

JACKDAW

FOR REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

**BACK OUT ON
THE STREETS!**

ISSUE NO 20 FREE

We Resist Therefore We Exist: Putting Hope Back on the Agenda

Despite the pessimism peddled in the mainstream media, 2024 was a year of resistance to the increasing barbarism of capitalism. Yes, we have the continuing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, both claiming thousands of victims, 45,000 and rising for Palestinian fatalities. We have the election of Trump in the USA, and the threat of the far right in Spain, France, Italy, Germany and here. We have the cyclone that hit the island of Mayotte, the extreme flooding in Spain, and more recently in the Midlands and Wales, events triggered by the worsening climate crisis.

All of this indicates that capitalism, which puts greed before general welfare, generates war after war, and is responsible for climate disaster, must go. It must be replaced by a new society based on the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution, the land and housing, the end of the class system and the overthrow of the State. Only this can end war, exploitation, and the destruction of the planet.



Despite the gloomy scenario that the media pushes, designed to lead to despair and helplessness, resistance is there and it can be seen in the events in Bangladesh, in South Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Kenya. A 24 hour general strike in Greece challenged austerity programmes and the Greek state's support for NATO, which involved maintaining a frigate in the Red Sea to protect Israel from the Houthis. Large demonstrations with the possibility of a general strike are looming in Belgium over austerity measures and attacks

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on pensions. Here in the UK, we had huge numbers turning out on demonstrations against the Israeli attacks on Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and the large numbers who turned out at short notice to counter far-right mobilisations.

The Tories suffered a severe blow at the last election when they were booted out. They were replaced by a Labour administration that has carried on with policies previously applied by the Tories. Labour won many seats, mainly due to anti-Tory revulsion, but their foundations are flimsy. Starmer's approval rating is the lowest for any party leader in the last half century.

This indicates that resistance can win concessions. Anger at the cutting of winter fuel payments and the maintenance of the two child benefit cap is the tip of the iceberg.

(cont. on page 2)

VOICE OF THE ANARCHIST COMMUNIST GROUP

We Resist Therefore We Exist:

Putting Hope Back on the Agenda (cont.)

There is a much deeper anger at the social conditions in this country that could explode at any time in the future. This should not be diverted by the fake anti-establishment credentials of Reform UK, a far right formation funded by a gang of billionaires and millionaires.

Putting Communism Back on the Agenda

The Starmer government has already shown that it means to continue with the austerity policies of previous Labour and Tory governments. It has attacked pensioners and means to continue the dismantling of the NHS. We must move from an anti-capitalism that is too often reduced to vague slogans to a strong defence of communism as the only credible alternative to capitalist globalisation and the wars between major imperialist powers that threaten us, as in Ukraine and the Middle East. This communism has nothing to do with Lenin, Stalin and Mao and the deplorable experience of the Soviet Union and China. It is a free, stateless, communism that must be re-introduced into

the dreams and the aspirations of the working class.

Anarchist communists must more than ever hold high their social project: socialisation of the means of production and self-organisation of society through a system of workplace and neighbourhood councils.

Resistance

Trump will now intensify support for attacks on Palestine and the Lebanon, and indeed throughout the Middle East. This requires an international movement against war, with practical support given to war resisters, conscientious objectors, draft dodgers, and deserters, whether in Israel or Russia and Ukraine. It requires the development of an internationalist anti-war position, at the moment voiced by small numbers of revolutionaries, including the Anarchist Communist Group. This is vital and we shall continue to defend these positions and attempt to enlarge their audience.

At home we must encourage opposition to the Labour government and to capitalism in general. We must get involved

in local and national campaigns around housing, support for strikers, and against attacks on the environment.

Recent events have seen support for the London Renters Union and for rank and file base unions organising workers who have been ignored by the mainstream unions, like security guards at London museums and workers at Harrods. Elsewhere we have seen strikes by workers at sixth form colleges and the NHS. All of these strikes must be supported. We must develop local strike support committees and organisation in the local communities, around evictions, landlords' treatment of renters, and against the closure of social facilities like libraries, youth and community centres, creches, and nurseries, etc. by local councils.

In order to resist, we must build alternative structures both in the workplaces and in the neighbourhoods. We must emphasise mutual aid and direct action, against the manipulations and betrayals by Labour and the union bureaucrats. That is the only effective opposition.

Resistance is fertile!

Messages of Hope

"It may be said that the more miserable a person is, the more they dread every sort of change, lest it may make them more wretched still. Some ray of hope, a few scraps of comfort, must penetrate their gloomy abode before they can begin to desire better things, to criticise the old ways of living, and prepare to imperil them for the sake of bringing about a change. So long as they are not imbued with hope, so long as they are not freed from the tutelage of those who utilise their superstition and their fears, they prefer remaining in their former position."

Peter Kropotkin (slightly adapted)

"The crises are too serious and the possibilities too sweeping to be resolved by customary modes of thought-the very sensibilities that produced these crises in the first place. Years ago, the French students in the May-June uprising of 1968 expressed this sharp contrast of alternatives magnificently in their slogan: 'Be practical! Do the impossible!' To this demand, the generation that faces the next century can add the more solemn injunction: 'If we don't do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable!'"

Murray Bookchin

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places - and there are so many - where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory."

Howard Zinn

"Intrepid souls who know that it is necessary to dare in order to succeed, these are the lonely sentinels who enter the battle long before the masses are sufficiently roused to raise openly the banner of insurrection and to march, arms in hand, to the conquest of their rights [...] it awakens the spirit of revolt: it breeds daring. The old order, supported by the police, the magistrates, the gendarmes and the soldiers, appeared unshakable, like the old fortress of the Bastille, which also appeared impregnable to the eyes of the unarmed people gathered beneath its high walls equipped with loaded cannon. But soon it became apparent that the established order had not the force one had supposed. One courageous act has sufficed to upset in a few days the entire governmental machinery, to make the colossus tremble; another revolt has stirred a whole province into turmoil, and the army, till now always so imposing, has retreated before a handful of peasants armed with sticks and stones. The people observe that the monster is not so terrible as they thought they begin dimly to perceive that a few energetic efforts will be sufficient to throw it down. Hope is born in their hearts, and let us remember that if exasperation often drives people to revolt, it is always hope, the hope of victory, which makes revolutions."

Peter Kropotkin

Sixth Form Workers Resist

The Labour government excluded teachers at sixth form colleges that are not academies from the 5.5 per cent rise promised to Labour snubbed teachers at sixth form colleges that haven't been turned into academies by excluding them from an annual pay award which was set at 5.5 per cent. In reply, 2,000 teachers at 32 sixth form colleges voted for strike action in November 2024. Labour then upped its pay offer from a measly 2% to 3.5 %, with a further 2% in April, but with no backdating to September. This was in contrast to the academies that received a 5.5 per cent increase from September. This creates a two-tier system in pay negotiation.

In response, over 2,000 NEU education union members at 32 sixth form colleges voted to strike in November. Just before Christmas, Labour put forward a deal that increased the pay offer from 2 to 3.5 percent, with an additional 2 percent in April. But that additional 2 percent wouldn't be backdated to September.

This goes against all the Labour promises to fund education. Teachers went out on strike for four days in November and December and were set

to strike again on 7th, 8th and 9th January. In addition, they picketed the Leeds constituency office of Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves. There is great determination among the sixth form striker, and a growing realisation that the new Labour government is enacting similar policies to previous Tory administrations.

Sixth form colleges are important for young working class people. In some areas as many as 50% of students are from impoverished areas and many have to take part time jobs to support themselves.

Some sixth form teachers are earning just above the minimum wage. It would cost just £15 million to pay for the 5.5% pay rise, but Labour is unwilling to do this. Determined strike action must force their hand. In addition, there is a hidden agenda by Labour to turn all sixth form colleges into academies. Most of the present ones are run by private companies, and teachers' conditions are under immediate attack from such organisations whose main preoccupation is not education, but profit.

WATER MESS!



- In the 2021/22 financial year, water companies paid out a total of £965 million in shareholder dividends (SAS Water Quality Report)
- Since 2018/2019 water companies have made £4.2 billion in pre-tax profits
- Water company CEO's took home an eye-watering £16.5 million in the 2021/22 financial year

Ban the Bailouts

Meanwhile, the government has proposed legislation that will effectively make the taxpayer ie the working class, pay for the mistakes of the privatised companies, ensuring that their profits, and shareholder dividends, don't suffer. The Bill essentially is bailing out the companies using money from taxpayers and water bill payers ie the working class. In addition, it confirms the regulator Ofwat's primary role as ensuring the water companies make a profit for shareholders. Surfers against Sewage, and other water campaigners, are demanding significant changes to the Bill. Meanwhile, it has been revealed that Ofwat fined water companies only £2 pounds since 2021, despite serious failures in protecting our water.

It's not drought, it's looting

Another issue with the profit-driven water system is the appropriation of water resources by multinational companies. Spain is experiencing extreme weather, the result of the climate crisis. In Valencia catastrophic floods killed over 200 people in October 2024 but this amount of rainfall did nothing to help the normal situation: drought and water shortages.

Water is essential for all life. Humans need it to drink, wash and bathe, produce food and other products, and to just enjoy. It is also home to millions of different species, mostly in the ocean. It is free, literally 'just falling out of the sky'. However, free, clean water is not something we can take for granted.

In the UK, and elsewhere, people are forced to pay for water. Water bills increase every year as companies make huge profits. The regulator Ofwat has said that bills will increase by 36% over the next five years. This is to pay for years of underinvestment by the profit-driven companies.

These profits are particularly obscene because of the current state of our lakes, rivers, and seas. There has been large-scale dumping of faeces into rivers and sea by the privatised water companies (still called 'spillages' by the media and government) and large scale leaks. Water is also polluted by run off from fertilisers, pesticides, and animal waste from industrial farming, with increasing numbers of huge battery hen and cattle factory farms a particular problem. Anti-biotics from farming and toxic industrial

chemicals also leak into water with health effects on people, damaging and killing nature generally.

Pollution in seas and rivers makes many places unsafe for humans to enter. Popular beaches have had to declare 'no bathing' alert. Exmouth had to close its beaches to bathing for several days at the height of the tourist season in August 2024. The impact on other species is also devastating. Pollution from sewage dumping and leakage and run-offs from agriculture and roads has a negative impact on aquatic plants, fish and birds, disrupting whole ecosystems.

Facts and Figures:

- 584,001 discharges of raw sewage into UK waterways in 2023 alone
- Of the 86% of inland water bodies which fail to meet targets in England, 36% have been identified as failing directly as a result of sewage and wastewater discharges
- This year alone, over 18,000 real-time sewage alerts and pollution risk forecasts for the UK have been reported.
- 75% of UK rivers pose a serious risk to human health
- 590 reports of sickness after bathing linked with a sewage discharge in the area

However, multinationals such as Nestle and Coca Cola are making huge profits by extracting millions of litres of water from the very land that is suffering from drought - and then selling it back to locals whose water supply has largely disappeared. "It's a cheek - the companies are extracting the water from under our feet, and selling it back to us" says local Rosita Roser. Water is also depleted by farmers growing water hungry cash crops such as salads for export as well as by the demand for water from golf courses for tourists. This has led people to organise protest movements in Spain and other parts of the world, using the slogan: 'It's not drought, it's looting'.

In the UK the Environment Agency warns that England will run short of water in 25 years unless steps are taken. Wales will suffer more droughts and Scotland faces water scarcity in summer. All the while, the same multinationals take billions of

litres a year of the best drinking water from national resources.

The United Nations special rapporteur for water, Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, has seen water conflicts increase across the world. He says, "The commodification of drinking water is immoral" and selling bottled water "is privatising a vital necessity that we all need to live. It's like bottling fresh air." Advocating the immediate banning of water in plastic bottles "which are an environmental disaster", he says, we should take a "human rights-based approach" to water distribution. Governments must prioritise the provision of drinking water to the population, above any private interest, and plan ahead for droughts and other emergencies.

Anarchist communists would agree that water is a human right and should be free. However, we do not believe that it should be nationalised, as governments, who seem

to consider the interests of business more than what is needed by us, the working class. Instead, it should be socialised, under worker and community control.

Resources and Action

Surfers against Sewage: <https://www.sas.org.uk/>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240704-the-wetlands-cleaning-up-the-uks-sewage-pollution>

<https://www.leighday.co.uk/our-services/group-claims/exmouth-sewage-pollution-claim/#:~:text=According%20to%20both%20South%20West%20Water's%20WaterFit%20website%20and%20the,Beach%20and%20the%20surrounding%20area.>

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WaterFit%20website%20and%20the,Beach%20and%20the%20surrounding%20area.

<https://news.sky.com/story/anger-as-sewage-leak-sparks-dont-swim-alert-at-exmouth-beach-13199007>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/nov/23/spanish-villages-people-forced-to-buy-back-own-drinking-water-drought-flood>

Renters organise

On 14th December 2024, 500 people, including ACG members, turned out in central London for a demonstration organised by the London Renters Union. There were demands for an end to soaring rent rises, which have hit people hard. Alongside this was bitter criticism of the housing system, where millions are forced to live in crowded, substandard and expensive accommodation.

The rise of properties owned by private landlords has heavily increased the spiralling cost of rents. It is vital that renters, in both the private and the so-called social sector come together to organise.

Renters unions can give local support if you're dealing with landlord harassment and illegal eviction.

You generally join a renters union and sometimes pay a small membership fee.

Renters unions can:

- attend and stop an illegal eviction
- request repairs work on behalf of tenants
- challenge bad practice by agents such as charging illegal fees
- Remember, united, we are strong!



London Renters Union:

<https://londonrentersunion.org/>

Greater Manchester Tenants

Union: <https://www.tenantsunion.org.uk/>

Renters Reform Coalition: <https://www.rentersreformcoalition.co.uk/>

MILITARY ESCALATION IN EAST ANGLIA

USAF LAKENHEATH

There has been a US air force base at Lakenheath in Suffolk for many years. In 2008, after many direct actions and a sustained protest campaign 110 nuclear bombs were removed from the site, leaving it as a USAF site with 'conventional' weapons. These can be deployed rapidly and after the Hamas action in October '23 F15-Es were dispatched to the area to support Israel. The base is entirely populated by US personnel (there is no RAF capacity there, despite being officially called RAF Lakenheath). There are 6000 military personnel based there at the moment. This is the largest deployment of US military personnel in the UK. At the moment there are massive building works to accommodate the new staff who would arrive with the new nuclear bombs and the weapons themselves. Currently there is a huge USA/NATO nuclear upgrade across Europe with 500,000 troops at a high state of readiness. Planes from USAF Lakenheath regularly take part in joint exercises with Israeli and Saudi forces.

At least two major incidents involving nuclear weapons are known to have occurred at RAF Lakenheath.

In 1956 a B-47 bomber on a routine training mission crashed into a storage unit containing nuclear weapons, killing four servicemen.

Official US documents declared it was a 'miracle' that none of the bombs detonated, and that 'it is possible that a part of Eastern England would have become a desert'. Five years later, an aeroplane loaded with



a nuclear bomb caught fire following pilot error. The bomb was 'scorched and blistered', and scientists later discovered it could have detonated in slightly different circumstances.

Both incidents were covered up by the US and British governments, only being admitted in 1979 and 2003 respectively.

We are now probably closer to a nuclear exchange than ever before. Nuclear weapons at Lakenheath put the UK in the forefront and make us a prime target. The siting of these weapons at Lakenheath has not been discussed in Parliament, nor by local councils, nor has there been any public consultation.

CLIMATE CHANGE: CAUSE AND EFFECT

6% of global carbon emissions come from military activity. The fighter planes used both for nuclear and 'conventional' weapons use hundreds of

gallons of petrol on each flight. When they need to refuel while on an exercise they dump whatever is in their fuel tanks in the sea before landing to refuel.

The US military is the single largest user of fossil fuels on the planet.

Climate change is also a significant cause of conflict and migration of people affected.

"Climate change causes war and war causes climate change" (*Angie Zelter speech at Lakenham camp*)

"Getting to net zero will require a radical social transformation including ending militarism"

Angie Zelter at Lakenheath

LAKENHEATH ALLIANCE FOR PEACE

Lakenheath Alliance For Peace (LAP) is made up of 40 different groups. It is dedicated to preventing the return of US nuclear weapons to USAF Lakenheath and demands that military resources are instead directed towards global peace and justice and prevention of human caused climate change and biodiversity loss.

In July 2024 LAP held a peace camp outside the air base for 10 days. Members marched with banners over three days from Norwich and then camped outside the base, where protests and actions took place. Vigils are now held at the base at the end of every month. There will be another peace Camp from Monday 14th April - Friday 25th April.

Lakenheath has been the focus of local and wider protest for many years. Previously the sustained campaign and a blockade of the site were successful in getting the weapons removed. This can be a focus again to protest about militarism and the completely crazy use of nuclear weapons.

"This may all feel daunting but let us recognise that the peace movement managed to rid us of cruise missiles, turfed the military out of Greenham Common, and managed to keep Nuclear weapons out of Lakenheath for almost 2- years. We can do this again and get rid of our own UK weapons of mass destruction. We can join with climate activists and environmentalists and demand the changes we need for a humane and peaceful world. This peace camp at Lakenheath is part of a civilian call to sanity and peace."

Angie Zelter at Lakenheath

Sources:

CND

Lakenham Alliance for Peace

Angie Zelter

Syria: a glimmer of hope

We were happy to see the fall of the Assad regime. It was responsible for a horrific system of oppression, where many thousands were imprisoned, and many tortured and starved to death. However, we have no trust in the Islamists of Hayat Tharir al-Sham (HTS), responsible for a repressive rule in the area they control, until recently affiliated to Al Qaeda and Islamic State. Nor in the Syrian National Army (SNA), openly sponsored by the Erdogan government of the Turkish state, an alliance of Islamist militias, militarily backed up by the Turkish army. The United States and Israel are intent on destabilising Syria through bombing raids in order to strike against Iran, which was an ally of the Assad regime.

Yet despite this, some hope for a different scenario is still there. As Têkoşîna Anarşîst, an anarchist group active in north east Syria, say:

"Authoritarian forces, like HTS or Erdogan's Turkey, will always use force to impose their control in times of instability. The only way to counter it is popular organisation, a strong ethical and political civil society, building people's self-defence and a revolutionary culture. With international solidarity, to challenge the nationalism and chauvinism that divides us, and that deceivingly serves to legitimise the nation-state system of capitalist modernity. With local governance and confederal models, to challenge the centralized systems and borders of nation-states, that only breed oppression and violence on diversity. With women and queer organizing at the front, to challenge the patriarchal oppression from where all authoritarian models stem.

Since the Arab Spring of 2011 we have seen many revolutionary attempts in the Middle East, but none of them succeed in achieving a liberatory solution, sinking again and again into new tyrannical forms of oppression. What do we do after the fall of a tyrant to prevent another one from replacing him? There is a small window of opportunity when a regime collapses. A brief revolutionary time, where the people can take the power back in their hands, preventing a new centralised authority from imposing itself. We have to be ready to seize those opportunities when they come."



Anarchist Communist Group

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Instagram: anarchistcommunistgrp

www.anarchistcommunism.org

WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation which is dedicated to seeking a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment.

To do this, we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective organisation that works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, in cooperation with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you want to join the ACG, then look first at our Aims & Principles on our website

www.anarchistcommunism.org

You can also drop us a line at info@anarchistcommunism.org

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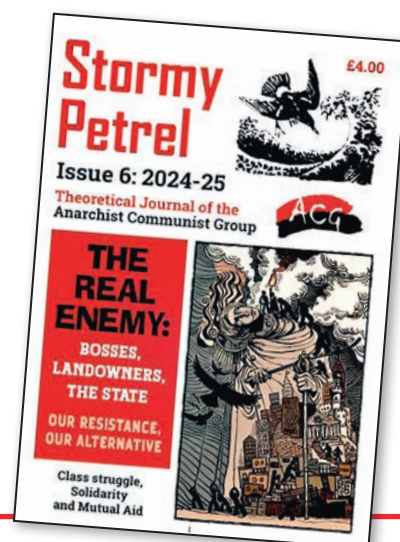


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