





Until everyone has a home  
and nobody lives in a cage.

[dogsection.org/dopeinfo](http://dogsection.org/dopeinfo)

**"We have a world of pleasure  
to win, and nothing to lose but boredom."**

Raoul Vaneigem

#### PHOTOGRAPHY

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P7 – Darren Cullen

#### ARTWORK

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"Intellectual property is a legally fabricated monopoly, confining culture and science, and violently depriving the poorest and most marginalised from access to critical resources. The fictions of copyright and patent are despotic attempts to monopolise the mind; outrageous constraints on intelligence and creativity; and a destructive protectionist scheme for the profit of power."





# Treehouse Utopia

By **Paul Dobraszczyk**

Building in trees, it seems, is all the rage. Not only are there many books illustrating tree-houses built all over the world – from adhoc to architect-designed – but if you’re looking for an alternative form of camping, you can choose to holiday in an enormous range of tree-based structures. These range from the basic – a tensile tent strung between two trunks – to the sophisticated – the Treehotel site in northern Sweden featuring many extraordinary treehouses, from a mirrored cube to a metal-pod shaped like a UFO. Treehouses seem to key in with a romantic desire to live more lightly on the land – a point that these buildings convey quite literally by being raised up from the ground. But, if you decide to build your own treehouse to live in, you may fall foul of planning authorities. Witness the case of Eddie Mellowcroft who purchased a smallholding in Wales in order to create an exemplar of low-impact development and, amongst other structures, built a tree house that was featured on the television series *Grand Designs*. Building without permission, Mellowcroft’s retrospective planning application was eventually granted by the local authority after a protracted legal battle and a trial by jury in 2019.

The sense of the treehouse as a place of retreat keys in with what might be regarded as an alternative, subversive tradition within historical conceptions of treehouses. If, in the Middle Ages, monks constructed treehouses as their own personal hermitages – secure retreats for esoteric pursuits out of reach of clerical authorities – today, some environmental activists build treehouses as quite literal barriers to development – a recent example being the treehouse camp in Steeple Claydon, Buckinghamshire, built in 2020 to resist the destruction of woodland by the planned HS2 railway line, and evicted in February 2021. One of the first was a ‘hut village’ constructed in 1980 to protest the building of a new runway at Frankfurt airport. In the latter case, treehouses were an effective barrier between protestors and contractors or police; they caused long delays in the process of building the runway, which was only eventually completed in 1984.

It was the wave of anti-roads protests in the UK in the 1990s that saw tree camps emerging as a commonplace and often powerful tool against the destruction of the natural environment. Many of these protests were ultimately unsuccessful: the planned bypasses around Newcastle, Bath, Newbury and Honiton/Exeter all eventually built after tree protests set up in 1993, 1994, 1995-6, and 1994-7 respectively.

Yet, the tactics employed were such that evicting protestors became so expensive and time-consuming that the UK government roads policy changed in the late 1990s – the incoming Labour administration of 1997 abandoning the roads-building programme it had inherited from the Conservatives.<sup>1</sup> Protestor Kate Evans, who had previously lived at Greenham Common, published *Copse* (1998), a book of cartoons that chronicled her life in some of the treehouses built on these sites. With one page offering step-by-step instructions on how to construct a treehouse, this book keyed into the radical DIY culture that was emerging at the time.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the treehouses built in the 1990s were elevated benders – stick-woven domed structures secured to a level timber platform lashed between branches. Occupied from just a few days to many years, these treehouses were sometimes ‘fortified’ by tunnels dug around the tree base (to prevent heavy vehicles from approaching), and barbed wire and razor fencing strung around greased trunks (to stop professional climbers hired by the police). Many protestors ‘locked on’ to the tree with an array of brackets, harnesses, clips, rope and tape. Some of these tree camps housed large structures: the ‘Mothership’, at one of the 30 separate protest camps set up along the route of the Newbury bypass, sleeping up to 30 people – including Kate Evans, who illustrated it in *Copse*.

More recent tree-houses were built for much longer periods of occupation: the trio of structures erected at Stanton Moor protesting the excavation of a quarry in England’s Peak District National Park remained in situ for 10 years, from 1999 until the planned quarry was eventually re-sited. Featuring pitched roofs and salvaged windows, these tree-houses effectively became places of permanent occupation – an entire infrastructure of tree-based life emerging in the process, including rope and wire walkways between the individual houses.

<sup>1</sup> The Newbury bypass protests were the largest of many anti-roads protests in the 1990s and were documented in Jamie Lowe’s 2018 film *Tales of Resistance: The Battle of the Newbury Bypass*.

<sup>2</sup> See George McKay, ed., *DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (London, 1998). See also the UK-produced pamphlet *Road Raging*, available at <http://www.eco-action.org/rr/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Hank Chapot, ‘Tree-sitting, since 1930’, *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 26 June 2008, <http://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2008-06-26/article/30396?headline=Tree-Sitting-Since-1930>.

<sup>4</sup> See Merrick, *Battle for the Trees* (London, 1996) which documents the life of a protestor at the Newbury anti-roads camp.

The sense of heroic resistance that imbues many protestors’ accounts of life in tree camps can be linked back to a children’s pastime that became a national craze in the US in the early 1930s, when endurance contests were held to see how long children could occupy their self-built tree-houses (an astonishing 107 days being the reputed record).<sup>3</sup> Yet, when living in trees, heroism is always accompanied by intense vulnerability, powerfully realised in a semi-fictional year-long tree protest that forms the centrepiece of Richard Powers’ magisterial novel *The Overstory* (2018), probably inspired by Julia ‘Butterfly’ Hill’s 738-day occupation of a threatened Californian Redwood in the late-1990s.

Cut off from the ground, the life of two young activists is sustained by a constant interaction between the tree dwellers and a network of support – whether the food or fuel that is hoisted up or waste materials that are lowered down.<sup>4</sup> These support networks demonstrate how our survival as a human species is predicated on a horizontal existence even though, presumably at some point in the distant past, our primate ancestors were fully at home in the forest heights.

Yet, the dream of an autonomous existence fuels the desire to live in a tree-house. In Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton’s bestselling series of children’s books, an imaginary treehouse grows from 13 to an extraordinary 143-storeys (in 2021) during the course of eleven separate books, and is set in an alternative world of fantasy structures, improbable functions and bizarre accoutrements. The practical, hands-on defence strategy of the tree-house as protest camp might seem a far cry from the skyward fantasy of a child’s imagination; yet, both share a sense of utopian striving that relishes the isolation of vertical living as a potent incubator of new possibilities.

## Illustrations

1 Eviction of the Tot Hill encampment in February 1996 (Alan Feebery, Wikimedia Creative Commons)

2 The UFO, Treehotel in Harads, Sweden, 2019 (steffen I, Wikimedia Creative Commons)

3 One of the treehouses built by protestors at Stanton Moor, June 2007 (Alan Feebery, Wikimedia Creative Commons)

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# Hell Bus

By Darren Cullen

Between the Pope auctioning off his autographed Lamborghini for charity, Lockheed Martin bidding to run NHS GP surgeries, or the FBI's social media tributes to Martin Luther King Jr, it's easy to come to the conclusion that satire is dead. And maybe it is.

As an artist who uses satire in my work I've been overtaken by reality more than once, and sometimes wondered if maybe I'm not making jokes, but accidentally producing comically malevolent ideas that could actually be used by the bastards who run the place.

But while reality can make satire seem redundant, the demands of corporate strategy and the contradictions of capitalism sometimes produce events which are self-satirising in a way that's funnier and darker, because its real but also because, in its own perverse way – it's *normal*. Like the oil and gas drill equipment company Baker Hughes selling a pink drill-bit to fracking clients in order to raise awareness about breast cancer (“Doing our bit for the cure”). Or a 1960s ad for the company that became ExxonMobil boasting about how each day the oil giant “supplies enough energy to melt 7 million tons of glacier!” Or the veterans charity Help for Heroes licensing their logo to sell minced meat adorned with its own medal at the supermarket. Just some of the incredibly normal things you'll find in late-stage capitalism that aren't supposed to be satire.

I found a few other examples when researching my Hell Bus project, a satirical Shell greenwashing showroom installed in an old single decker school bus that I brought to COP26 in November 2021. When the real world has actually produced such artefacts as *The Shell Guide to Britain's Endangered Wildlife*; a Shell sponsored Formula 1 Lego set that features instructions to rebuild it as a Shell oil rig; and a 1950s Shell ad that mocks pterodactyls for going extinct because they “could not or would not keep pace with changing conditions,” any satire has its job cut out.

In an early version of the Hell Bus installation I had a section about greenwashing the military by inserting seeds into missiles, to turn bombed-out cities into forests. I later found out this was similar to an idea developed by the US Military, for biodegradable training ammunition that included seeds to greenify firing ranges.

In the same installation I'd drawn a piece about Shell converting wind farms, submerged by rising sea levels, into tidal turbines; two years later I saw a BP advert about the company seeing a future in “solar farms that float.”

To paraphrase Frank Zappa, satire isn't dead, it just smells funny. This is just what happens to satire when you live inside the dystopia. As democracies become more managed and authoritarian, power structures exponentially amass more power and wealth at the expense of the governed, and the economy runs at full pelt towards climate apocalypse, satire may begin to sound less like a social critique and more like a dark joke before the asteroid hits.

In 2017 Shell launched a greenwashing campaign called *Make The Future*. Alongside slick music videos featuring sold-out pop stars, documentary-style fluff pieces about hydrogen-powered cars, and a multi-day festival of bullshit in London's Olympic Park, the campaign also showcased some of Shell's big ideas for combating climate change: a footstep powered football pitch, a gravity powered lamp, and roadside wind-turbines powered by passing lorries. It didn't matter that all these ideas either didn't work or were so expensive as to be impractical for real-world use. In the last decade the oil industry's strategy on global warming has changed from Denial to Delay. As wildfires engulf continents and record-breaking hurricane follows record-breaking heatwave it's become harder to keep up the fiction that we're not doing anything weird is going on with the climate. But by ostensibly accepting the science and pretending they're working on the problem, oil giants can postpone the solutions. There's a lot of profit that can be made between now and the total collapse of organised human life on Earth.

My Hell Bus exhibition is essentially a bleak exaggeration of genuine Shell policy and corporate history expressed in the form of a pre-apocalyptic marketing suite. But while I was installing the exhibits about “Shell's plans” to replace melted icebergs with polystyrene substitutes, rewild the great pacific garbage patch, or recycle the water used in fracking into a refreshing drink, a part of me worried if some of these ideas weren't stupid enough to avoid becoming real.



One exhibit shows the percentage of Shell's annual investment budget that they've pledged to spend on green energy by 2030 vs the rest of its nightmarishly gargantuan investment in fossil fuel extraction. But even this tiny slither of potential green investment is twice the amount Shell *currently* invests in renewables, a figure which also includes investments in unworkable and dangerous distractions like carbon capture and blue hydrogen. This investment in “green energy” is interestingly the same amount that Shell spends on marketing per year. I'm tempted to think the only reason oil companies invest in solar farms and wind turbines at all is so they'll have something to photograph for their fossil fuel advertising.

It is now public knowledge that oil and gas companies knew that their products were causing global warming, decades before it became a public issue, but purposefully lied and did not raise the alarm. Company documents show that, despite their reputation for climate denial, Big Oil did actually take the threat of global warming seriously, but only internally. They spent millions researching how hurricanes would increase in power and frequency and patented new oil-rigs designed to withstand them. Shell raised its drilling platforms 6ft in the North Sea to avoid the coming rising sea levels. They also designed ice-breaking oil tankers and rigs that could exploit and traverse the soon-to-be-melted Arctic of the near-future (another great example of reality eclipsing satire). At the same time the industry spent millions on junk science to confuse the debate and delay government action, often using the exact same researchers the tobacco industry used to cast doubt on the connection between their product and cancer.



The tobacco and oil industries have been intimately connected for decades. RJ Reynolds, a major tobacco company, even owned and operated its own oil company, American Independent Oil, in the 1970s. Oil and tobacco boards shared directors, their companies shared research scientists, used the same PR firms and deployed the same media strategies to smooth out the regulatory and public image problems that tend to haunt any business that kills people in large numbers.

Shell and Exxon both employed their labs to produce some of the first research into the effects of cigarette tar on human health. Both companies later patented some of the first cigarette filters. These filters not only helped the tobacco industry healthwash its public image in a time of increased scrutiny over the dangerous effects of their products, but also created an enormous new market for petroleum-based plastics. While cigarette filters do almost nothing to reduce the harm of tobacco smoke, (the yellowing of the filter is a trick caused by a PH reaction to the smoke, not, as it appears to be, from the accumulation of filtered toxins) the filters have made a significant impact in increasing plastic pollution, and are now the single most abundant item of plastic waste on the planet.

Shell's cigarette filter idea is much like their global warming plan: Present the public with pseudo-technological fixes that don't work, but which help reassure law-makers and consumers, giving Shell and friends social licence to continue extracting and burning oil and gas, while externalising the apocalyptic costs of their business model onto the rest of us. Greenwashing is about postponing the inevitable day when the business models that are destroying our world are stopped for good. Until that day, Shell will be out there trying to *Make the Future* a living hell.

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The Hell Bus will be free to view at various locations over the next year, including Glastonbury and Lewisham People's Day.

You can find details at [royaldutchhell.com](http://royaldutchhell.com)

Darren Cullen makes work under the name Spelling Mistakes Cost Lives and runs the Museum of Neoliberalism in Lewisham.

[www.spellingmistakescostlives.com](http://www.spellingmistakescostlives.com)  
[www.museumofneoliberalism.com](http://www.museumofneoliberalism.com)





# Social Ecology and the Rojava Revolution

By **Debbie Bookchin**

It has become impossible to deny the deep ecological crisis imperilling our planet. Poisoned air, dying coral reefs, scorching heat, wildfires, and the flood waters of “super storms” that pummel us as global temperatures rise – these are just a few of the many environmental traumas bearing witness to the immense destruction of the ecosystems of Earth.

For decades, the accepted response has been to silo these environmental degradations, treating them as isolated problems and attempting to solve them with piecemeal responses. Governments ban certain chemicals; well-meaning scientists suggest we deploy smarter technology; advocacy groups push for “greener” consumer products. Only recently has the public discussion finally acknowledged the obvious: our ecological crisis has a deeper, structural basis and we cannot save the planet if we do not address this head on.

Murray Bookchin was the original exponent of this viewpoint. Bookchin began predicting a coming ecological crisis in his writings beginning in the early 1960s, and after a thorough analysis concluded that the ecological crisis cannot be separated from the social crisis. In a series of books and essays over the next four decades, Bookchin laid out his central theme: At its root, our ecological crisis is not just a crisis of capitalism, important as that may be. More fundamentally, it is a crisis of hierarchy and domination, whose effects are readily seen in the deep divisions in wealth, status, and well-being that permeate society today.

The many forms of hierarchy we experience in society – based on age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, ableness, and economic status, among others – are projected onto the natural world in a rapacious, exploitive attitude toward nature. As Bookchin wrote in 1964, “The imbalances man has produced in the natural world are caused by the imbalances he has produced in the social world.” He frames the problem even more succinctly in an essay from 1986: “All of our present ecological problems originate in deep-seated social problems.”

Bookchin used the expression Social Ecology to capture these concepts. Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan breathed new life into Bookchin’s ideas when he made social ecology one of the main pillars guiding the Kurdish freedom movement. Like Bookchin, Öcalan presents a searing critique of how social imbalances and hierarchy, in particular the oppression of women, are manifesting themselves in our ecological crisis. “As with the problem of women’s freedom,” Öcalan observes, “the patriarchal and statist understanding of power also contributes to the fact that ecological problems have been delayed for so long and have still not been solved properly.”

Öcalan’s philosophy, Democratic Confederalism – built on the pillars of women’s rights, social ecology, and direct democracy – undergirds the Rojava Revolution and has made it an important example for how to build an ecological, egalitarian society from the ground up.

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Social ecology is not just a critical philosophy; it is a reconstructive one as well. It insists that we completely rethink our relationships to each other and to the natural world. It asks us to look to nature for a model of how social relations can be reimagined so that all forms of hierarchy are eliminated in favour of horizontal, ecological models, where every species plays a role in maintaining ecosystem balance.

Social ecology shows us that the mechanisms at work in a healthy ecosystem – diversity, non-hierarchy, symbiosis built on complexity – are the very elements necessary to restore social relations in order to achieve norms that foster mutual aid and sustainability, rather than competition and strife. Bookchin and Öcalan understood that these are the values that would allow us to achieve a truly ethical society and heal our relationships with each other and nature. As Öcalan puts it: “No social system that is not in harmony with nature can claim rationality and morality for itself.”

How do we create an ecological, ethical society? We can begin by asking fundamental questions such as: What is nature? What is humanity’s place in nature? What is the thrust of natural evolution? And ultimately, of course: What would a rational relationship between human beings and the natural world consist of? In reconceptualising our relationship with nature, we can make some basic observations. First, the prevailing notion in Western philosophy, including Marxism, that nature is somehow ‘hostile’ or ‘stingy’ or based simply on the survival of the fittest, doesn’t conform to reality. Darwin bequeathed to us a notion of nature as one of rivalries and competition. As a result, for too long we have superimposed categories of hierarchy on the natural world when, in fact, stable ecological systems are those that are symbiotic, non-hierarchical, and diverse.

Social ecology frees nature from these anthropocentric views – trappings imposed on it by a cutthroat capitalist mentality. Social ecology observes nature as directed and striving for ever-greater diversity. This differentiation and symbiosis encourages stability in an ecosystem; symbiosis fosters the survival of plants and animals far more than the notion of pure competition would allow. As such, we can begin to see a thrust in natural evolution toward diversity, individuation, creativity, and, in the form of human beings with their complex nervous systems and high functioning brains, toward self-consciousness and reason.

Second, because human beings emerge from nature, these concepts of selfhood, reason, and freedom should not be seen as antagonistic to the natural world, but rather an expression of nature in its most advanced form. The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte called human beings “nature rendered self-conscious.” Bookchin suggests we are nature rendered potentially self-conscious, inasmuch as we have yet to behave in the fully rational fashion that would exhibit true self-consciousness. Öcalan observes, “Philosophy defines the human being as ‘nature becoming aware of itself.’ The human being is basically the most developed part of nature.” This means that human beings have the ability and the responsibility to intervene rationally in nature and society to enhance stability and freedom.

This striving toward reason and freedom is a potentiality within nature – not a law of nature, to be sure, but a possibility that exists, which human beings alone have the capacity to bring to fruition. Social ecology is fundamentally a philosophy of potentialities, of development, of ‘being’ as ‘becoming.’ An immanent striving for realisation doesn’t mean a predetermined outcome. As Bookchin says: it is a message of freedom, not of necessity.

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Rojava, with its emphasis on direct democracy, social ecology and women’s liberation, exemplifies the realisation of the unique potential of human beings to create rational, ecological societies that enhance freedom for all.

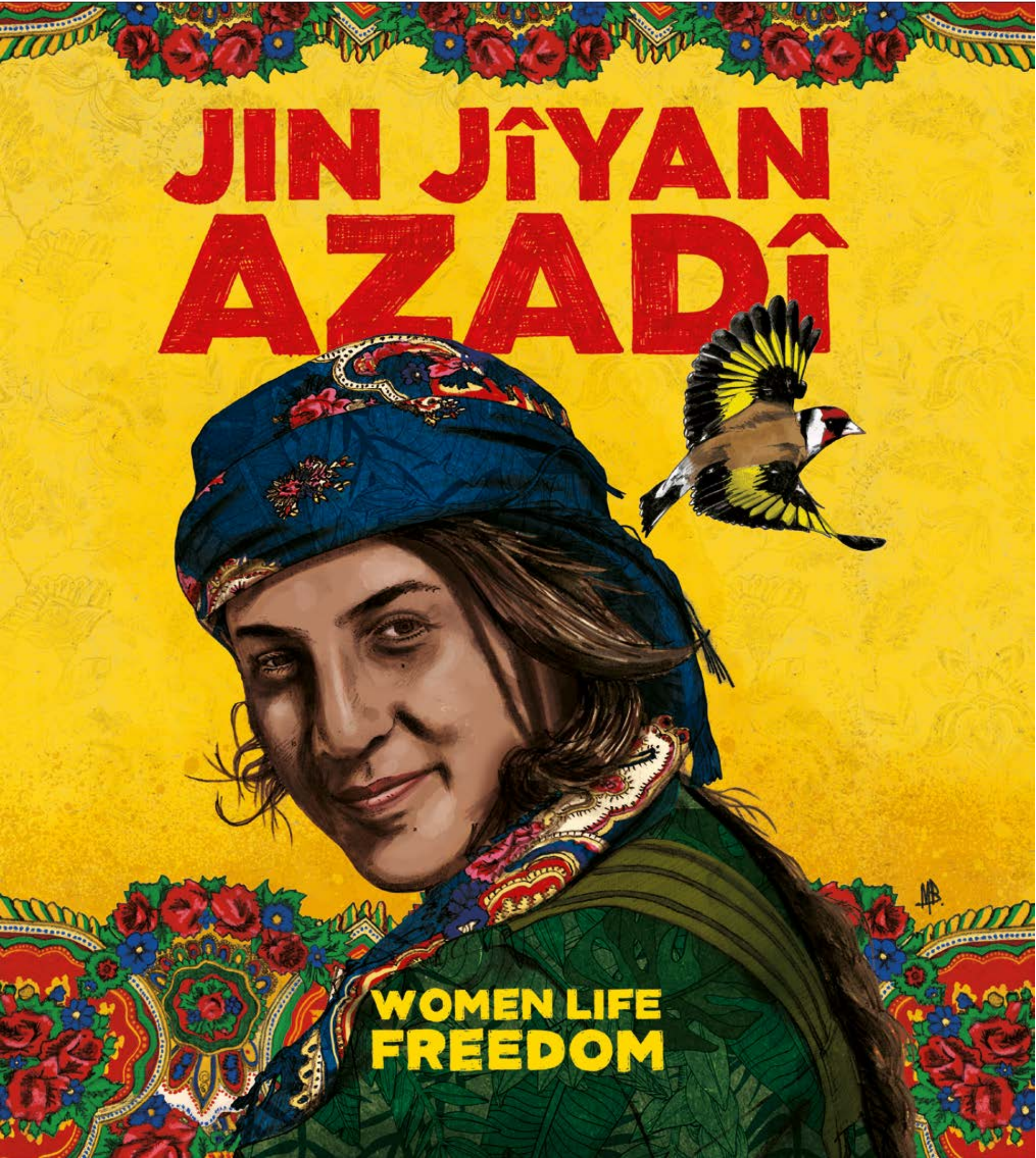
Like the French utopian thinker Charles Fourier before him, Öcalan observed that a society cannot be deemed free unless women are free. Indeed, the measure of whether we will have achieved a truly free, rational, and ecological society will be whether we eliminate capitalism, the state, and all hierarchies. In this project, the people of Rojava have provided the world with a vibrant example. Hopefully we will have the courage to follow their lead.



Debbie Bookchin is the co-editor of *The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy*, a book of essays by her father, the social ecologist Murray Bookchin.

She is a founding member of the U.S. group: Emergency Committee for Rojava.

[defendrojava.org](http://defendrojava.org)





# Journey for Life

*By Ameer R. Azad and Anthony Faramelli*

The term “decolonise” tends to get thrown around a lot in political discussion, academic work and in the comment sections of media publications. But it is often used without context. This effectively muddies the water, obfuscating its meaning and importance. This past year many of us in the UK and Europe had the opportunity to take part in and witness a profound decolonial or, better yet, anticolonial act, the meaning of which will no doubt inform thought and critique for years to come.

In April 2021, a delegation of seven Indigenous Zapatistas from Chiapas left Mexico and set sail on their ship La Montaña, for an “invasion” of Europe. It was a mission of solidarity with all resistant political struggles. In this way the trip reversed the historic colonial gaze by taking Indigenous resistance to the very heart of where their colonial oppression had begun, renaming Europe “Slumil K’ajxemkk’op”, Mayan for “Insubordinate land.” The symbolic act of naming these lands Slumil K’ajxemkk’op not only plays with the direction of colonial flows of power, but also opens a space for resistance across the continent to connect anti-imperialist struggles for dignity and autonomy.

2021 marked 500 years since the conquest of Mexico and the subsequent Spanish colonisation of the Mexicas, making Spain the natural first destination in their trip. Two years previously, The President of Mexico, Lopez Obrador, made a request to Spain for an apology for the barbarous colonisation of Mexico. This request was dismissed by Spain. However, the Zapatistas are not seeking any type of apology, saying that “they didn’t conquer us, we are still resisting, in rebellion.” And this past autumn, they brought this message to the WISE Isles (Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England).

This statement has been the driving force for their journey across the continent. Throughout Mexican history, Indigenous peoples have faced terror, intimidation and repression from the state. Indeed, this violence was key to the colonial system – a system which worked by oppressing native populations in order to better extract natural resources and wealth from the land. Since independence, the Mexican capitalist state has continued the same colonial practice of oppression and extraction. This neo-colonial system has resulted in Indigenous peoples being denied basic human rights such as state education and healthcare as well as facing killings and kidnappings by the federal government.

Despite having historically one of the poorest populations in the Americas, Chiapas (the region of Mexico where the Zapatista movement and communities are based) is actually one of the wealthiest states in terms of natural resources such as copper and iron, making it a key target for centuries of (neo)colonial extraction. Therefore, the self determination of the Indigenous has always been a threat to the state and the colonial structures on which it is built.

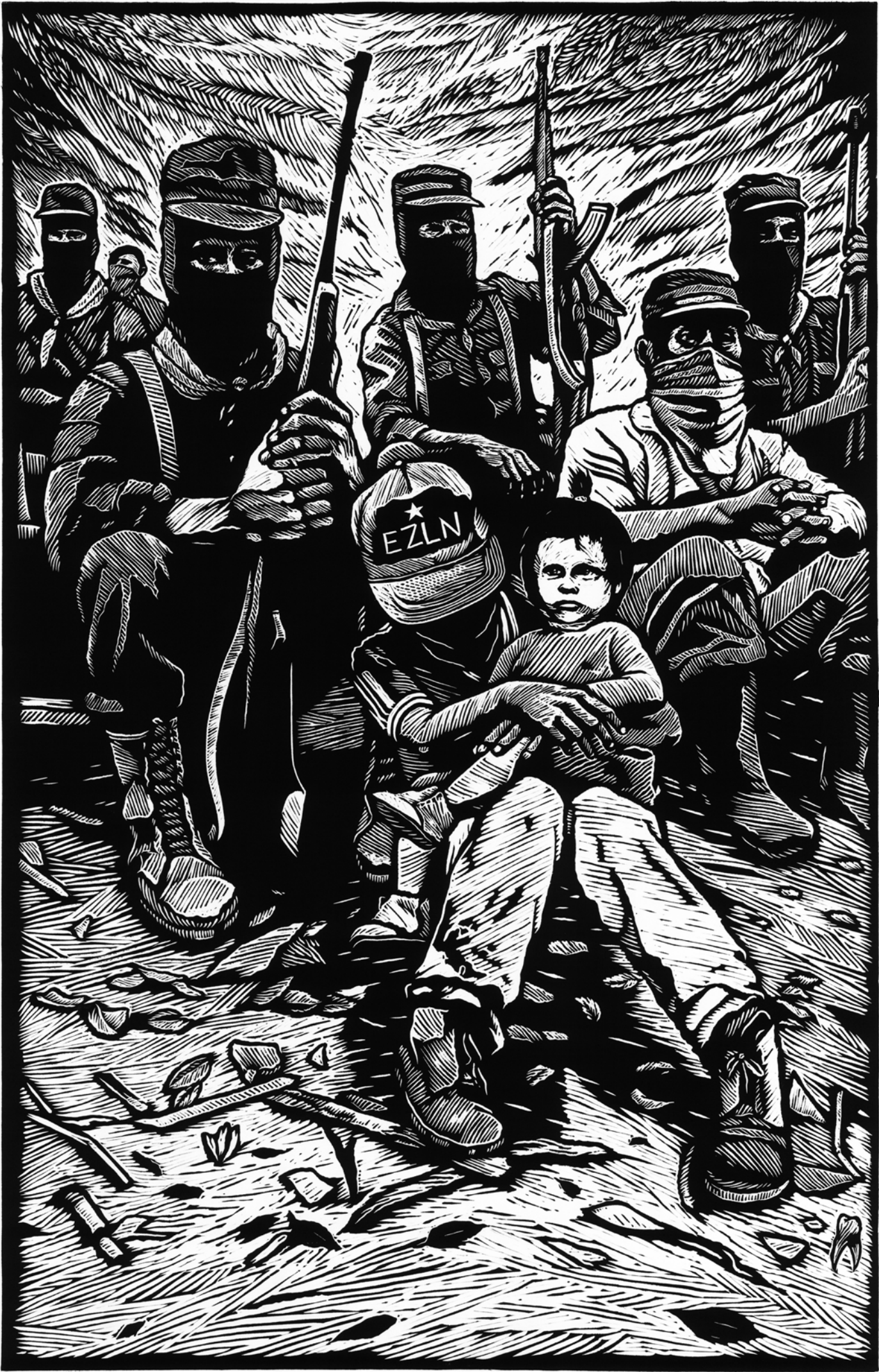
On 1 January 1994, the same moment when NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement that finalised the full integration of Mexico into the global capitalist system) came into effect, the Zapatistas rose up against the Mexican state and the enduring legacies of colonial oppression with the cry of “¡Ya basta!” (“Enough already”). They demand “work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, liberty, democracy, justice and peace.” In essence, life itself, which includes the lives of people, animals, their land and the environment, against the destruction that capitalism has brought upon them. This is the same message they are spreading now, the call to resist and create. To resist enduring colonial violence and oppression and to create another world, a world in which many worlds can fit.

Their recent visit to London by a delegation of five Zapatista compas (comrades) as part of their Journey for Life, in which they also stopped at several other cities and places in the WISE Isles, was not a mere history lesson or a spectacle for interested Londoners. More than anything else, this visit was educational. They came to meet with local communities and groups organising resistance to oppression “from below and to the left”. Their goal in London and the rest of the WISE Isles, as it will be during the rest of the Zapatista tour of five continents, was to listen so that they could learn about the problems and struggles people in the WISE Isles face and how resistance to oppression is organised across these territories. They also came to share their own story. They spoke about the history of Chiapas, how the violence of colonialism continued to endure after Mexican independence and why they felt the need to rise up in resistance to the neo-colonial system. Most importantly, they also taught us about their on-going process of creating a new world in Chiapas. An environmentally sustainable world based on self-determination and true democracy, where people have equal access to healthcare and education. A pluralistic world that can accommodate difference because the conditions of life ensure the dignity of all other forms of life. This is a radical form of education, a pedagogy based on learning with, and not from, others.

Over three days the delegation met with organisations and collectives where a great exchange of ideas and experiences took place. Among a number of others, Latin American solidarity groups were present as well as environmental groups and anti-racist organisations. As we discussed these varying struggles, we found common ground between them: capitalism. From seeing the disaster of COP26 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill aiming to step on the right to protest we understand that the situation in Britain is dire; however, it is imperative to draw the links between individual struggles because revolutionaries never look for freedom in isolation, freedom is sought everywhere. The Zapatistas are more than aware of this fact, as they say, “Our Struggle is for Life.” They spoke about issues specific to them in Chiapas, but which resonated with all the people in the meeting because, as they pointed out at the end of their journey, the problems they face in Mexico flow from the same spring as the pressures faced by people across this group of islands and beyond.

The conditions that have been made to isolate us – racism, sexism, poverty – will not divide us. The Left here is often divided and London’s protests can appear as fickle; however, our divisions politically were stripped in favour of unity from this visit. The Zapatistas have no use for those who think of themselves as the “revolutionary vanguards.” They came to meet all people and groups resisting in dignity. This forced us to move beyond shallow differences in order to work together to help bring the Zapatistas to the UK. Caring was central to welcoming the Zapatista teams. Before they arrived, the planning team members discussed how to guarantee their wellness and avoid physical and emotional exhaustion. Once the delegation was here, these concerns became a real challenge. We also had to work in a way that didn’t fall into idealisation, that didn’t elevate the Zapatistas and think about them as some kind of famous rock band.

The process of working together on the Journey for Life, as well as the actual meetings with the Zapatista delegation, was an education that more than anything else works to decolonise the mind. That is to say it forces those involved to critically assess ideas and assumptions that are based on a colonial worldview. For example, why don’t we learn any of the 68 Indigenous languages spoken in Mexico instead of expecting the Indigenous to speak to us in Spanish and English? Working on this trip taught us to interrogate how we can work together to not just tolerate, but to embrace otherness. To learn to walk slowly, together, while asking questions. What was learned gave us strength for movements to come. It gave us a glimpse of a world where many worlds can fit.



Ameer R. Azad and Anthony Faramelli are members of the Southeast Zapatista Solidarity Network.

[zapatistasolidarity.net](http://zapatistasolidarity.net)





WHY SHOULD WE BOTHER

TO FOLLOW THE RULES IN A



ANARCHY



RIGGED FROM THE VERY START?

GAME THAT HAS BEEN





# Onward to the Black Revolution!

By Lorenzo K. Ervin

In recent years, we have seen rebellions of poor people rise up against racist violence and police murder. But what is a rebellion and how does it differ from an insurrection? An insurrection is a general uprising against the power structure. It is usually a sustained rebellion over the course of days, weeks, months or even years, which has been organised by grassroots political forces. It is a type of class war that involves a whole population in an act of armed or semi-armed resistance. Sometimes mistakenly just called a rebellion, its character is far more combative and revolutionary. Rebellions are almost totally spontaneous, short-term affairs. But even an insurrection is also not the final stage of social revolution, since revolution is a social process that transforms the whole of society, rather than a single event.

An insurrection is a planned violent protest campaign that takes the spontaneous revolt of the masses to a higher level. Revolutionaries intervene to push rebellions to the insurrectionary stage and the insurrection on to a social revolution. It is not small, isolated pockets of urban guerrillas taking actions, unless those guerrillas are part of a larger revolt. The importance of recognising the true differences of each level can define our strategy and tactics at that stage and not lead us prematurely into a full offensive, when the enemy is not yet weakened enough by mass street action or political attacks.

The importance of also recognising the true causes of the revolt cannot be understated. Anarchist revolutionaries intervene in such struggles to show people how to resist and the possibilities of winning freedom. We want to take the people's rebellions against the state and use them to weaken the entire rule of Capital and its white power structure.

We want to create resistance on a longer term and to win liberated zones. To disconnect these communities from the state means that these rebellions will assume a conscious political character like the Palestinian Intifada in the occupied territories controlled by Israel in the Middle East.

Creating the possibility of a Black insurrection means popularising and spreading the various rebellions to other cities, towns and even countries and increasing them in number and frequency. It also means consciously nullifying the power of the state, instead of temporary revolts against it, which ultimately preserves its power. There must be a deliberate attempt to push the government out of existence and establish people's power. This has not yet happened with the various Black revolts we have seen since 1964, when the first such modern revolt erupted in Harlem, NY.

In the 1960s, the Black communities all over the United States rose up angrily with massive rebellions against the state demanding racial justice. After the Harlem revolt, for the next four years major rebellions shook the United States in the Watts section of Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago and hundreds of other North American cities. Isolated acts of police brutality, racial discrimination, substandard housing, economic exploitation, "the hoodlum element," a breakdown in family values and a host of other "explanations" have been put forward by liberal and conservative sociologists and others commissioned by the state to whitewash the true causes. Yet none of these revealed this as a protest against the capitalist system and colonial rule, even though the social scientists "warned" of the possibility of a new outbreak of violence.

Once again in the spring of 1992, we saw a massive revolt in Los Angeles, whose immediate causes were related to the outrageous acquittal of four Los Angeles policemen who had brutally beaten Rodney King, a Black civilian. But there again, this was just an immediate cause acting as a trigger; this revolt was not a sympathy revolt for Rodney King personally. The cause of this rebellion was widespread social inequality in the capitalist system and years of police terrorism. This time the rebellion spread to 40 cities and four foreign countries. And it was not just a so called "race riot," but rather a class revolt that included a large number of Latinos, whites and even Asians. But it was undeniably a revolt against racial injustice first and foremost, even if it was not just directed against white people in general, but the capitalist system and the rich. It was not limited to just the inner city in the Los Angeles area but spread even to white upper crust areas in Hollywood, Ventura and beyond. This was the beginning stage of class warfare, instead of just a "racial squabble."

We saw yet another rebellion against racism and police terrorism in London, UK, in early summer 2011 after the police murder of yet another Black man by Metropolitan police. The Black community rose up in rebellion, destroyed capitalist property, and "looted" a store of consumer goods they could not afford. Like in most instances, the bourgeois media zeroed in on the "looting," and labeled the whole thing as a "criminal orgy of violence." Sadly, some white middle-class Anarchists repeated this propaganda in their own denunciation of the "rioters." They had no understanding of what was happening, and why they should have been in the streets with these youth, giving them political and military direction. If the so-called Anarchist "Black Bloc" of white youth had joined with inner city Black kids, we may have had a general insurrection of long-standing and major damage to the state and capital.

If an underground military force existed or a militia was assembled out of this united attack of Anarchists and Black youth, it could have entered the field of battle with more weaponry and advanced tactics. As it was, the gangs played that role in Los Angeles in 1992 and London in 2011, and played it very well. Their participation is why it took so long to put the rebellions down, but even they could not prevent the re-establishment of white power in South Central Los Angeles or Black sections of London. Not just because of being militarily outgunned, but because they had no revolutionary political program despite all their rhetoric of having been radicalised. Also, the state came down extremely hard on the rebels. Over 20,000 people in Los Angeles were jailed, 50 were killed and hundreds more badly wounded, and over 2,000 were arrested and jailed by the UK government and police.



Could a liberated zone have been won, so that dual power could have been established? That possibility existed and still does exist if the people are properly armed and educated, but it is not easy. Mass resistance with heavy military weaponry may have won serious concessions, one of which was to pull back the cops. We don't know if that would have happened and those who said the Los Angeles Police Department did withdraw were engaging in pure speculation. We do know that this is not the last rebellion in Los Angeles and other cities. They may come much quicker now that the genie of urban revolution is out of the bag again. London provided another example of angry poor people rising over yet another atrocity by the police. There have been hundreds of such rebellions in the USA, UK, France and other countries against police terror and government repression. This is a form of class warfare. If white Anarchists can hail protests like Black bloc attacks on buildings, confrontation with cops at anti-globalization demos, and other acts of political violence, then they need to support these revolts by poor people, the truly oppressed, under the capitalist system, and not lecture them from the side-lines.

ONWARD TO THE BLACK REVOLUTION,  
AS PART OF A SOCIAL REVOLUTION!

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin is an American writer, activist and black anarchist. He is a former member of SNCC, the Black Panther Party and Concerned Citizens for Justice. Following an attempt to frame him on weapons charges and for threatening the life of a Ku Klux Klan leader, Ervin hijacked a plane to Cuba in February 1969. While in Cuba, and later Czechoslovakia, Ervin grew disillusioned with the authoritarianism of state socialism. Captured by the CIA in Eastern Europe, he was extradited to the US, put on trial and sentenced to life in prison in 1970. He was introduced to anarchism whilst in prison, inspiring him to write Anarchism and the Black Revolution in 1979. Released after 15 years, Ervin remains politically active.



# Defeat the Rich!

By *Jeremy Corbyn MP*

During the darkest times, I often stop and think about some of the battles of the past. The incredible campaigns, the trade union victories, and all the countless times people have come together to fight injustice.

Now, the time has come to take our place in the history books as the generation that turned it all around.

The reality is that the gaping chasm between the richest and poorest in our society is growing.

While multi-billion fossil fuel giants and corporations announce record profits, the Food Foundation reports that one in seven adults in Britain cannot afford to eat every day, up a shocking 57% from January of this year alone.

Many leading economists have stated that we are at the beginning of the largest decline in living standards in post-war Britain, but for so many, the devastating impact of over a decade of Tory cuts and austerity is nothing new.

Working class communities in Britain have been hit the hardest in terms of decimated public services, lack of investment and low wages. It is on these issues that we must unite and build a real alternative.

The future of the next generation depends on it.

In recent months, despite stark warnings of climate catastrophe and soaring poverty, the government has shown that it does not have the political will to do what is needed to alleviate the pressures on families up and down the country.

These unprecedented times call for urgent action.

We need a comprehensive Green New Deal with sustainable jobs and a pay-rise for workers; a £15 minimum wage to relieve the unbelievable stress so many are facing due to the soaring cost of living and for energy companies to be taken into public hands.

None of this will be easy to achieve and those hellbent on maintaining the status quo will put up a well-funded, aggressive and coordinated resistance, but the seemingly insurmountable power of the global elite can be defeated.

We must take inspiration from the incredible victories of organised workforces in the UK and around the world. From the many recent wins of United Voices of the World members in London hospitals, to the against all odds successes of the unions at global giants such as Amazon.

In 2020, Chris Smalls was sacked by the company for organising a mass walkout in protest against Amazon's appalling treatment of workers during the Covid pandemic. Here we are, just two years later, with Smalls as president of the Amazon Labor Union after the historic ballot at the Staten Island warehouse.

The formation of the new union at Amazon in the US is a beacon of hope in a world where the entire system is built by the elite for the elite, and the protection of their excessive wealth and influence.

Fair pay, conditions and pensions are the absolute bare minimum every single worker should have. Any company that values its workforce can offer this by paying decent wages and enshrining job security into its practices, but far too often there is exploitation and appalling treatment that goes unpunished by our governments.

Take P&O Ferries, for example, who illegally fired its entire workforce with immediate effect by Zoom to replace them with overseas labour in March this year. The British government offered hollow words of condemnation but stopped short of taking the assertive and necessary action to reinstate the 800 seafarers and end the abhorrent practice of fire-and-rehire.

I was proud to join a number of demonstrations, alongside seafarers and comrades from the RMT Union and others in Parliament and at P&O's London headquarters, and many MPs did their best to amplify their demands, but at the end of the day the buck stops with the government.

They failed to stand up for workers and will do so again and again until we achieve the real change that so many in this country are desperate to see. It is up to us to stand together, defend one another and build that alternative world.

So, my message to you is this: there are many injustices but only one struggle. Build the new future: one with its foundations deeply rooted in our communities, workplaces and trade unions.

Join or even start a campaign, community group or collective. Get organised and fight to win.

That is what I sought to do when I founded the Peace & Justice Project. Bring people from across the global labour movement together and work with progressive forces around the world to build an alternative future – one where we and future generations are not consigned to misery and hopelessness.

That is the only way we will achieve true social, economic and climate justice, and build real hope for the future.

*Jeremy Corbyn* is the MP for Islington North and a former leader of the Labour Party.

He has recently founded the Peace and Justice Project, a campaign to bring people together for social and economic justice, peace and human rights.

*thecorbynproject.com*





# Prison Works

By Ruth Kinna

In 1993 Michael Howard, Home Secretary in John Major’s Government, told the party faithful: ‘Prison works.’ Prison, he said, protects us from ‘murderers, muggers and rapists.’ The bald statement that prison takes ‘wrong’uns’ off the streets and deters them from doing us harm, slipped easily into Howard’s tough law and order agenda. But its simple logic has a wider appeal. Prison seems the obvious answer to infant killings, child abuse, violence against women, campus shootings and racist attacks. Common sense tells us that prison keeps decent people safe by taking dangerous villains out of circulation. We read graphic reports of headline cases and demand that perpetrators be caught and locked up so that they can never repeat their heinous crimes. When we discover that the baddies have been passing themselves off as goodies, we shout even louder. Police corruption punctures our faith that government can in fact meet its first duty to protect us. The only way to deal with bent cops, then, is to lock them up and throw away the key.

Prison works. So how come its apparent success is measured by increases in the prison population? If would-be criminals were in fact put off by the threat of doing time, why does the number of prisoners continue to grow? When Howard came up with his slogan, the UK prison population was 44,246. By 2018 it had nearly doubled to 82,384. The House of Commons Select Committee predicts further increases for 2022, to 85,800 and a maximum of 90,900. Scotland, England and Wales boast the highest rates of imprisonment in Western Europe: 130-133 per 100,000 of the population compared to Norway’s 54.

Howard correlated the rise in the prison population to dramatic falls in the crime rate: the so-called ‘incarceration effect.’ More people inside meant better protection outside. But the link between crime and imprisonment is flaky. International comparisons show that crime figures do not map neatly onto rates of imprisonment and that falls in crime figures are not explained by increases in imprisonment alone. Looking at the figures for 1991-1998, US criminologists estimate that a massive 144% hike in incarceration achieved a 35% reduction of crime in Texas. It’s a significant drop, but less impressive than the 43% decrease that New York recorded on the back of a 24% rise in imprisonment. Likewise, in the UK, youth offences have tumbled since 2006 but the decline follows the trajectory of the fall in numbers in youth custody.

Prison works as punishment, appealing to an ingrained sense of retribution that is easily heightened by anxieties about the threat of physical injury. Howard’s allusion to killing and assault was calculated to bolster the case for prison. Who would you put at the top of your list of the blameworthy? The quarter or so of UK prisoners serving time for various forms of violence or the 15%-20% committed for sexual offences? This way of thinking fools us into believing that prisons are as essential to public wellbeing as hospitals. And because most of us underestimate rates of conviction and the severity of sentencing practices, which have become harsher in the last 25 years, the appeal to punishment also encourages us to complain about the perceived leniency of the courts and to demand ever higher prison tariffs. The full picture is messier. According to the Prison Reform Trust, two thirds of the 40,000 people sent to prison in England and Wales in 2020 were categorised as non-violent offenders and 44% received a sentence of 6 months or less.

The insidious link between violence, prison and punishment desensitises us to the plight of prisoners and the grim conditions they endure. The government guarantees prisoners’ rights to protection from bullying and racial harassment, access to solicitors and healthcare. Prisoners are also promised between 30 minutes and an hour a day in the open air. Rule breakers can expect to be kept for up to 21 days in their cells, have TVs removed and more time added to their sentences. If this sounds all well and good, it’s worth remembering that prisoners, including the 25% being held on remand, are drawn disproportionately from black and minority ethnic populations; that in 2018 61% of prison accommodation was assessed by the Prison Service to fall below its standards of decency; and that record numbers of deaths were recorded in the four months to March 2021, largely because of Covid. Prisoners typically feel insecure in prison, and for good reason. In 2020, the UK government recorded 148 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, 95 assaults on prison staff and 662 incidents of self-harm for every 1000 prisoners.

Prison works, but against the idea of rehabilitation that reformers have promoted since the eighteenth century. For the last

fifteen years, reoffending rates have flatlined at around 30%. The expectation of the Prison Inspectorate is that prisoners will spend at least 10 hours a day (on weekdays) out of the cells so that they can socialise, exercise, access libraries and take part in creative activities. Yet a survey conducted in 2018-19 found that only 10% prisoners were unlocked for the recommended period. About a quarter had less than 2 hours a day.

Prison is expensive: In 2019-20 the cost per prisoner was £42,670, up 1.3% in real terms on the 2018-19 figure; however, government spending was slashed 19% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2015-16 and, in roughly the same period, the number of prisoners enrolled on programmes designed to reduce domestic violence, sexual offending and violence plummeted by 36%. Education deteriorated too. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18, 40% fewer prisoners achieved a basic Maths qualification. The drop in English was 47%.

Prison works by making complex social problems disappear. According to the Prison Reform Trust, 68% of prisoners – and a staggering 81% of women prisoners – were unemployed in the month before they were taken into custody, 13% had never had a job and 15% were homeless. A quarter of prisoners were in care as children and over half had been regularly truant. Prisoners are more likely than the rest of the population to exhibit learning disabilities and suffer from mental health problems and drug and alcohol dependency. In 2017, the National Audit Office reported that government had no knowledge of the incidence of mental illness in prisons or how much of the budget was spent on tackling mental health. In the same year, the Prison Ombudsman estimated that two thirds of prisoners suffered from a personality disorder and 45% from a neurotic syndrome, such as depression. Half of the women in prison report histories of emotional, physical or sexual abuse and nearly the same proportion have attempted suicide before being taken into custody. Although they constitute only 4% of the prison population, women have higher rates of self-harm than men.

Late Victorian reformers once dreamt of medicalising criminal behaviour and imagined new secure facilities – the asylums – to filter freshly classified groups of deviants from the ordinary crooks and felons.



Cure rather than care was their priority, but the distinction at least pointed to an acknowledgment that transgression was linked to complex sociological and psychological phenomena and that criminality was less clear cut than lawyers implied. In contrast, the argument ‘prison works’ tries to persuade us that ‘crime’ is a straightforward choice that bad people make. It conceals the muddiness of the legal construction and the moral judgments that underpin it. Government sticks an image of Alan Turing on the £50 note to make amends for forcing him to choose chemical castration over imprisonment because he was gay. It’s as if the criminalisation of homosexuality was an aberration of law, not a consequence of its application to classes of people and types of behaviour perceived to be undesirable or wrong.

Prison works by removing people from the communities that are best able to give them help and support, even though the data tells us that community sentences are more effective than prison in reducing rates of reoffending. Oscar Wilde described prison as ‘the result in our days of hard-and-fast rules, and of stupidity.’ His conclusion is hard to resist. Prison sanctions harsh treatment in anticipation that prisoners will emerge from their incarceration as model citizens.

The reality is that on release most are simply cut adrift. In 2019-20, 17% of prisons achieved targets for first night accommodation and only 4% met the employment targets at six weeks after release.

Prison works by encouraging us to demand protections from each other that no government can guarantee. It dissuades us from thinking about how to respond constructively, even compassionately, to antisocial behaviour and injury. It causes us to worry about the financial not the human costs. It invites us to surrender the management of our social relationships to law enforcement agencies. It generates divisions between those who benefit from the laws and those who are disadvantaged by them. Prison works by inhibiting efforts to build trust and create communities of care. It allows us to carry on with life as usual, with all its injustices, oppressions, antagonisms, hatreds and stresses, confident that someone else will deal with the unruly. Prison works on a basis of out of sight out of mind. It’s high time to think about abolition.

Ruth Kinna. is a professor of Political Theory at Loughborough University, working in the Department of Politics, History and International Relations where she specialises in political philosophy. Since 2007 she has been the editor of the journal Anarchist Studies. She is the author of The Government of No One (Pelican) and Great Anarchists (Dog Section Press).



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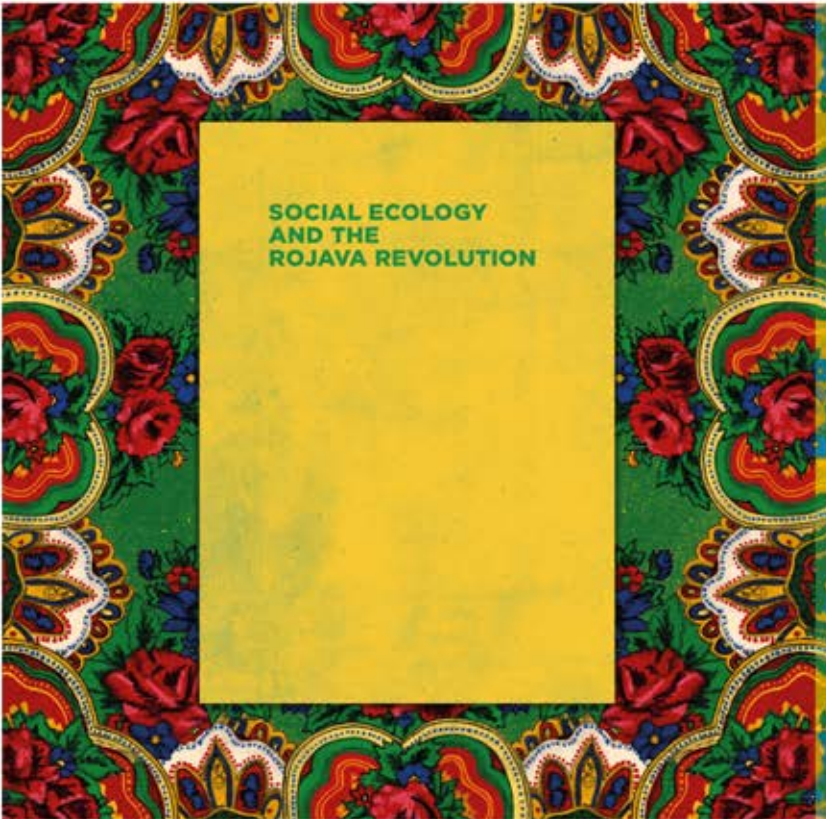
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