

Britain : ACR is a thing ! Revolutionary Marxist organising now

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The process of constructing Anti-Capitalist Resistance has taken a significant step forward. Ian Parker was there.

The two-day online event took place on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 January, bringing together revolutionary Marxists from England and Wales, and visitors from elsewhere. This is one culmination point of a process that has been taking place over the last year. It brings together [Mutiny](#) – a small group discussing key texts, developing their own analyses, and intervening as individuals in different campaigns – and Socialist Resistance, and comrades old and new looking for an alternative, an alternative way of organising together. We know that things have to change, not only in developing a fresh political alternative that re-energises revolutionary Marxist politics, but in the way we work, learning lessons from different liberation movements and different traditions on the far left.

The two days were designed to showcase where we are up to now, and to emphasise that our internationalism is not an abstract flitting from one solidarity campaign to another, but entails a deeper process of linking our struggles with others around the world, and appreciating the cultural diversity of the working class here ; our working class in the so-called 'United Kingdom' is multi-faceted, profoundly international in character, and must be internationalist in order to realise its potential as a progressive force so we are able to take control of our own lives together. This means that this new [Anti-Capitalist Resistance](#), ACR, organises itself in England and Wales, in solidarity with revolutionaries organising separately in Scotland, and we will work to establish a revolutionary movement in Wales. An [ACR North](#) group has already been set up with a public meeting set bringing together activists from Scotland, Wales and the North.

Saturday was an open public event – 'From Resistance to System Change : Prospects for 2021, A day school for anti-capitalists' – with speakers Gilbert Achcar, Ana Cristina Carvalhaes and Phil Hearse bringing perspectives from the Arab world, Latin America and from within the British state, this in a first impressive session on the theme 'The world crisis and the revolutionary left'. Some of the opening talks were too lengthy – we should have learnt some lessons about the limits of Zoom by now – but around 100 comrades came together to debate and take forward key issues that impact on every aspect of our work here.

The second session keyed into direct political challenge facing us now ; in 'Britain after Corbyn – what next for socialists ?' guest speakers Michael Chessum, Seema Syeda and Simon Hannah opened up a lively discussion, effectively opening the way to the task of developing an organisation of revolutionaries fit for the tasks ahead. This set the tone for our internationalist perspective, critical of the EU while refusing to fall in line with xenophobic Tory Brexit promises of 'taking back control', and clearly 'ecosocialist' and feminist, with the oppressed and never with the oppressor.

Sunday was a closed event, with fewer people of course, but in some ways more ambitious. This was a 'Members Conference' tasked with setting up Anti-Capitalist Resistance.

This day was crucial, and was proof positive that the careful comradely discussion – sometimes sharp and always respectful – that had already taken place over the past year would be put to the test in the organisational questions that too-often divide revolutionaries from each other.

Before we could begin work on Sunday, however, we quickly formulated a message of solidarity with the [Russian Solidarity Movement](#), comrades across Russia demonstrating that weekend in the bitter cold. Our message read ‘This conference of Anti-Capitalist Resistance sends its comradely greetings and solidarity to the Russian Socialist Movement and other progressive forces demonstrating against the Putin regime today, Sunday 31st January, and suffering police attacks and detainment.’

There was detailed discussion and voting on documents on the international situation and Britain, including amendments, discussion and voting on an ‘ACR : What We Stand For ?’ document, including amendments. And, this sounds really dull to be honest, the day concluded with discussion and voting on a constitution, including amendments, and the election of a steering committee and appeals committee. It was not dull actually, and as well as intense concentration and handling of disagreement, there was energy and will to take this forward to the next stage of the process. It was important to define ourselves, for instance, as an organisation committed to revolutionary democracy, not a top-down caricature of ‘democratic centralism’, but something that can intersect with the experience of the exploited and oppressed.

Breakout groups in the middle of this day highlighted one of the real strengths of the new organisation. There is an active women’s group inside ACR that has been meeting regularly, and a trade union group for comrades to discuss strategy. There were also break out groups on ecology – the largest group, an indication of how seriously we take ecosocialism as part of revolutionary politics – and on [Zero Covid](#), a campaign ACR has been working together on. Key campaigning priorities for ACR will be Zero Covid and this year’s COP 26 UN Climate Change conference.

This is possible ; another organisation that really breaks with the stultifying sectarian way of doing things that divides us and holds us back, and that has demoralised so many on the left in the wake of the defeat of the radical revival of socialist hopes under Jeremy Corbyn inside the Labour Party. ACR is an alternative, but comrades who are working independently are also in active solidarity with comrades who remain active inside the Labour Party. There will be multiple lines of defence and attack in the next years, with some ACR comrades active in the Labour Party, some working also as members of [Left Unity](#) as a ‘broad left’ project that also includes revolutionaries, complementary perhaps but very different in political scope to ACR. And, of course, members of Socialist Resistance will still be working together in solidarity with the [Fourth International](#). Those different allegiances are not obstacles, but will be our strength, if we can really work together as revolutionary Marxists.

The two-day ACR event was not perfect, either in form or content, but what compromises we made, and will make, will be part of a dialectical process of learning and activity, of practice. It will be practice that will be the key, and Socialist Resistance is committed to following that through, working now, among other things, towards the second stage of the process, the founding conference later this year. Edited footage of the first day and documents for the Sunday founding conference are here in the latest newsletter of ACR.

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P.-S.

- Socialist Resistance. Posted on 11th February 2021 :

<https://socialistresistance.org/acr-is-a-thing-revolutionary-marxist-organising-now/21641>