for the real needs of humans and the environment. A rational relationship with our environment can only come from collective control of production by the workers themselves.



Cost of Living Crisis = Capitalist Crisis

Wage cuts, precarious jobs, collapsing health service, school buildings falling down, inflation at 8%, widespread poverty and deprivation experienced by large swathes of the country – that's the state we are in. Of course, the government is not interested in solving these issues. Both parties have become too lazy or incompetent to even pretend to help, preferring instead to compete over idiotic culture-war issues while calamities pile up around them. The crooks who run our water companies are dumping sewage into our waterways while they line their pockets with public money, decades of neglect have left our schools at a literal risk of collapse, and now even basic goods are becoming unaffordable. There seems to be nowhere safe from this decay, but what is driving it? The answer is the capitalist system itself is in a state of collapse.

Working class people, those who rely on wages for their living expenses, are reliant on

a capitalist class who will try to only pay them for the bare necessities they need to survive, and extract from the time they spend in the workplace as much newly created value as possible. From the difference between the wages we are paid and the value we create while we are at work, comes profit. The search for profits is therefore at all times a struggle by the bosses and their government to reduce the portion of wealth going to the working class as much as possible, whether this is in the form of wages or social amenities such as health services, benefits, education or essential infrastructure.

The basic living standards of the working class, a functioning NHS for instance, become seen as needless luxuries, while the stabilisation of industry means a fresh wave of assaults on our lives. Longer hours, lower wages, intensified labour and worsened working and living conditions happen with increasing intensity. The time we spend each

day producing value which we take home shrinks against the time we spend at work making profits for the boss.

All industries are fair game to be abandoned if they dip below a certain rate of profit, with recent examples like Wilko being bought out, stripped for parts and their workforce sacked. Not only does capital expect us to settle for as little possible in our personal lives, it soon ransacks the state's coffers for huge sums of money, taking funds away from schools, hospitals and housing. Everywhere you look public spaces are increasingly commercialised, formerly sacrosanct state institutions are on the brink of ruin. Each decline in living conditions and real wages is not an isolated instance of incompetence or greed but a further theft of the goods we produce, only made possible in the first place by the theft of our ability to control our own labour. Capital needs labour, it lives and grows through working class

exploitation, but labour does not need capital. If the global working class were to take control of industry and produce for need instead of profit we would be free of the pointless, brutal labour that devours our lives. Rather than making fossil fuel infrastructure or plastic tat destined to be dumped in the ocean, we could finally use our enormous productive capacities, wasted by capital, to fix the problems capital won't fix. Lack of medicine, food or housing could be things of the past. But as long as we work for the enrichment of our bosses they'll always be luxuries increasingly many can't afford. The hardships mounting all over the world are not new and they certainly will get worse. If we don't want to see our lives bled dry by capital, we must make our own demands and lead our own struggles, as workers, against this rotting system.

Lessons from the Strike Wave



The wave of strikes which erupted in Britain in June last year have mostly ended in defeat overseen by the unions. Trade union membership continues to decline and it's easy to see why. Although consecutive governments have attacked the rights of workers to organise, to strike and to picket, the unions have proven themselves both unwilling and unable to fight against this legislation, enforcing it instead, going above and beyond to keep struggles within legal boundaries that make any wider resistance impossible. Nor have they fought against the unprecedented 18 years of declining real wages, which the TUC itself calculates has been the worst since the Napoleonic wars! We will look at two of the many examples of unions sabotaging workers' struggles.

Union Sabotage

In the April the UCU ballot of lecturers 85.6% voted to strike. Despite this there were no strike days called by the union between March and September. Instead the UCU leadership decided to go with a Marking and Assessment Boycott, with only a handful of local strikes against punitive pay deductions for those joining the boycott. Out of the 80,000 strong membership of the UCU in HE, only a part are actually involved in marking, and therefore could participate in the boycott. With the UCU not being on strike these workers just had to support the action from the side-lines. This is while workers in the boycott faced pay deductions that would often be 50% of their wages, but at certain universities, such as Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Winchester, it was as high as 100%. The boycott ended up being mostly ineffective, largely due to the huge amount of scabbing, with unqualified people marking students work, as well as universities handing out provisional results or certificates, to allow students to graduate on time. When the UCU announced the end of the boycott in September, workers were simply assigned a gargantuan amount of work to mark, with tight deadlines and no extra resources. Any workers who refused to mark to the deadline were at risk of losing their jobs. The UCU then went on to announce five days of strike action nationally, to start in September coinciding with the

influx of new students. But as the proposed strike got closer they wrote to all their branches giving them the option of calling off the strike at their universities, effectively letting branches break their own strike. This led to a situation where instead of 140 universities going on strike, only 42 walked out – less than a third. This splitting up of a national strike into a handful of isolated strikes is nothing more than sabotage by the leadership of the UCU. Even a blind man could see that the UCU was not trying to win this struggle.

It's elementary that strikes are more effective when the struggle is spread across all layers of the workplace. During the recent government attempt to cut teachers' pay, the National Education Union (NEU) attempted to recruit support staff, such as teaching assistants and administrative staff to join the fight. The majority of these support staff are not in any union and the NEU balloted 57,000 of them for strike action. The response from GMB, Unite and UNISON, the unions who have historically organised support staff in schools, was to put forward a complaint to the TUC! The TUC and the unions have carved up much of the economy, with different unions claiming different parts of it as "theirs." The TUC sets up these deals, and imposes sanctions on unions that break them, even if, as in this case, the unions aren't actively organising this section of workers. The TUC upheld this complaint imposing a fine of £153,952 on the NEU, even while its members were involved in a national strike. This fine has to be paid to GMB, Unite and UNISON. The actions of these three unions and the TUC sabotaged an attempt at a unified struggle. This clearly shows the different interests of rank-and-file workers and the union bureaucracy, who have no interest in workers uniting and fighting to win better pay and conditions. They only care about keeping their own positions in their respective sectors.

Instead of organising an effective struggle that could force the bosses to accept the demands of workers, unions do what they can to weaken the struggle, organising as few strike days as they can get away with, cancelling them whenever possible. The unions are more than happy as long as they

can keep control of the struggle and in doing so, keep their position as permanent negotiators in the sale of labour-power. They are a vital cog in the machinery which keeps capitalism functioning. They are embedded in the structure of capitalism and the result is that they support capitalism and respond to and support the needs of the system. When profitability of capital requires wage cuts, worse conditions and sabotage of effective struggle this is what they fight to achieve, as the examples we quote clearly show.

Working Class Self-Organisation

You may ask, well what is the solution? The only solution to unions being unable and unwilling to fight for a better life for workers, is for workers to take the struggle into our own hands. Workers need to form their own strike committees which can coordinate and unify the struggle on a wider scale. As self-organised bodies, these are controlled by all the workers involved (whether in unions or not), and unlike union structures, don't have to play by the bosses' rules to keep a permanent position under capitalism. The wildcat strike on North Sea oil rigs last autumn was a positive example of how we can take the struggle forward. Workers formed their own strike committee, taking two waves of strike action across 19 platforms, after years of their own unions refusing to even ballot them. Despite the unions (Unite, RMT, GMB) sending a threatening letter claiming wildcat action would never achieve anything, echoing the threats of the gas barons to shut down platforms, these workers put so much pressure on the North Sea bosses that they

were forced to respond. A new collective bargaining agreement was announced in December, with Unite claiming credit, while the workers who actually took action were disciplined! This struggle didn't manage to link up with workers beyond the North Sea, which could have allowed it to raise bigger and more political demands – but, in a sea of union-controlled strikes, their efforts show how workers can self-organise.

Any successful fightback will have to unite workers not only in their own workplaces but across industries and ultimately across national borders, as a global working class with the same interests and conditions. But as long as capitalism exists, any concessions won will only be temporary. Unions will never support the abolition of wage labour or the struggle for communist society and no change in leadership will change that. The only thing that can truly end the horror of capitalism is the overthrow of the capitalist class and the creation of a new society, based on production for human need. Resisting the attacks on our standard of living, taking our struggles into our own hands beyond the union framework, is the first step in the struggles to come.

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What We Stand For

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO).

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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