

shift magazine

issue 6 / May - Sep 09 / £1.80



**IN MEMORY OF
STEVE COHEN**
the anti-Zionist Zionist

FILM REVIEW
Baader-Meinhof Complex

INTERVIEWS
Marina Pepper
Whitechapel Anarchists

SUMMER OF RAGE?

Climate Camp, cake and bunting
G20 protest diary
Police violence

May '09 - September '09

Contents

Shift Magazine Issue 6

- 4** In Memory of Steve Cohen
An obituary by IONNEK of Indymedia London
- 5** Writing as a Jewish Traitor
STEVE COHEN'S 2006 article on anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism
- 10** Interview with the Whitechapel Anarchist Group
...on their involvement in the G20 protests
- 12** Kettles, Cake and Bunting at the G20
...were not enough, writes STEPH DAVIES
- 14** The G20 Diary
JOHN ARCHER on his experiences in London and Strasbourg
- 18** Interview with Marina Pepper
The G20 MELTDOWN organiser gives some insight into the group
- 21** Violence and Red-Green
A philosophical essay by the FEARLESS THEORILLAS
- 23** Politics or Pathology: the Baader Meinhof Complex
A film review by RAPHAEL SCHLEMBACH

EDITED BY

Lauren Wroe

Raphael Schlembach

PICTURE CREDIT

Dan Egg (cover; p.15), pseudoliteral (pp.8/9), Charlotte Gilhooly (p.13), London IMC (p.14), Leon Neal (p.16), Lefteris Pitarakis (p.17)

CONTACT SHIFT

shiftmagazine@hotmail.co.uk

www.shiftmag.co.uk

editorial

On 1 April, sometime after 7pm, we happened to walk unchallenged into the area around the Royal Exchange, which was eerily deserted by protesters. A dozen or so policemen stood confused, almost dazed, at the corner of Cornhill and Birchin Lane – behind them the body of Ian Tomlinson. The death of a man at a protest that could hardly even be called a riot was certainly the most sobering aspect that we took away from that day.

The G20 protests haven't shut down a summit nor have they been a threat to business-as-usual in the City. What they have done, however, is to kick-start a far-reaching and at times exciting discussion on the role of police during protest events. It is entirely unsurprising nonetheless that this debate is carried out within a liberal framework which does not question the role of the police as an institution or the state's self-granted 'monopoly of violence'.

The problem to us seems to be one of criticism and critique. We see a whole lot of criticism of policing operations, of police tactics and of the behaviour of officers on the ground. But criticism, when adequately addressed, can only serve to reinforce the image of the police as the legitimate protector of property and law and order. Outrage at police violence, while from the perspective of the peaceful protester entirely understandable (and by no means do we want to condemn the anger felt when brutalised and humiliated by a force more violent than us), can only mean that 'proportionate' and 'peaceful' policing would be acceptable (or even possible).

A critique of the police (and with it of its relationship to the state and to capital) would be something entirely different. For a start, we would have to ask questions of ourselves: how can we deal with contemporary policing of demonstrations in the UK without resorting to the help of the corporate media, the IPCC or the legal system? And in the public realm we have to push an analysis that regards the police riot on 1 April as the very self-evident and expected role of those forces of the state that try to regulate, manage and control the status quo.

We have to be careful that the good deal of bad publicity that the Metropolitan Police receives from the Guardian and other newspapers will not have a de-radicalising effect. If liberal capitalist democracy is seen to be working – i.e. media scrutiny, police accountability, judges and politicians that punish police brutality – then where is our platform for attack? By (only) criticising the actions of the police we are appealing to the status quo, not condemning it.

This response to police action was also evident when 114 climate change activists were recently arrested in Nottingham in connection with an alleged plan to disrupt a local power station. The liberal media and many activists were outraged – this kind of policing impinges on our 'right' to protest; rights that are granted (or should be, so the argument logically goes) by the state and facilitated by the police. If we use this appeal to 'rights' and the legal framework to defend our actions, where are we left when our actions are antithetical to the requirements of the state and the police?

The G20 protests also showed our strengths of course. To begin with, an anarchist movement in the UK does exist and can achieve a tremendous amount with small numbers. Also, the Climate Camp mobilised thousands of people to engage with climate change not just as an outcome of carbon emissions but as a result of capitalism (well carbon trade, at least). This move away from simply seeing climate change as a scientific problem to stressing its social and economic causes is an important step towards building an anti-capitalist environmental movement ahead of Copenhagen.

Of course, the conversation on the role of violence in movements for social change and what 'violence' actually entails needs to be had. The black and white picture constructed by the media, made possible by the separation of the 'peaceful' Climate Campers and the 'violent' anarchists (as if you couldn't be an anarchist Climate Camper) – skews the discourse on violence and the reality of state oppression and forceful resistance that is, globally, a necessary part of the lives of many ordinary people.

This difference of criticism and critique is also mirrored in the political responses to the recession currently on offer. Criticism of unfettered finance capital, of bankers and speculators, is put forward by a 'grand coalition' ranging from the BNP ("fat-cats") and the Tories ("stop the bonuses") to the Labour government ("more regulation") and the Socialist Workers ("tax the rich"). Slogans we heard on the G20 demos ("hang the bankers") are just the more radical version of the same message.

On the other hand, a critique of the financial system requires an analysis of, say, private property, a mode of production and exchange inherently motivated by the need to make profit, economic and political hegemony, and the relationship between these processes and personal, social and environmental issues. Only then can we move away from a reductionist politics that often results in the blaming of particular social groups or institutions (bankers, migrants...). In a recession, we should not self-prescribe poverty as some protesters did ("we need to get rid of the rich"), or ask for the right to succeed on a green and fair labour market ("jobs, justice, climate"), but demand 'luxury for all'. What this luxury could look like must emerge from our future responses to the permanent crisis of capitalism.

in memory of steve cohen

Steve Cohen, a socialist and fighter against all forms of racism and immigration controls, died on Sunday morning, 8 March 2009.

“Right now, ‘Don’t Organise, Mourn!’ - his only slightly tongue-in-cheek injunction to grieving friends’ seems as tidy and insightful as anything else he came up with.” (Jane on Engage Online)

Here is my attempt at public remembering and mourning.

Steve worked for about 30 years as an immigration-law barrister in Manchester, set up the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, participated in many Anti-Deportation Campaigns. He wrote books, manifestos, pamphlets and emails about anti-Semitism and socialism, about immigration, borders and the welfare state, in past and present.

Steve was a lawyer, a writer, and a political organiser. A Socialist and a non-religious Jew. A very funny and inspiring man full of integrity with a clear, analytical and personally grounded political stance. Probably a bit of a workaholic, full of enthusiasm that was difficult to withstand. A man who brought immigration history from below and past political struggles right into today’s realities, showing that “learning from history” is not necessarily a dusty, empty phrase.

He came from a generation of socialists that was used to organising in fixed structures, with committees, formal meetings and clearly defined roles, through mani-

festoes, programs, political parties and position papers. Within this tradition, Steve was fascinated by the interventionist, creative, direct action oriented political forms which were revived in the framework of the globally networked social movements of the last decade. Thus he was one of the bridges between political generations - although the younger generation’s informal, networked, horizontal, non-representative and seemingly chaotic ways of organising must have seemed weird to him at times.

In 2003, Steve was a driving force in writing a political manifesto against immigration controls titled “No One Is Illegal”. This slogan, taken from the writings of Elie Wiesel, was also the main statement of the transnational European noborder network which formed in the late 1990s. This network developed into one of the main grassroots assemblies of radical migration related politics on a European level, using “new” networked formats of political organising visible in border camps, campaigns against migration control, and Europe-wide action days. The “No One Is Illegal Manifesto” articulated the same uncompromising position against any form of immigration control. It helped to assemble No Borders-hubs in the UK and connect them with existing campaigns against immigration controls.

For the last fifteen years, Steve suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. This illness twists and turns the body. It is very painful and affects the functions of the body - hands, eyes, back. Nevertheless, Steve continued writing political texts and orga-

nising emails “with one eye and one finger”, as he put it.

In 1984, Steve wrote a text titled “That’s funny, you don’t look anti-Semitic”. A careful account of the history of anti-Semitism on the left in the UK, it also presents a differentiated analysis of Zionism and anti-Zionism. This text, re-published on the net in 2005, represents a valuable intervention in the current debate within the UK left about Palestine and the politics of the state of Israel.

Two positions seem to be impossible to reconcile: One accuses certain discourses amongst anti-Zionist supporters of the struggle of the Palestinians of anti-Semitism. The other accuses this criticism of Zionism. Steve had “one foot in the camp of the anti-Zionists and yet he [was] still mortified by left-anti-Semitism” (Engage Online). His position shows one way to oppose the Israeli occupation of Palestine without falling into anti-Semitic ways of thinking and feeling.

In an obituary on Workers Liberty, he is described as “a tower of strength and source of inspiration to all around him”. Even though I only met him very few times, I am sadly missing him as well. I am grateful for having crossed his path while he was alive. Now his body has gone to medical research according to his wish, and the folder with his numerous organising mails on my email client is closed. Nevertheless, Steve’s approach to life, politics, illness and humour will continue to enrich my own. Thanks, Steve.

Steve Cohen

writing as a jewish traitor

an imagined disputation with my comrades on anti-semitism

[DISCLAIMER: This is an edited extract from a text that Steve Cohen wrote in 2006 with the Lebanon war in mind. He sent it to us again during the Israeli attack on Gaza, still noting its obvious relevance for the Gaza solidarity protests. The full text is available online].

For forty five years as a Jew and a revolutionary Marxist I have been waiting for this debate, this disputation. The time lag is itself revealing – revealing of the left's refusal to get beyond platitudes, often nasty platitudes, in discussing Jews. Let me say what this is not about. It is not about Zionism. Rather it is about the anti-Zionism of fools. And it is about the anti-imperialism of fools. I speak as an anti-imperialist. Over a century ago August Bebel, the German Marxist, coined the phrase "the socialism of fools" to describe those early socialists who equated world capitalism and world Jewry. In my view much modern anti-Zionism contains caricatures and myths which are equally foolish and equally dangerous. They are both a slur on Jews, all Jews, and do nothing whatsoever to advance the absolutely justifiable struggle of the Palestinians to become free of Israeli hegemony. And yes I think anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism should be conceptually and politically kept absolutely apart. However it is the result of the dominant discourse on the modern left that they have crashed into each other and joined up. This discourse is joined up anti-politics at its most grotesque.

What makes these anti-politics even more grotesque is that prior to the triumph of Zionism (and the establishment of Israel)

there was another anti-Semitic slur (often found in Stalinist mythology) – that of the rootless, cosmopolitan Jew, that is the Jew without a country of his/her own and owing loyalty to no other state. So it is damned if you do and it's damned if you don't. The language of damnation, of fire and hell, is itself absolutely appropriate coming from a Christian-imperialist tradition which is responsible for anti-Semitism (as it is for Islamophobia).

**«In my view
much modern
anti-Zionism con-
tains caricatures
and myths which
are foolish and
dangerous»**

As I understand it, the emergence of idiotic anti-Zionism as being dominant within anti-Semitic discourse found within the (non-Stalinist) left began in earnest after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the consequent Sabra-Chatilla massacre (actually committed by Christian Phalangists). In 1985 I wrote a small book on the subject of left anti-Semitism – "That's Funny You Don't look Anti-Semitic" (which is now posted on the web). This looked historically at how there has always been a significant current within the left who have adopted conspiracy theories

about Jews. Only a few pages of this were devoted to the issue of anti-Zionism. Now I feel a whole library would be insufficient to house what is required. The real turning point were the Twin Towers destruction and the subsequent aggression against Iraq, both which have resulted in a global anti-Semitic backlash. The attack on the Twin Towers is perceived as a response (legitimate or illegitimate) to Zionism and the invasion of Iraq as being manipulated by Zionism. Of course neither of these events were in any way the responsibility of Jews or of Zionism. But even if they were they would not justify an anti-Semitic response. Even the real horrors of Zionism (such as the non-stop invasions of Gaza and the West Bank) are no such justification. This is blaming Jews for anti-Semitism – an outrageous concession to this oldest, or certainly the most persistent, of all racisms.

Imagine there's no countries
– or religion too

Allow me to state my position on Zionism as a political movement. Surprisingly it is doubtless at least in its basics the same as yours. I am opposed to it. I am opposed to it because of its racism towards the Palestinians. Because of its dispossession of the Palestinians. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, bad that you can tell me about Zionism that I would even start to justify. What is more I am opposed to the state of Israel. And I am opposed to the suggested two-state "solution". If anything I am for a "no state" solution – that of a federated Socialist Middle East. I am opposed to Israel because I am opposed to all exclusivist

states. Israel is an exclusivist state. Therefore I am opposed to it. I am a kind of Anarcho-Marxist on this question. I am for the absolute right of a law of return for Palestinians (and Jews). As a Diaspora Jew I am absolutely proud to hold no allegiance to any country on the planet – including Israel. I am proud to be both a Jewish traitor and a traitor of the Jews.

In fact I regard the very idea of a Jewish state as quite ludicrous. Can a state be circumscribed? Can it eat kosher meat? Can it be barmitzvahed? And I feel the same way about the idea of a Muslim state – such as Pakistan. And I guess this is where we start to differ. I refuse to exceptionalise Israel. I am against exclusivist states. But all states are exclusivist, certainly all bourgeois states. It is their nature. They cannot be otherwise. The British state is a prime example. It is defined, and defines itself, by its immigration laws – who can come and who can stay and who has what rights (if any) dependent on immigration status. Want to define Israel as an apartheid state? Fine – as long as you are prepared to do the same for the UK. Want to organise a boycott of Israeli universities? Fine – as long as you are prepared to do the same for British universities, who are up to their necks in the enforcement of immigration controls. Open your eyes to the fees discrimination against “overseas” students – who can be deported after extraction of fees on completion of studies. Open your eyes to the vetting by university authorities of every single potential employee to ensure they have the “correct” immigration status. This in addition to the paid research or training contracts some educational institutions have with the Immigration and Nationality Directorate. Want to demand the “dismantling” (whatever that means) of the Israeli state? Great! I’m for the smashing of all bourgeois states by the workers and their replacement with workers democracy. This is elementary Marxism. Which is why I am for unity between Palestinian and Jewish workers against their own rotten (mis)leaders.

What I am not for, what I am against, are clerics waving Kalashnikovs in their attempt to recreate another theocratic monstrosity. The exceptionalisation of Israel has led to the utterly demeaning slogan on anti-war demonstrations in this coun-

try of “We are all Hizbollah now”. Well count me out of that one. Hizbollah is a clerical organisation which peddles the notorious Protocols of Zion – the nineteenth century forgery that reiterates the claim that Jews control the world (which is itself the central tenet of anti-Semitism). It is a clerical organisation whose chief political and military backer is Iran – whose leader is a holocaust denier. It is a clerical organisation which ultimately has no interest in a Palestinian state as such but seeks to recreate the Caliphate (which belongs to Islam’s golden age of philosophy, science, art and medicine – an age long past like the age of all religious constructs). This exceptionalisation of Israel is anti-enlightenment. It is spiralling political debate and practice into the most obscurantist period of history. It is replacing politics by religion of the most mindless variety (is there any other?).

«Want to define Israel as an apartheid state? Fine – as long as you are prepared to do the same for the UK. Want to organise a boycott of Israeli universities? Fine - as long as you are prepared to do the same for British universities»

As a traitor of the Jews I am also an atheist – and therefore opposed to Jewish religious practice in any guise. But who are paraded (like puppets) at the head of

marches organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign? It is (male) members of the Naturei Karta sect. Sure these people are opposed to Israel. Why? Because the messiah, the real one, the Jewish one, has yet to arrive – and until he arrives a Jewish state is sacrilege! When he (these people sure are not looking for a female messiah) arrives then doubtless Naturei Karta members will be queuing up for their share of Kalashnikovs, will be training in the art of suicide bombings and will be promising each other their allocation of virgins in heaven or other such comparable inducements (an indefinite supply of bagels and lox?) and may even be piloting planes into the architecture of Manhattan (“we can do it for you cheap – we use only low cost airlines”). I joke because the only alternative is to throw up and be sick. And all this identification with religious obscurantism is supposed to pass as modern politics? And all this lauding of religious fundamentalism is supposed to be beyond criticism?

Imagine there’s no anti-Semitism

As an opponent of Israel I will not exceptionalise Israel. And as an opponent of Zionism I do not, will not, demonise Zionism. Demonisation reverts to the popular inspired myths of medieval Europe. It is the dark side of theology – and ultimately there is no other side. It is anti-secular. It is anti-Semitism: Jews as the hidden hand of history; Jews as the devil; Jews as the killer of god. The demonisation of Zionism simply transfers this to the killer of all of god’s people. It is the twenty first century equivalent of the blood libel accusation – the Jew as the murderer of Christian children and the drinker of their blood in order to acquire super-natural powers. This fantastic accusation has been responsible for a thousand years of pogroms. As Lenny Bruce used to joke – don’t the statute of limitations apply here? Just as the Jew of medieval Europe (and then Nazi Europe – there is a direct line) was depicted as all powerful, as being in possession of life’s secret mysteries, mysteries inaccessible to mere mortals but which determine the life and death (usually death) of all mortals – so Zionism is depicted as a supra-national force, more powerful politically than any other force on earth, and the cause of all



war – from Iraq to Afghanistan. Next stop Iran!

And it doesn't need to do this in its own name! It operates as the modern hidden hand – manipulating the lesser powers of Yankee and British imperialism. Armageddon in the New York sun? The destruction of the modern pyramids of the Twin Towers? None of this would have happened if Zionism wasn't occupying the West Bank. This is the hidden hand twice removed. And the hidden hand operates under a supposed central Zionist ideological imperative – namely that Jews are a superior people, the real master race (in fact whatever the undoubted material wrongs done to the Palestinians, Zionism – unlike many other nationalisms – does not contain any such premise). If only Zionism would disappear then peace would reign on earth. The Messiah would have returned (the Christian one – the Jewish one hasn't yet been)! I'm tempted to say to my supposedly secular comrades in a paraphrase of the only language they appear to understand, biblical language (the language of the "New", not the "Old", Testament): "Forgive them Marx they know not what they do – or say".

Imagine workers' solidarity – here, there, everywhere

So can I ask you another "what if" question? What if you had been a Jew in Germany/Czechoslovakia/Poland – in fact anywhere in Europe – after the Nazis first came to power in Germany and then proceeded to annex/conquer everything around them? Completely isolated by the historic defeat of the workers movement (thanks to Stalinist betrayals) what would you have done? And even if you weren't a Jew then what would you suggest Jews should have done? For myself I think (depending where I was living) I would have had to acknowledge that the battle was lost. Resistance by Jews alone was not going to overturn the Nazi monster. Like today's refugees I would have probably sought escape – and indeed advocated mass escape. Certainly I would not have criticised those who took this position (tragically they were shown to have been historically correct). However there was just one problem. Even at a time when the Nazis may have been prepared to allow such exit yet every other state in the world was imposing immigration controls against Jews. There was no escape route

available!

On this planet without a visa for Jews there was one possibility of flight – to Palestine. Palestine was then of course under the colonial boot of Britain – which exercised immigration controls there against Jews there as it did in the UK itself. However there was the possibility of clandestine help from other Jews. I would have had no hesitation in seeking refuge there – or helping others get there. I have been to meetings where I have been told this was politically wrong. Wrong because it is the role of socialists to fight oppression where they find it – not flee from it, and not flee from it even where it is irresistible. Well, that would avoid all solidarity with today's refugees. Wrong because it was and is somehow morally indefensible for a European to assume a right of entry into a "third world" country. Why? Who wrote this text book? I'm for a world without borders. A world where in the 1930s what was required was proletarian solidarity – given by Palestinians as well as Jews – to those seeking refuge in Palestine. Maybe some or many Palestinian workers did offer such solidarity. I don't know the history. But I also know that as a commu-

nist I would have entered Palestine not as a coloniser but with a communist political programme – the same programme of Jewish/Palestinian proletarian unity that I advocate today. In the 1930s this would have meant unity against the Zionist leadership, against the absentee Palestinian landlord class, against the Mufti of Jerusalem and his open support for Hitler and against the British occupying forces. What would you have done my anti-Zionist friends?

Imagine there are no more lies

The slanders directed against Zionism, either directly or by default, are endless. It is impossible to deal with them all. But here are just more. Some nationalists actually did support the Nazis politically. Others fought alongside them. Even others were party directly to the holocaust. However these were not Zionists! The most vicious and most powerful was undoubtedly the Ustasa movement which ran the puppet State of Croatia (and many of today's Croatian leadership continue to act as Ustasa apologists). And of course there was the Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammad Amin al-Husayni and his followers. Al-Husayni, a leading Palestinian nationalist, met with Hitler personally during the holocaust. He was instrumental in forming specifically Muslim Waffen SS units in the Balkans. The largest was probably the Bosnian 13th "Handschar" division of over 21,000 men. The list of his crimes appears infinite. But the point I am making here is that none of this perfidy has ever called into question the inherent justice of Croatian, Bosnian or Palestinian nationalism. And I'm certainly not arguing that it should. – as far as I'm concerned nationalism can stand or fall on its own terms and these obviously need not be fascistic. What I am arguing is that the double standards at play are fantastic. Zionism is condemned as illegitimate for somehow supporting the Nazi enterprise – which it never did. Other nationalisms, or other nationalist leaders, which did support the holocaust are continued to be seen as legitimate.

And this brings me to another highly dubious point. I am being told more and more that it is politically incorrect to designate this Nazi genocide of the Jews as "the" holocaust. Instead it should simply be called

"a" holocaust. Personally for myself I do not mind whether you use a "the" or a "a". All that I am concerned about is the murder of six million Jews. I am well aware, and equally concerned about, other genocides both under Nazi Germany (of countless gypsies, trade unionists, lesbians, gay men, communists, disabled people...), historically (death through the slave trade, deliberate genocide of the American Indian, Turkish massacre of the Armenians, Stalinist atrocities...) and unto the present (Rwanda, Somalia...). Historically Jews themselves have suffered a thousand years of European pogroms many of which may legitimately be referred to as holocausts (where does one finish and the other start?).

So for myself language is irrelevant. Except the challenge to language can itself be highly political. And what concerns me about the emphasis on referring to what happened to Jewry under the Nazis as "a" holocaust is the hidden accusation that Zionists have somehow magnified, exaggerated, inflated (as though any of this were possible) what happened to Jews in order to justify the creation of an illegitimate entity – Israel. At the same time this attack on language seems to be suggesting that Jews are claiming for themselves a unique victimhood. Well, for me, this simply reproduces the dark and medieval image of the "squealing" Jew. I would personally be prepared to argue that what happened to Jewry under fascism was pretty unique. But so what? The idea that Jews have been politically or genetically programmed for victimhood is just another myth. As a Jew I also know something else. Ask all Jews in the world whether they would surrender Israel if retrospectively the events under Nazism could be undone -if the/a holocaust could miraculously be undone. I bet most, maybe all, would gladly give up Israel. But the/a holocaust did happen. And therefore so did Israel.

Maybe I'm a dreamer

The Chairperson has passed me a note – "wind up, only 5 minutes left". I've seen a thousand in my lifetime. Anyhow this debate is only imaginary. But I'll conclude on two points which I hope are provocative (what's the point of exchanging truisms?). First I take it as axiomatic that the state of Israel would not have come into existence





without the holocaust – it was the holocaust that legitimised (vindicated) its need. And its need was as a refuge from anti-Semitism. Of course (and unfortunately) most Jews who sought refuge were not communists. Workers' unity has not (yet) materialised. The Palestinians have suffered a terrible wrong. However this terrible wrong should not conceal another truth. This is the uniquely contradictory nature of Zionism – unique because as far as I can see it exists nowhere else. In fact Zionism contains within itself its own contradiction. And it is this contradiction which renders it such an emotional as well as political firecracker (I know of no other political area where the emotions get raised so high on both sides). On the one hand Zionism is undoubtedly, unquestionably racist towards the Palestinians. Which is why I'm an anti-Zionist. On the other hand it is seen, and I think correctly seen, by most Jews as anti-racist. It is anti-racist in that it was and is a response by Jews to extricate themselves from the racism of anti-Semitism. Maybe not your way of fighting racism. Maybe not mine. But anti-racist nonetheless. And the majority of Jews in the world today view Israel as a "bolt-hole" where Nazism to arise again. It is in response to this political contradiction that I have started to assume the somewhat novel self-description of being an "anti-Zionist Zionist". I am an anti-Zionist like no other (maybe I exaggerate) in that I refuse to accept anti-Zionist myths and untruths. I am a Zionist unlike no other (here I don't exaggerate) in that I am opposed to the state of Israel. The only way out of this contradiction – a political contradiction not one of my personal pathology – is the unity of Palestinian/Jewish workers within Palestine/Israel combined with a relentless fight against anti-Semitism internationally.

My final point is to emphasise my role as a traitor. I no longer see any point in being Jewish. And I aim to give up on it. Not that I feel bad about being a Jew. Just the opposite. Rather I want to become the sort of Jew the anti-Semites warn us against. The cosmopolitan of no fixed identity. And I hope you are willing to surrender your own tribal/ethnic/nationalist/religious identities and allegiances. Join me as a traitor to your own traditions. Become cosmopolitans!

interview with the whitechapel anarchist group

In the run-up to the G20 protests, parts of the corporate media ran a sustained campaign of scare stories about 'violent anarchists'. How has your relationship with the media been? Did you try to get a more serious anarchist perspective out?

As far as I can remember, there weren't many anarchists actively engaging with the media in the run-up to the G20. We did our best to respond to the interest that the media took in us - we're definitely not about an absolute boycott on the corporate media. However, this does have its pitfalls and you definitely can't go about it with any illusions. They will get what they want out of what you say - after all, they're about selling papers! You could come out with the most solid critique of capitalism and they could still take more interest in what colour hoodie you're wearing. However, I don't think it bit us on the

arse too hard...even that Daily Mail article was a good laugh!

To our knowledge, the only G20 event co-ordinated by London anarchist groups was the 'Militant Workers Bloc' on the trade union and NGO march. Why the focus of effort on this demonstration when an explicitly anarchist intervention on the 1st or 2nd April could have had a much bigger impact?

Actually, we put work into publicising the party at the bank, produced and distributed thousands of the now notorious posters. The poster certainly did a great deal in terms of getting numbers down there and also fuelling the flames of media hysteria. But, as they say, no publicity is bad publicity. With regards to the other questions, there are a lot of factors to take into consideration. The most important one for us to address here is our current lack

of ambition as a movement and the extent to which we have internalised a culture of defeat. We are always one step ahead of the coppers in shutting our actions down. Its time to turn that on its head again and come up with some fresh and innovative ideas that can turn round the culture of dissent in London.

However, in defence of the Militant Workers Bloc it wasn't simply 600-700 anarchos turning up to a Trade Union march. Our place in the march was negotiated with links that people have to militant sections of the workers movement and was symbolic of progress being made to integrate a direct action approach back into workers struggle.

The main two groups calling for protests in the City were Climate Camp and G20 Melt-down. There are rumours that London anarchists found it hard to work together with them. How did you get on?

As with all events thrown together under high pressure and with very little time, political differences and personal tensions did result in some difficult meetings. For all the criticisms of the G20 Meltdown group, they did manage to sustain media interest and pull off their action on the day. Whilst some may not see their action as being particularly ambitious, political or structurally sound (as some critics have said), they did a lot more than any of the Anarchist groups in London did. Most of us organised independently but under their banner on the day. As for the Climate Camp... well... I'm not gonna get into too much mudslinging as I have better things to do but they have definitely made some unwelcome contributions to the argument over diversity of tactics vs. pacifist witch-

hunting.

The focus of most activist groups was very much on the anti-bank protests rather than on attempts to oppose the G20 summit. Was it a missed opportunity to disrupt a major gathering of world leaders or have we simply moved away from the anti-summit protests?

Simply put, the opportunity wasn't there. Try looking at the ExCel Centre on a map and you'll understand why. Even those outside our milieu described the G20 as largely pointless - better to have an action in the rotten, beating heart of capitalism

than on its fringes! Also, Bank is right next to Whitechapel so we have a vested interest!!

How would you evaluate the days of action, considering there were only a few broken windows, countless head injuries and a killed bystander? What would you have counted as success?

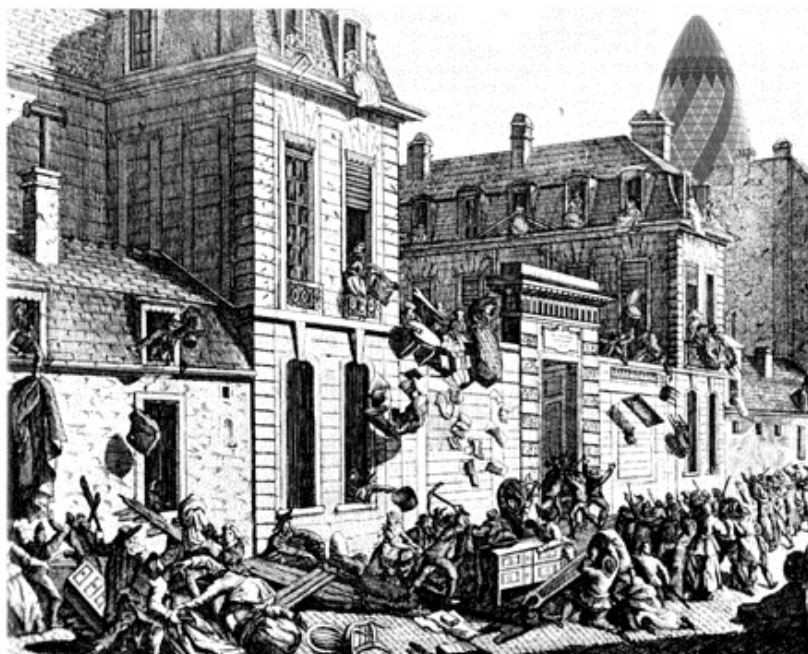
In terms of lessons learned, let's hope it is a massive success. There is a lot of scope for reflection and a lot of room for development - in terms of street direct action and long-term political strategy. It was what it was, and I think we've come out the better for it. Emphasis was placed on police brutality, but I think this reflects the politics of the people there. For those who went there to confront - albeit symbolically - a political and economic system, this was pretty much standard. A few blows to their side, a few blows to ours. Chris Knight claimed it to be the revolution, for many of us it was just another day at the office! Ian Tomlinson was killed by the police, and the truly tragic part is it takes a man to be murdered for people to give a toss about the function of police in our society. He may simply have been on his way home for work, but he has come to stand for something much more. He has reminded us that we are not doing this simply for a laugh, that we are against capitalism because it is against us, that we are not after some hippie utopian dream but the end of a system of terror. We feel nothing but compassion for this man we never knew, and in solidarity with him and all others who have lost their life or liberty in the pursuit of anarchy, and for our own selves, we continue our struggle.

<http://whitechapelanarchistgroup.wordpress.com/>

EMERGENCY EDITION

★CITY FINAL

STORM THE BANKS!



**APRIL 1ST 12 NOON
BANK OF ENGLAND**

WWW.G-20MELTDOWN.ORG

Steph Davies

kettles, cake and bunting at the G20

For me the G20 was a crazy mix of potential, missed opportunities, conflict and division. As someone with their feet in several 'camps' I felt torn...should I go to the autonomous march? Should I swoop with the Climate Camp? More than anything, I wanted both protests to converge in a beautiful, messy way. Now that would be a threat...

There were some great things about Wednesday: the scale of the autonomous march, taking a street in the heart of the financial district and holding it for 13 hours, giving workshops, and the RBS action. All this despite a staggering police operation, which resulted in the death of Ian Tomlinson.

The most disempowering thing for me on Wednesday wasn't the state response, or the scale of the problems we are protesting against. It was how quickly we bought their hype, and how quickly we were divided. It's always easier to point the finger and scapegoat other groups rather than sit

back and take a long hard look at your actions, and as activists, we are no exception to this.

Cake and bunting? [see the article on guardian.co.uk, written by Plane Stupid activist Leila Deen titled 'G20: The Cake and Bunting Revolution'] It ain't enough. Sorry... Environmentalists (myself included) often talk in scary statistics. Most people agree that the time for action is now. In order to bring about mass scale social change we definitely need movement building. But what about movement strengthening? Sometimes it seems like people are so desperate to get new people involved they stop listening to those who are dissenting. The climate camp created a space for direct democracy, critical theory and positive solutions, but where was the attack? People often get politicised by going on demonstrations, but few would state that this was enough. Positive solutions must be part of any model of social change...but sadly, the state isn't going to back down to bunting. The lack of de-

fences at the climate camp made me painfully aware that it's time to reinforce what we've got if we really want to scale up to new levels of surveillance and control.

This does not mean that what happened at Bank was any more effective. Thousands of people occasionally throwing water bottles in the air and some Graff does not a revolution make. The police are scaling up their operations, and as a result of this, we need to face up to public order situations better, in a far more effective and confrontational way.

We talk about diversity of tactics but on Wednesday there were two main options: stand in a kettle in black or in rainbow coloured kooky charity shop chic. We need a combination of movement building and also strengthening networks that exist. For me, the climate camp is a brilliant method of outreach, and a great place to provide training and converge. But as an end in itself, is it really going to bring about mass scale social change or tackle the root

causes of climate change? It's undeniable that it's been a great tool for movement building, and it should be celebrated for that. But, as ever, a look to history is always helpful. Where did the climate camp come from and why are those who helped set it up walking away in droves? I still believe absolutely in the aims of the camp. It has been successful in creating a space from which direct action on climate issues can occur. The media response to the raid and arrest of the 114 activists in Nottingham is a testament to this. Direct action on climate change is now publicly acceptable. Now it's time to raise the stakes...

At the G20, none of us were up to the job. This is the disempowering truth. Black balaclavas or cake and bunting... neither weapon of choice was sufficient. Where were the affinity group solidarity actions from groups who didn't make it down to the capital? Why did so few break through police lines? Why was our response to the death of Ian Tomlinson and the Raids at Earl Street and the Rampart Centre a half-hearted demonstration? It's vital that we acknowledge these issues.

Divisions within the general climate movement have been increasing over the last few years, and it would seem to me that there is a kind of critical mass that can be carried along by it at any one time. As it's grown outwards and become a successful vehicle for movement building in relation to new people, others have left the process. I felt totally schizophrenic on Wednesday, wishing that we could be united in our dissent and believing that only then would

we really be a threat, but realising also that the split was real and that false unity is more dangerous than separation.

The whole day was carefully choreographed by the media and the police to ramp up the divisions: prior to the 'swoop' people could move freely by the bank of England. As soon as climate camp took Threadneedle St the bank protestors were kettled. Apart from those who broke the police line, the protest by Bank remained contained all day. Climate campers were allowed to roam free. On the dot of 7pm, the Bank kettle was lifted, and climate campers were then surrounded by a ring of steel until late in the evening, when people queued up to be searched and photographed. Those from bank were not allowed in, and many people from the camp were separated by the riot police who flanked the sides, isolating small groups and stopping anyone coming in until the site was baton charged at 2am. The climate camp would never have been allowed to continue if the eyes of the law hadn't mainly been on the G20 Melt-down...and as darkness fell, unsurprisingly, the 'good protesters' became the target of more police harassment..

Fluffy v. spiky? The debate has raged for years, and this is a new chapter with the same content. Good and bad protesters? Most people that I know are sceptical of the mainstream media, yet we all seem to have bought their narrative. Why are we talking about cake and bunting? Why are we using media spotlight to further outline divisions amongst groups fighting for social change? It's all a game, and

we are foolish to buy into it. This doesn't mean never interacting with the media, but why do their job of perpetuating stereotypes and belittling serious demands and key messages for them? Complicity between the main stream and the state is an interesting topic for analysis because it does not require an in depth analysis of our own politics. It's easier to look outside. What is truly disempowering is not the might of the media or their rhetoric; it's how quickly we buy into it and use it against each other.

Sometimes it feels like we really are at some mythical point of mass scale social change, and other times it feels lost amongst our own entrenched positions and lack of ability for critical analysis. Perhaps it's time to stop and take stock of our 'movements' before we build further on weak foundations... Why can't there be cake, bunting, violence and riots? Why can't the samba band provide a soundtrack or diversion for the black bloc? All these tactics have been used before, isn't it better to think about how we can compliment each other, rather than condemning? There is no one size fits-all tactic for sparking off mass-scale change. We need reflection, analysis and being open to different forms of action, and a desire for genuinely working on collective weaknesses.

Steph Davies has been working on various campaigns, from Climate Camp to No Borders and animal rights, for several years.



G20 diary



For some pretty good reasons, summit mobilizations were supposed to have fallen out of favor in recent years. But with the world's cameras zooming in on London for a meeting of world leaders in the middle of a recession that was throwing history wide open, suddenly everyone wanted a piece of the summit action!

The G20 mobilizations essentially took place for want of something better to do. Far from making good of the crisis, organizations across the spectrum of the left have remained in a state of rabbit in the headlights paralysis. The anticipated wave of labour militancy and invigoration of oppositional politics hasn't materialized. No significant political responses to the crisis have emerged, much less a movement. Maybe a big show of force on the streets of London was the spark required?

The last time world leaders met on British soil was 2005 for the G8 at Gleneagles. The counter mobilization was long and meticulous. Not this time – Christmas hangovers had barely faded before the scramble to prepare began. Political meetings were filled with a sense of panic, but also expectation. So how did it match up?

Saturday 28th

The Put People First (PPF) coalition was formed following the announcement of the London G20 in late 2008. Founded on the principle of 'people not profit', it draws together a dizzying array of organizations. Usual suspects like Oxfam, Greenpeace and the Jubilee Debt Campaign sit alongside smaller groups ranging from Sudanese Women for Peace to Performers Without Borders. There are even several Christian groups – witness the Salvation

Army marching unto class war! This is all knitted together with the combined might of the Trade Union Congress's 6 million members.

Their demonstration started the week of protest. Organizers speculated turnout would be the highest of any demonstration since the anti-war movement's peak in 2003. Titled 'Jobs, Justice and Climate', the march aimed for broad appeal. Whilst occupying the respectable political middle ground, this was no Make Poverty History, focusing on charitable handouts without challenging power. PPF instead attempts to interlink climate change with the global economic system and its negative impacts upon people near and far – asserting a co-ordinated response is necessary.

They succeeded in broad appeal. It was a veritable safari tour of the left in its natu-

ral habitat: Anarcho samba-bands alongside marching brass bands. Embroidered trade union banners mingled with environmentalists wearing green builders hats (some kind of peace gesture to the labour movement). There was even a couple of hundred clad in black for the 'militant workers bloc.' Broad yes, but the turnout was low - at 35,000 not even the biggest this year.

It's not hard to see why. In attempting to be as inclusive (i.e. vague) as possible in demands and politics, the crucial business of making bold, concrete demands that might actually inspire people hit by the recession to protest fell by the wayside. The hardcore from various organizations brought their pet issues along, and it became impossible to discern any meaning from the cacophony. It encapsulated the British left: tiny, fragmented, direction-

less. The march trudged tiredly into Hyde Park, some clustering around 'anarchists speakers corner', most went to be hectored by union bureaucrats at the main stage. Attention turned to Wednesday...

Monday 30th

Press coverage suggested massed ranks of anarchists were hidden around the city planning unimaginable destruction. For out-of-towners wanting to join in, it was very confusing. Either secrecy has increased dramatically, or there wasn't much happening. The 'convergence centre' announced on Indymedia was a 'hoax' to divert the police, apparently. Hard to stomach when stood outside in the rain.

To Ramparts and the London Anarchist Forum we went in search of information. The undercover Evening Standard journal-

ist wrote as if he'd infiltrated the 21st century gunpowder plot. In fact, nobody seemed to know what was going on. The Climate Camp was judged the 'most anarchist' option, causing your correspondent to choke on his lager. In fairness, the Camp does try to be inclusive, open and organized. G20 Meltdown just seemed a mess, with Chris Knight embarrassing 'the movement' with ludicrous media statements.

That night, Whitechapel's 'we're closing in' benefit fraud adverts got covered in Financial Fools Day posters. Funny, but also depressingly ridiculous. The bright press spotlight on the UK's anarchist scene cast a huge shadow against the wall, making many believe the approaching beast was a lot bigger than in reality.

Tuesday 31st

The elusive G20 Meltdown were tracked to a press conference outside the Bank of England. With the world listening, what would they say? With protective boarding being hammered into place all around, the representatives threw down a picnic blanket in front of a camera scrum and began to act the role demanded of them: strange, incoherent radicals. It's easy to dislike the slick Climate Camp media team, but I felt warm affection for them on this occasion. Almost pity. This time, they occupied the shadows.

Still in search of information for our affinity group, we head to the Foundry, a hip anarcho-cyclista-artista bar. Twitter and Facebook tell us of an open G20 Meltdown meeting there at 2pm. The Foundry is locked, with a FIT team outside. Half an hour passes, and dozens have abandoned hope and move on. When they arrive, there are more press than protesters, and we wait in line for information. Hearing that a large squat has been opened behind Liverpool Street station, we move on. Squatting an enormous office building in the financial district is no mean feat, but it came too late. The atmosphere was tense. Surrounded by particularly obnoxious cops and lacking numbers, a raid was expected from the start.



April 1st

Pick a horse, any horse! What symptom of global capitalism bugs you most – war (red)? Financial crisis (silver)? Enclosure (black)? Or climate chaos (green)? All will converge on the bank from different starting points. Alternatively, forget politics and think safety in numbers. Doing just that, we pick the silver horse. More people than expected, and the mood is as sunny as the weather. Reaching bank unimpeded is an additional surprise. The crowd is diverse, and the politics just as jumbled as PPF, but with more sound systems and less supervision. Drinking, dancing, chalking slogans on the wall and enjoying the spectacle. Nobody seems to notice the police sealing off the roads.

Trying to discern a message from the madness, the scapegoating of bankers, greed and speculation as the cause of the recession emerges strongest. Understandable, but it's a shame to see a 'radical' protest parroting mainstream analysis. Banners don't have to recite Das Capital vol. 1, but it's important to do better. The predictable consequence of this foreshortened critique is cooption of popular anger with curbs on bonuses and tax havens. Like the PPF, G20 Meltdown was based around vague principles rather than political demands – they're desperately needed if this is going to lead anywhere.

Getting out of the kettle was a stressful experience, but Climate Camp was the perfect place to relax. The police allowed the 'good protesters' and their cohort of Lib Dem MP's and Guardian columnists a relatively free reign initially. Bishopsgate was truly reclaimed. A friend who'd enjoyed the best of the Reclaim The Streets years commented: "the soundsystems are smaller, the music's worse, and people are on less drugs. But, people seem to have a better idea of what they're here for, there's more politics. And that's a good thing, maybe it's better!"

The European Carbon Exchange seemed a good target, if a bit obscure. It's good to see attempts to link climate change to the economic system when the tendency in the past has been to lament poor personal consumption habits. The demographic at



Bishopsgate was narrow compared to at Bank. An altogether classier breed of protester as style mag Grazia put it "smartly dressed ... young professionals, many of whom have never demonstrated before." The organic food stall – 'farmers markets not carbon markets' – seemed apt.

Expecting clashes elsewhere, pacifism defined the Camp's efforts. More than just a simple grab at mainstream legitimacy, it seemed an attempt to distinguish the camp from the nasty protesters down the road – the ones who weren't basing their protest on SCIENTIFIC FACT! When police advanced, 'this is not a riot' resounded. Every twitter post and press statement reaffirmed the non-violence. Besides that old chestnut of reaffirming the state's monopoly of violence, in the immediate present it makes life hard for protesters wanting to resist being penned in and beaten. The good protester/bad protester divide was erected by those who are normally on

the wrong side of it.

As evening drew in, things got rougher – both at Bank, and despite all the pleas, at the camp too. News of the tragic consequences of this police violence filtered out as the night wore on. The streets of the square mile were eerily quiet but for roving packs of riot police attempting to round up the remaining protesters.

April 2nd

The day of the summit. Time to 'shut them down'? Apparently not, everyone thought. The Excel centre seemed far away for tired legs and bruised bodies. No organizations issued a call for a protest. These meetings are just photo shoots anyway, attempts to portray stewardship over a system that is beyond control. Or so I told myself when the alarm went off.

All attention was already focused on the



death of Ian Tomlinson. A vigil at Bank was called for 1pm. As the afternoon wore on hundreds arrived. The media happily replicated police press releases. People who'd been at the scene were contesting their version of events, but at this stage nobody wanted to listen. People talked about a cover up, 'another de Menezes' unfolding. Although police tactics the previous day weren't remarkable, everyone had upsetting stories to tell. There was a sense of being on the back foot – pleading for the authorities to go easy, rather than threatening more unrest. The crowds disappeared without trace by early evening, people drifting back to the places they live and work to re-enter the relations they'd been trying to break the previous day. Then the news began to filter through of Visteon workers occupying factories in Enfield and Belfast.

April 3rd

Not ready to drift back, we board a coach at dawn to Strasbourg for the anti-militarist protests against NATO's 60th birthday celebration. A tough decision – 12 hours aboard a Stop the War Coalition coach was the price to pay. Twelve turned to 18, and exhausted we blundered through barricades into the convergence

campsite, with 'the need for party discipline' ringing in our ears. Battles with the police had been running for a couple of days now apparently, and of an intensity that made London look like a picnic. The slogan, 'you make war, we make trouble' seemed to sum up the approach.

April 4th

The 'No to Nato' demo had been called by a European coalition of NGO's and peace groups – the majority German and French. Autonomous groups had also mobilized, and were first out of bed. It was pretty hard to tell that you were on an anti-militarism protest. The prevalent politics was anti-authoritarian. Ignoring pleas to keep things calm so the organized march could go ahead, a series of blockades were set up in the morning, igniting running battles with the police. Several buildings were burnt to the ground, including, much to everybody's delight the customs building on the France – Germany border.

The differences with the London G20 were stark. As the windows of Threadneedle Street's RBS went in, the crowd screamed for people to stop – wouldn't want to look bad for the media after all! Whilst not everyone joined in the destruction, even

amongst the mainstream protesters it seemed accepted that violence against property, well, wasn't violence. The French police were met with a hail of stones and fireworks, the reply was endless teargas. UK police have an easier task, people generally police themselves. The passivity allows for the kettling, searches and surveillance. Further teargassing cut short the speeches at the demonstration's official start point. The march got off to a chaotic start, and finished soon after. The police blocked the bridges leading out of the suburbs – sticks and stones were powerless to budge them.

John Archer is based in Manchester, and writes and campaigns on a variety of issues

interview with marina pepper

Your public strategy in the run-up to the protests at Bank was rather unorthodox. On the one hand you stressed your image of tea-drinking hippies, on the other hand people from your group spoke of immanent revolution and 'mutually assured destruction' if the police attacked. Was this deliberate?

Tea drinking I am sure you know really is hardly the preserve of hippies. Tea drinking as a pastime and a ritual is symbolic on many levels. Tea drinking fueled the Blitz spirit, the American Revolution (think Boston tea party), it's served at funerals, in cricket pavilions. The Queen drinks it, the workers drink it. No problem is ever worse after a cup of it. I've long been serving it on the frontline because it breaks the ice. Somehow the police are more trusting when you have a bone china cup of Darjeeling and a saucer in your hand. It goes so well with cake, too.

The idea of drinking tea and sharing food allowed us to promote the idea that coming out to G20 Meltdown was spikey enough, in that we were going to close the city roads, but a positive, civilized affair all the same. Like in the Asterix comic: when Asterix and friends fought the English, everyone stopped fighting to take tea. We were facilitating not a riot, but a very English revolution – as opposed to a Greek one – to which all races and nations were invited, to come and get stuck in.

It was all going so well. Then one individual got carried away. I guess it was in response to the police describing the future as a "summer of rage", statements suggesting

the police were "up for it." Very unhelpful. I was beside myself when I saw the first interview on Channel 4 regarding mutually assured destruction.

The fact is, he had no right to offer mutually assured destruction as an option because, quite frankly, we didn't have that kind of army available to match the threat. As was proven when the police got heavy and we all fell to their truncheons and shields. If we'd been any sort of destructive threat, Molotovs would surely have materialized. But they didn't.

After the marches with the four horses of the apocalypse, people were kettled for hours at Bank - for many this felt very disempowering. Some blamed the disorganisation and possible tactical errors made by the G20 Meltdown group. Could it have been avoided?

In the early meetings many experienced protesters voiced their concerns that kettling could be problematical. As we couldn't rule it out, we decided to use it to our advantage. Let the police blockade the roads, much easier than us having to do it. So that was the plan. Bring tea, cake, food to share, something to sit on, music etc and enjoy the kettle. I think it worked to a certain extent.

But so many people came who were new to direct action, who thought they were on a march or something. They came without any supplies. We put our kettle on and people kept asking to buy tea from us. We said: "We'll swap you tea for your water." They didn't even have water with them.

Kettling can be – and was for many – disempowering. It's boring – and extremely annoying when you need the loo. We have to overcome this by utilising the time. I wish we'd had half the artists they had floating round at climate camp. We needed more entertainment – although the reggae band kept us going on Threadneedle St. A makeshift ladies loo over a drain materialized. More such initiatives were needed.

Tactically, by starting at four railway stations and by having enough push in us to keep us moving (well done guys and gals who kept the Black Horse moving) we split the police. Always the plan. Once kettled at the bank the job was a good un, as they say. No traffic moving around the Bank of England. A blockade using shear numbers. Result. Tactically, we should have spent more time empowering people by telling them what to bring and then organizing once there. Could we have pushed off again in four directions? And if so, what then? What if? Who knows? Were we ready for what might have ensued?

Once again, one person from the Meltdown core group had his own plan for the day, taking off to UEL for some old codgers meeting of Old Labour. Like that's useful. Staying put was the better plan. We had responsibilities to the crowd. I feel that certain core members let the people down. But all is not lost. We have started something. Many of us have learned from the experience and have strengthened our networks. I'm not getting a sense of "never again." Quite the opposite. Groups like Climate Camp, Climate Rush, the Whitechapel Anarchist Group, while not likely to take up arms, are radicalized now more than ever. We are more serious about what needs to be done. We're upping our game,

creatively, effectively, for the long haul. And we have stronger international networks now. I'm in contact with Greece and Italy. I have friends in France. We are one.

On the G20 Meltdown website the stated aims for the protest on the 1st April were to 'participate in a carnival party at the Bank of England' and to 'overthrow capitalism'. Do you think it's possible to create political change using carnival tactics?

Carnival tactics are one tactic. Carnival is has the harlequin at its heart, who resists all authority in a topsy turvy world with the people taking the power, the fool be-

ing king for the day. Carnival releases us from the boundaries of the everyday norm. It is an excellent starting point. And the media loves it. If it can't get a riot, it will settle for a carnival. God, anything to get us away from boring A-B marching on the one hand, and Molotov lobbing on the other.

Carnival gave birth to theatre, the first example of mass media, crowds experiencing the same emotions together. Think Ancient Greece. So empowering, so powerful.

Carnival is the way to get people up off their sofas, out of their houses and on with the action. It is most definitely a way forward for mass disobedience: civilized

or otherwise, if we're serious about stopping capitalism. Carnival is a great mobilizing tactic. But it's as well as, not instead of, small autonomous groups doing the serious damage eg, where it hurts!

When we become too expensive to police, capitalism will fail. And if they send in the army? The British Army won't be up for shooting down a Carnival.

How did the J18 protests in the City of London 10 years ago influence your tactical and political aims?

Me personally? I'll be honest. In 1999 I had two children under the age of two and was working seven days a week, stopping only to breast feed and instruct the nanny. I didn't even know J18 had occurred.

My political focus back then was climate change and waste, real nappies and organic farming. I thought you changed the world by exposing the problems – I was a journalist. Naively I felt if people knew what was wrong we'd all pull together and sort it. AS IF!

I even got involved in local politics – for my sins I'm still my community's representative on the Town Council. I think 9/11 and the launch of the "war on terror" has held everyone back. It's a bit like the suffragette movement which called a "ceasefire" during WW1. On top of that, people felt they were benefiting from the boom or bubble years. Buying their homes, shopping for stuff, all on credit, obviously, but it's not something people wanted to discuss. They just wanted to strut around in their new kitchens in their new outfits, downing wine from a buy two get one free deal. It stopped them thinking about the overdraft.

G20 was the first opportunity for the movement to thrust forward, having learned not just from J18 but from G8 and Make Poverty History. With the crunch and the bail outs enough people could finally see the bleeding obvious: don't ask the problem for solutions. We are the solution. No apathy, no extremism and no wrist bands. Let's imagine it differently and implement.

With the scales falling from so many peoples' eyes right now, we have an almost

WWW.G-20MELTDOWN.ORG

**G20
MELTDOWN**

Get active!
Take the day off work.
Come to London.
Soak up the carnival atmosphere and make a stand!

**BANK OF ENGLAND
12 NOON APRIL 1ST**

MASS STREET PARTY

World Leaders are holding the G20 summit in London to talk about 'fixing' the Global Economy. Let them hear **your** views on important issues such as: Climate Change, Housing, Unemployment and War for Oil.

See you there!

self-mobilizing movement to work with. At last!

Already after J18, people said that we shouldn't just limit ourselves to criticism of the financial sector and of banks. Wasn't the anti-banker position that G20 meltdown took a bit populist?

Of course Meltdown was populist. Money is what people care about. They feel so let down. That could be seen as problematical for an anti-capitalist movement. But let's deal with the world as it is, not as it ought to be – that comes later. My feeling is you get people out on money, then through mixing it up with climate change, war, land issues and the squatting fraternity, people will come to understand it's all part of the same problem: capitalism.

I only realized that relatively recently. I had to overcome the style issues presented by the anti-capitalist movement. I got to my thinking first through Climate Camp and have become totally convinced through meeting and working with Anarchists, who to my mind have it largely spot on.

But it's too early to bandy Anarchy around the place. We're fighting too many preconceived ideas. Maybe we have to dispense with all the old descriptions. Right now we need numbers and new blood. At G20 Meltdown and Climate Camp in the City we enabled thousands of new people to participate in anti-capitalist actions. This wasn't your average summit hopping event, it was a mass of people expressing their need for a better world who don't know yet quite how to express it.

Money issues are to anti-capitalism what the polar bear is to the climate change movement – not the point, but a way in. I disliked the hanging a banker vibe – although in many cultures puppets and voodoo dolls have a healing role to play. Just as burning effigies does it for the bonfire crowd in Lewes to this day. But the whole banker thing was a bit too literal for me. Our other messages got lost. Bankers aren't the problem, they are the servants of the system. The system needs profits. This drive for profits is what gives us all the other problems. "Only following or-

ders" is no excuse, but let's go for those giving the orders as well.

Following the death of Ian Tomlinson, everyone talks about police violence. It is clear that 'mutually assured destruction' did not take place. How could we have protected ourselves better?

Barricade and enemy dispersal, eg: roll cars, set them alight and lob Molotov cocktails over the top? I jest.

«Money issues are to anti-capitalism what the polar bear is to the climate change movement – not the point, but a way in. I disliked the hanging a banker vibe»

Look, I saw many people who received worse treatment than that meted out to Ian Tomlinson. He was so unlucky. I personally was thrown to the ground, hit with a shield and squashed against a wall. I saw a woman dragged along by her hair and dogs set on people who were already lying on the ground and certainly not fighting back other than to cover their faces. I have many friends who received bruises the size of dinner plates from repeated bashings on the legs from truncheons.

So what could have been done differently? Nothing much at the time. It's what we do from now that counts. We learn lessons, regroup, re-form and go again, varying tactics. The element of surprise is our best advantage – if we can work round police surveillance.

If we're going to be kettled, let's get kettled in useful places with lock-ons, glue-ons and tripods. Let's go for the worst offending businesses – the war machine, the fossil fuel industries, let's make it impossible for the politicians to continue with business as usual.

But we could also do more – as the movement grows – to ensure we act as one and know why we're acting. The Bank of England didn't have the drinking problem that arose at Climate Camp (because we were kettled from the outset). A decision was taken to keep hold of Bishopsgate overnight. But there were lots of people in the crowd who'd come for the craic. You can't hold a road if you're drunk. There were no blockades at all. That's why it was so easy to shift everyone.

"No drinking" is a message I'm hearing – and I listen a lot. I'm also hearing: "this is only the beginning." I personally – and lots agree – feel that we mustn't get bogged down in this "police brutality" issue, because quite frankly, this wasn't the worst we've seen and it won't be the worst we'll see, especially when the cops are dealing with food riots. The idea of protesting against policing with specific protests is ridiculous. Just go and protest – against war, capitalism, climate change inertia. Go take a building and transform it into an autonomous social space. That's how to address policing issues: on the real front-line, not on some union-backed vigil-heavy posturing parade.

I won't suggest we have to be peaceful about it – "peaceful" is such a lame over-used and misused word. Let's keep focused on why and how we want the world to change. Let's be provocative. Let's keep them guessing. Let's keep the kettle on, tea in the pot, love in our hearts and a riot up our sleeve. And if we only manage to change the world enough to create common spaces and new lives to opt out to, then so be it. We'll have made enough of a difference for those of us who realize the authority we face is a false one. This is our world too and we'll build it anew if we want to. Now is the time. Up the revolution!

Marina Pepper was interviewed as a member of the G20 Meltdown group.

violence and red-green

Anarchists are communists too. The question of climate change cannot be adequately dealt with by a philosophy, but to inform how we organise ourselves to stop the causes and deal with the political effects of climate change, we must look to communist philosophies. For us, this is the challenge of Red-Green: not to provide a Marxist or Anarchist reading of climate change, but to eke out the strategies and tactics where we can in order to progress our politics. In many ways, this distinction is well thought through by the term Ecologism (rather than environmentalism): Ecology suggests a total reworking of how we live and interact with each other and with a world beyond ourselves as human individuals or units, or rather, suggests a total unity of the world outside and inside. Is this not, at the heart of it, the same as the Communist hypothesis?

When we say that anarchists are communists, this is based on the premise that the entire concept of party-communism is essentially dead. There can be no serious attempt to resurrect ghosts of one-party states and voting for the revolutionary party. But this does not mean turning our backs on the concept of a labour movement, or the very basis of the communist hypothesis: that of a single humanity, working as a whole - albeit a diverse, frac-

tured and fragmented unity. What follows is essentially a very brief intervention, in which we want to breath some life into what is currently seen as a subsection of our movement, but should be (and possibly is) its very core.

Violence & (power)

Common-sensically, there are two essential ways of getting what you want: violence and power. The general adage is that power comes through violence: the government gets to do what it wants because it has the police and the military, and use their violent means to achieve their ends. Another equally common phrase attests otherwise: 'violence ensued because of a vacuum of power'. In other words, where there is no power, there is violence. Similarly, where there is no violence, it is because there is power.

Let's think of it in terms of a cocktail. In the first instance, our two ingredients of violence and power are in the same glass, mixed up together. Violence and power, whatever their individual flavours and colours, are always presented in the same drink. In the second formulation, they are always in two separate glasses: violence in one, power in the other. If you've got one drink, you certainly don't have the other.

However, there is another way. What if there is actually only one cocktail, and the other one is just imagined? Let's assume that violence really does exist - it certainly seems so when baton meets body. Now, in order to have a drink, we need to also know that the drink may not have existed at all, and may not in future. Its entire existence is based on this idea of its own non-existence. So our one and only drink - Violence - is defined by the possibility of an empty glass. Nothingness makes us uncomfortable: it's too difficult to understand. So instead we fill in the idea of the absence with something else, fantasising that there is something in the empty glass. This imagined drink would be power.

So what is power? It's a catch-all term for anything that isn't violence, for a fictive opposite of violence. That's why we spend so long trying to work out where power lies: the media? Charisma? The public? The solution is that power is not a thing in itself. This is really important for understanding any potential labour movement. We cannot look to fictive focuses of change in order to actually affect change. So it would seem that the media, party politics, opinion polls- all these are quite literally nothing, compared with the actuality of material effects of violence.

Imaginative Labour

As has been pointed out by socialist feminists in the 1970s and Italian economists more recently, our modes of labour have fundamentally shifted. To what geographical extent this is true is a moot point, but certainly in the UK cognitive, immaterial and affective labour has become a dominant part of capitalist life. It would be quite possible to argue that the unpaid labour which occurs in the upkeep of a material labour force (more often than not women maintaining men) has always been dominant. But we can vaguely separate out two kinds of immaterial labour here, which we'll label Upkeep and Office Work.

email lists may unfortunately confuse the matter, and the whole process is certainly not perfected. But the degree of spontaneity and ease with which the virtual occupied space was created was really quite incredible.

Secondly, the Visteon occupation. Not seemingly spurred by the student movement actions or the G20 actions, except in perhaps providing an opportune moment for Ford to hide a bad story behind the glare of politicians' smiles, the Visteon occupation was quickly seen by socialist and anarchist groups as a site of political importance. What could have happened, I'll come back to. But what was important is

that a workers movement must be organised from within, that we cannot bring direct action to the workers. But once we realise that imaginative labour is the workers movement for us, it becomes clear that the ways in which we use the limited skills of imaginative labour in order to take control is what we've been doing all along. What was astonishing at Visteon, was that with the G20 protests having just occurred, it turned out we were less organised, rather than more. During the G20 itself, as the police presence increased, it became apparent that we hadn't developed in advance the tools we needed to make good decisions quickly: affinity groups, consensus decision making, spokes coun

«the solidarity the workers seemed most interested in was the offer of being taught consensus decision-making»

What has all this to do with violence? Well, the sheer materiality, the physicality of violence helps support the case for organising and agitating the workers within the structure of a material labour system. Old-style communisms often focus on the ability for workers to change what is happening because they have material control over society, because they quite physically control the factories themselves. But if this has shifted, where are we left?

Yes, Office-Workers' Climate Action sounds a bit strange, but it's movements like this which might actually be able to salvage the red from the green. Capitalism gives us things, it creates the seeds of its own destruction, to paraphrase a dialectic. And that which capitalism creates in the processes of imaginative labour are often the exact things we need and use for activism in today's world.

To mention two examples: Firstly, the Internet. During the wave of university teach-ins prompted by the atrocities in Gaza earlier this year, it became apparent quite how powerful a tool the Internet has become. Not simply through its own technology, but our familiarity with it. Every teach-in had a facebook group and a blog, some events actually seeming to start online before they ruptured into the campus itself. A range of Internet forums and

that the solidarity the workers seemed most interested in was the offer of being taught consensus decision-making. This is not just a symptom of desiring better management, but for some kind of genuine imaginative expression - through the political.

Better tactics, not just theory

What did become clear during the Visteon occupation, was that, as campaigns acting in solidarity, we lacked the tactics necessary to really help the workers in any immediate way. There were, however, some good ideas proposed: to set up a mini Climate Camp outside the factory; to bring a tea stall or kitchen, so that we could provide food for supporters. As a possible eviction grew in potential, locking-on and barricading bubbled up in conversation. This was all a deep contrast to the Red-Green solidarity of Put People First on March 28th, where Workers Climate Action (and the Alliance for Workers Liberty) marched side by side with the Rail, Marine and Transport Workers Union. Making banners and writing flyers is important - but if we are to progress with a workers politics, especially with regards to climate change, our tactics must be more inventive, and more direct.

Of course, the political breaking point is

cils, and the like.

We are a workers movement. We are students in marketised universities and office workers constantly in the process of imaginative labour. Sometimes we are material labourers too. Taking the tools capitalism provides us with is still a question of revolutionary discipline, and the key to this is tooling up for democracy. If we're serious about climate change and building a mass movement quickly, we need to encourage imaginative insurrection as much as an insurrectionary imagination. Violence in Red-Green is not a question of finding a way for Communism to bypass violence and direct action in the name of power (or of the People), but realising that we as a labour movement can provide the imaginative tools necessary to dream up more effective ways of organising and affecting change - violent or otherwise.

The Theorillas [Theory-Guerillas] are a theory affinity group set up to throw some questions and thoughts into our movement - think of it like little thoughtful gifts. Kudos to all other gift-givers, both thought and actions).

Raphael Schlembach

politics or pathology? review of the baader-meinhof complex

On the day of the premiere for the German blockbuster *Baader-Meinhof Complex*, a group of left-wing *Autonome* threw rocks and paint-filled bottles at the villa of bestselling author Stefan Aust and started a fire at the front door. Stefan Aust's non-fiction book *Baader-Meinhof Complex*, with 500,000 copies sold, provided the background study for the film of the same name. Aust was also a close collaborator to Bernd Eichinger's script and Uli Edel's direction. The trio hail their work as a historical intervention into the contemporary debates on terrorism. Aust is more than just the extremely lucky – and now extremely rich – author of the *Baader-Meinhof Complex*. He has led, in the past decades, the academic, journalistic and cinematographic vision of the *Red Army Faction* – as author, in a number of TV productions and as editor-in-chief for the major politics magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The blockbuster film version tells the story of the *Baader-Meinhof* gang from the late 1960s to the 'German Autumn' in 1977. A radicalised generation of students fights against the failed denazification of West Germany, against their parents' authori-

tarianism, and against what they perceive as the new face of fascism: US imperialism. When pacifist student Benno Ohnesorg is shot dead during a demonstration on 2 June 1967 and a right-wing fanatic nearly kills popular student leader Rudi Dutschke less than a year later, parts of the movement begin to adopt more militant tactics.

The attack on Aust's villa in the noble-district of Hamburg-Blankenese is a sign that a small part of the German *Autonome* movement continues to agitate along the lines of the *RAF's* anti-imperialism and still justifies its methods. The *Baader-Meinhof Complex* is not only an attempt to come to terms with episodes of left-wing terrorism in Germany's past but also helps to condemn those tactics in the present. However, rather than making a political argument against them it attempts to depoliticize – and pathologize.

The book's and film's title should be enough indication of the political direction that Aust, Eichinger and Edel take. The militant and armed struggles of the 1970s – of the *RAF* and the 2 June move-

ment in Germany, the *Brigade Rosse* in Italy, or November 17 in Greece – are seen as the result of a psychological complex of a young, naïve, but frustrated element of the hippie generation. The extreme violence portrayed in the film is explained as a mere pathology – not based on ideological thinking but on psychology alone. The idea that you'd have to be 'mad' to advocate or even practice violence and terror as political tools characterises the *Baader-Meinhof Complex*.

Take the depiction of Ulrike Meinhof. With her articles in the magazine *Konkret* she was the voice of a whole generation of students and leftists. In the film she at best provides the 'theoretical' voice-over for Andreas Baader's adventurist and macho escapades. At worst her appearance strikes the viewer as naïve, timid and intimidated by the 'deeds-not-words' actionism of the *Baader clique*. Her decision to join the gang into illegality is shown as impulsive, rather than the result of the ideological escalation of her own beliefs. Even when she leaves behind her children, against all her previous principles, it is other members of the group that speak for

Anarchistische Gewalttäter

- Baader/Meinhof-Bande -

Wegen Beteiligung an Morden, Sprengstoffverbrechen, Banküberfällen und anderen Straftaten werden steckbrieflich gesucht:



Meinhof, Ulrike
M. 2. 11. 1926, Berlin



Baader, Andreas
A. 2. 12. 1942, Berlin



Ensslin, Gudrun
G. 2. 11. 1940, Berlin



Meinhof, Holger
H. 1. 11. 1941, Berlin



Dambach, Renate
R. 1. 11. 1942, Berlin



Gelsowatz, Petra
P. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Schmecke, Jürgen
J. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Isenhardt, Ingrid
I. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Knippenberg, Godefrid
G. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Gerner, Rainer
R. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Jurgens, Sabina
S. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Ottinger, Ulrike
U. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Engelke, Ulrike
U. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Gysi, Gert
G. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Kluge, Heide
H. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Jurgens, Sabina
S. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Frey, Hans-Joachim
H. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Knippenberg, Godefrid
G. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin



Gerner, Rainer
R. 2. 11. 1944, Berlin

Für Hinweise, die zur Ergreifung der Gesuchten führen, wird insgesamt 100 000 DM Belohnung ausgesetzt, die sich für Beamte bestimmt sind, zu denen Berufspflichten die Verfolgung strafbarer Handlungen gehört. Die Zuerkennung wird die Verurteilung erfolgen unter Ausschluss des Rechtsweges.

Mitteilungen, die auf Wunsch vertraulich behandelt werden, nehmen entgegen.

Bundeskriminalamt - Abteilung Sicherungsgruppe -
53 Postfach 60400, Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 1 - Telefon 02229 / 33001
oder jede Polizeidienststelle

Vorsicht! Diese Gewalttäter machen von der Schußwaffe rücksichtslos Gebrauch!

her. Her suicide in Stammheim prison is finally no longer a protest against the prison complex and the conditions of her imprisonment. In the end it comes across as no more than apologetic self-justice or as the only possible frustrated attempt to leave the RAF and its violent campaign.

Already Meinhof's first – and, in the view of Aust and Eichinger, fatal – decision to leave behind the bourgeois idyll of nude beaches and garden parties for the revolutionary milieu is not one she takes out of political motivation: she is simply driven away by her cheating husband. But here, here credentials as a radical journalist do her no favour. She is repeatedly challenged by über-activist Gudrun Ensslin for her intellectualism. For the film makers, the Baader-Meinhof group still had to abandon its political and theoretical baggage before it could begin its campaign of terror.

In stark contrast to Meinhof is the character of Andreas Baader. Baader's first appearance is with a bottle of beer in his hand, making petrol bombs with the other, and telling his friends that they should burn down a department store. Macho, womanizer, drinker – Baader comes across more like a Wild West villain than as the political leader of a revolutionary group. With his liking for fast cars, drugs and guns, he is action hero – not terrorist, bandit – not revolutionary. Armed struggle was certainly a major tenet for the RAF, with the Heckler & Koch machine gun as its logo. But Baader's continuous racist and misogynist outbursts reinforce the image that he's in it for the thrill, not political change.

A third character plays the role of the measured and rational antagonist to the raging Baader. Bruno Ganz, who previously played the figure of Adolf Hitler in Eichinger's *Downfall*, is persuasive in his role of Horst Herold, the president of West Germany's national police force (BKA) and the RAF's enemy number one. Only that Herold, who in the 1970s vowed "we'll get them all", is portrayed more as an understanding and intelligent chief-of-police who sees the root of the problem not in terrorism, but in the "objective" wars and social conditions that have radicalized a generation. What is needed according to

the film character is not a police operation but political change. Meanwhile the real Herold was ousted from his job in 1981. His controversial methods of treating as suspect everyone with radical left-wing views had led to accusations of a police and surveillance state.

The RAF's anti-imperialism

More important than the characters that the film presents, is what it only alludes to – the RAF's political motivation. Other than describing it as a group made up of drop-outs, hippies and macho activists, this is where the film really fails to make any significant commentary on the political situation in West Germany at the time. The first attempt at showing the social conditions, the repression and brutality of police forces, comes right at the beginning. Other than the rest of the film it is highly dramatised and exaggerated, ending in the killing of student Benno Ohnesorg, underlined with dramatic music like a theatrical piece.

«Meinhof too reiterated the message of revisionist and Holocaust denier David Irving that Dresden turned the anti-Hitler war into fascist barbarism»

The RAF's anti-imperialism is portrayed vividly in an early scene when Gudrun Ensslin storms out of her conservative-religious home dominated by her priest-father. The first step towards rebellion against the state is rebellion against one's parents, it seems. Next up, Rudi Dutschke and his student audience at the Berlin Vietnam congress, consumed by a quasi-religious revolutionary fever, react to the

only pro-war protester with passionate chants of "Ho- Ho- Ho-Chi-Minh". Ensslin adds a few derogatory comments about consumerism in America.

But a seemingly significant, almost apocalyptic camera shot, goes almost unnoticed. In front of the flames of a burning Springer Press building (the symbol of mass media collusion with war and capital) stands the lonesome figure of a bare-chested hippie. Directed at the night sky, he repeatedly shouts his political message: "Dresden! Hiroshima! Vietnaaaam!". All three refer to large-scale bombing campaigns against US American enemies. Taken together, however, their political meaning is equated, or forgotten altogether. While 'Vietnam' was the disastrous US war that mobilized the RAF's generation, 'Hiroshima (and Nagasaki)' were nuclear attacks on the Empire of Japan towards the end of World War II. The air raids on the East German city of Dresden, however, were much smaller in scale and were carried out by British and American air forces in February 1945 during the allied war against Hitler's Third Reich.

The comparison of the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima is a central demand of neo-Nazis today, who refer to the allied air raids as a holocaust, also equating it with the Nazi Holocaust against Europe's Jews. Already in 1965, Meinhof too reiterated the message of revisionist and Holocaust denier David Irving that Dresden turned the anti-Hitler war into fascist barbarism. The film scene is an indication of the political turn that would come for some of the Baader-Meinhof group.

Most striking of course is the direction taken by Horst Mahler, prominent lawyer and RAF founding-member, who in the Baader-Meinhof Complex organized the group's trip to the Jordanian PLO training camp and appears complete with Castro-style cap. Mahler spent years in prison for left-wing terrorism where he made his complete conversion to neo-Nazism. Later, he became a member of Germany's far right party, the NPD, successfully defending it in lawsuits brought by the German government. He has been back in court and prison several times since, for Holocaust denial and showing the Hitler salute, providing him with a welcome platform

for anti-Semitic and xenophobic remarks.

The film's failure to look at that side of the RAF's politics is also picked up on by Hans Kundnani in the review for Prospect magazine. Kundnani spots Abu Hassan, the leader of the early Arab terrorist group Black September, appearing in the film as the commandant of a PLO training camp in Jordan. Black September was later responsible for the killing of 11 Israeli athletes and a police man at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane. They demanded the release of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof alongside 230 Palestinian prisoners.

Kundnani writes:

“What the movie omits, however, is the bizarre communiqué Meinhof—the designated ‘voice’ of the RAF—wrote from jail celebrating the killing of the Israeli athletes as a model for the West German left. Meinhof's weird logic illustrates the arc of anti-Semitism on the German New Left that began well before the RAF, with the bombing of a Jewish Community Centre in West Berlin on November 9th 1969, the anniversary of Kristallnacht [the first Nazi anti-Jewish pogrom]. This left-wing anti-Semitism culminated in the Entebbe hijacking in 1976, in which two German members of the Revolutionary Cells—another terrorist group to emerge out of the West German student movement—and two members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked an Air France jet, flew it to Entebbe and separated the Jewish passengers and the non-Jewish passengers before Israeli commandos stormed the aircraft. And all of this from a student movement that began as a rebellion against the ‘Auschwitz generation’.”

Kundnani is right to highlight the mixture of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic ideology that became part of German anti-imperialism at least after the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and Syria, at the end of which Israel had gained control of Gaza and the West Bank. Few in the ‘Free Gaza/Palestine’ movement today make reference to the RAF, the Revolutionary Cells or Black September though the connection between Arab liberation

movements and Marxist-Leninist armed struggle groups is interesting, if only insofar as it shows its political limitations.

German nationalism

While one might spot a critique of left-wing anti-Semitism in the Baader-Meinhof Complex, the political career trajectories of some other RAF protagonists—those who don't even feature in the film—are left completely unaccounted for. Most importantly there is Otto Schily. Friends with both Rudi Dutschke and Horst Mahler, he was also the defence lawyer first for Mahler and then for Gudrun Ensslin. He was also a key figure contesting the suicide of Baader and Ensslin, accusing the German state of murder. In 1980, he was co-founder of the German Green Party and then quickly succeeded in a career as Member of Parliament, for the Greens and then the Social Democrats. From 1998-2005 he was Minister of State for Home Affairs. Here Schily became synonymous with new draconian anti-terror legislation, surveillance measures against political opponents of the Federal Republic, and the scrapping of data protection laws.

«government ministers began their political careers in the revolutionary scene of the RAF years»

Other government ministers, including ex-foreign minister Joschka Fischer and ex-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, began their political careers in the revolutionary scene of the RAF years—Schröder even as lawyer of RAF member, turned neo-Nazi, Horst Mahler. When two police men were left injured after Molotov attacks at a demonstration commemorating Ulrike Meinhof's death, Fischer was arrested in connection with the attack—though never charged.

It is significant that today's political lead-

ers—Schily, Fischer, Schröder—do not feature in the film, as their departure from left-wing radicalism marked the stabilization of German society in the 1980s and 1990s, and also allowed for a new-found confidence of the re-unified state. The Baader-Meinhof Complex is a contribution to this new Germany and, despite its refusal to deal with the RAF's motivations, this makes it deeply political.

The importance that the cinematic version of Baader-Meinhof Complex has in the German national understanding should be made clear. The production was not only expensive; it is also an assemblage of the best-known faces of German cinema and TV screens. Eichinger's other blockbuster production, Downfall, had a similarly star-studded cast and was a portrayal of German suffering and resistance against the ‘invasion’ of the Red Army of Berlin. It was a “German project, with German actors and a German director”, as Eichinger makes clear. Allegedly, even a few modern neo-Nazis were in the cast, exited by the chance to wear SS uniforms. Hitler's last days are also depicted as pathology—a mad dictator who should have listened to his saner Nazi inferiors. Once Eichinger had the German nation defeat the Red Army (sacrificing Hitler) on the cinema screens, it was a logical conclusion to have them take on the Red Army Faction next.

Moreover, the film finally allows German schools to put the history of the RAF and the ‘German Autumn’ onto the curriculum. Until now, the story of RAF terrorism was also the story of political policing, illegal surveillance and state cover-ups, which could open up some uncomfortable questions in class. Documents that could give an indication whether Baader's and Ensslin's deaths were suicide or murder are still withheld from public view. The Baader-Meinhof Complex turns these questions into non-topics: the RAF; they were slightly mad, slightly cool—but certainly not political. Another ‘difficult’ chapter of German history has been dealt with—the lessons learnt can only strengthen the Federal Republic.

Raphael Schlembach is an editor of Shift Magazine.

what next?

As you can see we have a new cover design! Please continue to support us; email us for details of subscriptions to the magazine; and send in your ideas for articles or comments.

Issue 7 of Shift Magazine will be published in September 2009.

Thank you,

Shift Editors.

CONTACT SHIFT

shiftmagazine@hotmail.co.uk

www.shiftmag.co.uk

