

# Unrest in Neukölln



On the riots of October 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, the  
anti-Deutsche, and lessons to be learned

On the nights of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October, a mixed crowd of predominantly Palestinians took to the streets in Berlin's Neukölln district despite the state's bans on Palestinian solidarity and anti-Zionist demonstrations. They did this with negligible support from the broader radical left movement.

What follows necessarily cannot be the full picture, especially not the histories that had to converge to lead to these events. Instead, it is one Berlin anarchist's experiences in the days following the IOF's bombing of the al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza and the ensuing unrest along Sonnenallee in Neukölln. Videos of fireworks exploding against lines of riot cops and photos of burning barricades made the rounds on social media, and to prevent it from just being another flash of riot porn, this is some context in hopes of making a more lasting impression to those living both here and outside the BRD.<sup>1</sup>

Because much of this has to do with ethnicity, religion, and bigotry, it is relevant to know that I am white, neither Muslim nor Jewish, and neither from the BRD nor Middle East.



Despite the days of police occupation to prevent anything that might turn into a protest, in the early evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, Palestinians gathered on the streets of Neukölln to show their anger as they had on previous days throughout Berlin. The Israeli state had been upping its occupation into genocidal slaughter in revenge for the atrocities Hamas committed on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The BRD was reasserting its unwavering support for Israel and further criminalizing Palestinian liberation and anti-apartheid activists. The bombing of the al-Ahli Hospital by the IOF was, in the words of many individuals I spoke with, why they had joined the crowd.

At the major intersections of Sonnenallee at Reuterstraße and Pannierstraße, the crowd overflowed from sidewalks into the street. Traffic crawled by, and often the cars honked along with those who had gathered, waved flags from their windows, and blasted music in Arabic. Chants boomed from the crowd, loudly and full of emotion with random participants starting starting new cries when the crowd had been quiet for too long. The crowd was overwhelmingly Muslim and Middle Eastern,<sup>2</sup> likely over 95% so, and to our shame

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<sup>1</sup>Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*). The least nationalist way to refer to the German state, though perhaps the somewhat common 'Schland is even more dismissive though less clear in English.

<sup>2</sup>I know this isn't an ethnic group, nor is the Middle East the term people at the bleeding edge of progressivism use to describe that location. Literally everyone I talked to said they were Palestinian or Lebanese — often both. There were a handful of flags of the Turkish state, and, well, do they consider themselves Middle Eastern? Please let this phrase, this poor approximation for the ethnic and cultural complexities of that region suffice for now.

there were exceptionally few white accomplices or allies. The majority of the white people present were off to the side and part of the German press from official outlets to random livestreamers.

Riot cops tried to keep the streets clear, but they were too outnumbered to keep the crowd truly contained. Like at demos over the past years, the cops snatched Palestinian flags and arrested the individuals who held them or wore keffiyehs. The arrests went from forceful to increasingly brutal, and the crowd's anger shifted from being calls for attention to the plight of Palestinians generally to acute rage at the cops. With each successive arrest, the crowd grew more hostile, and the situation escalated from a spontaneous show of emotion to a direct struggle against the police.

Unlike the typical demos of the radical left in Berlin, and despite what such demos proclaim themselves to be via flyers and announcements over loudspeakers, the crowd on Sonnenallee was actually decentralized and autonomous. There was no van with speakers mounted atop laying out a pre-defined plan for the action. There were no demo marshals (*Ordner:innen*) in marked armbands or vests telling people what to do or how to behave. There was no one with officiality or authority seeking to deescalate a crowd facing police violence or standing in the way to prevent de-arrests, and while some individuals in the crowd tried to do such things, they were immediately and resoundingly ignored. There was no declared route or meeting place, and the only course of action was to act on one's own desires. Affinity groups, or perhaps simply "friends" in their terms, formed to take the actions they felt necessary with neither commands to do so nor top-down proscriptions against acts of defiance against the state.

Cops pepper sprayed the crowd as they made arrests and dove in swinging to cause maximum terror as they grabbed their targets. They knocked down anyone who stood in their path and indiscriminately attacked people in the crowd if they had the misfortune of being near the police as they tried to arrest someone. Like at so many protests, there was no violence until the police created it. In turn, the crowd responded.

Small groups — mostly of youth<sup>3</sup> — formed and engaged in guerilla tactics against the police, throwing stones and shooting fireworks at the cops before sprinting away into side streets and disappearing. Hours of cat-and-mouse games continued. As arrests mounted, as the pyrotechnics ran out, and as evening turned to night, the protesters went home. Some made their way across town to a more tame protest at Brandenburger Tor that was quickly repressed into a guided march down the street to the nearest S-Bahn station

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<sup>3</sup>Here meaning mostly teens but also young adults most seemingly in their early to mid twenties, though in the dark, perhaps I was underestimating age.

where it ended quietly.



At around 03:45, across the city in Mitte, two as-of-yet unknown individuals threw molotovs at the Kahal Adass Jisroel Jewish community center and synagogue. Luckily, the molotovs only hit the sidewalk in front of the building.

In the morning, this attack was immediately blamed on the protesters who had been out at Sonnenallee as well as Palestinians and Arabs at large.<sup>4</sup> The fingers were pointed not just by the right, center, and liberals, but also by large parts of the left.

The police banned the demonstration titled “Youth Against Racism” (*“Jugend gegen Rassismus”*). This was following a ban from the previous week on the demonstration titled “Jewish Berliners Against Violence in the Middle East” (*“Jüdische Berliner:innen gegen Gewalt in Nahost”*).<sup>5</sup>



Wednesday evening, like the previous day, people gathered on Sonnenallee at the same corners though in greater numbers, and finally a few radicals and liberals had taken note and showed a discernible presence but were still only a small fraction of the crowd. The police, too, had amassed a larger force. The night began much the same as it had with sporadic arrests, but this time the large groups of protesters were kettled and slowly one at a time arrested.

Despite the cops’ greater numbers and preparation, they were still not able to cope with the Palestinian and Middle Eastern youth’s guerilla tactics. They’d armed themselves with even more fireworks, and the fights continued. The crowds were larger which provided more cover for the youth. There were more police, which meant more targets. Because of the narrow streets, their vans and water cannons were useless, and because of their armor, they were slow. More numbers did not mean more control of those directly fighting them.

The guerilla tactics were beautiful. In one case, the youth fired a volley of fireworks at the cops then ran off. As the cops chased them, ones who acted as if they were bystanders set fire to barricades after the cops ran by before themselves running off. Often, they were dressed indistinguishably from the rest

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<sup>4</sup>Without even considering that it could have been a fascist attack that would serve the dual purpose of terrorizing Jews and galvanizing the public against Palestinians and Arabs. Since we don’t know who did it or why, the best course of action is to cautiously avoid blaming groups of people and to offer solidarity both to those who were attacked and those who will face the blowback.

<sup>5</sup>It also had the subtitle “Against the Murder of our Fellow People in Gaza. Jewish and Palestinian People Have the Same Right to Live” (*“Gegen den Mord an unseren Mitmenschen in Gaza, jüdische und palästinensische Menschen haben das gleiche Recht zu leben.”*)

of the crowd: plain street clothes and keffiyehs. The cops couldn't easily differentiate them from the other protesters, and as such the youth could spring their attacks and run back into a crowd before launching a second volley of stones and bottles and running off again. Arresting everyone was infeasible, and the cops were often unable to bring their force down on the assailants.

There was a joy to the attacks. Both the tactics themselves and the mirth of it all were present the first night, though on this night they were much more so. As the youth pelted cops with whatever was at hand and watched them trip over themselves as they gave chase, the youth laughed, jeered, and taunted. When they escaped immediate pursuit, they pulled down their masks and were smiling as they slapped each others shoulders and cheered at a job well done as barricades and tires burned behind them.



In parallel to the rioting in Neukölln, there were two separate demonstrations. There was a solidarity gathering against antisemitism in front of Kahal Adass Jisroel, and there was a Palestinian solidarity protest at the Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*). Like in Neukölln, but not nearly to the same degree, the protesters at the Foreign Office were pushed back and abused by the police. The crowds at these two gatherings were both sizeable and diverse, and both included many Jews. However, the number of Palestinian allies present at them far, far exceeded those who were present in Neukölln both in raw number and in percent of the total crowds.



The swelling wave of unrest never crested. Instead, it was pacified.

All day Thursday it was cold and rainy. The night before, one of the protesters who had been brutalized by the cops required hospitalization. Social media and group chats were coursing with the rumor that he had been killed by the cops. Nevertheless, a protest never materialized as the police were aggressively arresting and forcing dispersal of any gatherings of more than three people throughout the previous areas of conflict. They'd lit these contested street corners with portable floodlights as a deterrent against anything that might lead to unruliness. From the side of the Palestinians, posters declaring a general strike were being hung, and word of it was being passed around.

On Friday evening, Neukölln was quiet, starkly so. The strike was in effect. The usually bustling bazaar of Berlin was dark, and many shops were closed. The night was cold, and the police were out in numbers hassling and arresting people who gathered in small groups. Again, no protest materialized.



For Saturday, a demonstration was planned under the title “Decolonize! Against oppression globally!” It started at 16:00 at Oranienplatz in Kreuzberg — the traditional starting point for many left-wing demos including the First of May — and had a roughly 2 kilometer route ending at Hermannplatz, a major square on Sonnenallee just a short distance away from the corner of Reuterstraße which had been the main locus of conflict on previous nights. Many attempted demos that could have been seen as supporting Palestine were banned by the police on grounds of having the potential to incite hatred against Jews, including several by Jewish groups, but having never mentioned Israel or its war against Palestine, this demo was allowed.

In typical fashion for demos in Berlin, a rented box truck was parked with its vinyl sides rolled up, and a small stage with speakers had been erected in its bed. Protesters were gathered around it, and the organizers were distributing orange vests to be worn by demo marshals. The organizers over the loud-speaker made a few announcements, but mostly engaged in call-and-response or repeat-after-me chants, repetitively until they felt meaningless. From the start, they had a distinct lack of energy compared to previous nights.

The demo started. Not even one block away, and on the grounds that the person on the loudspeaker was calling for violence, the police forcibly separated the truck from the rest of the protesters. Some chants continued, and there were only a few arrests despite the thousands present, many of whom had Palestinian flags, keffiyehs, or the sorts of signs that were cause for arrest in the previous days. When people were arrested, demo marshals intervened to keep the crowd back from the cops.

Around Hermannplatz, the cops had sealed off the square from all other roads using vans placed bumper to bumper and squads of riot cops standing guard. Getting to the corner of Sonnenallee and Reuterstraße was mostly infeasible, and the lackluster march, while it had numbers the other spontaneous actions did not, ended uneventfully with everyone being politely asked by the cops to leave Hermannplatz and then obeying. Some hours after it has mostly cleared out, there were some minor confrontations with the cops and a small amount of fireworks, but nothing compared to the crowds of Tuesday and Wednesday.

The police had taken a light touch approach because they realized that additional repression would likely only lead to more resistance. By allowing the demo to happen on their terms and by not giving the crowd a reason to start fighting them, they stifled insurrectionary energy and didn’t allow the creation of situations by which others could become radicalized.



Berlin, like any radical scene, has its divisions, splits, and schisms. Unlike

most of the rest of the so-called west, however, its main split is less authoritarian communists (“tankies”) vs. libertarian socialists, but rather the split is about the side one takes in regards to Israel’s occupation of Palestine and the surrounding conflict. Often this is described as the Anti-Deutsche vs. Anti-Imperialist split, but that overly centers the old lines of the inter-left conflict. Many of the radicals who give undying support to Israel don’t see themselves as Anti-D, many who “merely” suspect that all Arabs are somewhat antisemitic don’t see themselves as being on Israel’s “side” of the conflict, and many who support Palestinian liberation don’t approach it from the Marxist lens of anti-imperialism.

Not even just among radicals, but generally speaking, prevalent currents within German society are so aggressively against antisemitism that their behavior and beliefs are better described as philosemitism and Zionism that have crossed into anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia. Even anarchists are not immune to this where the slogan “destroy all states, but Israel last” is not a rarity. There are leftist clubs and squats with Israeli flags or that ban people who wear Palestinian flags and sometimes even those who wear keffiyehs. Calling what’s happening in Palestine apartheid, much less genocide, is decried as Holocaust relativism.

When someone supports Palestinian liberation, either the most liberal ‘67-border two-state solution or something more anarchic, they are often quieter about their views. For many, this is because of the social censure associated with supporting Palestine. Doing so can quite easily land one with the label of antisemite, and collectives will demand other collectives expel members for pro-Palestine beliefs.

I was part of a collective that did mutual aid for roughly four years, and I had suspected that they had some weird pro-Israel sentiments, but it never came up, so I continued to work with them. At a demo, a “lefty” journalist got called “Zionist press,” and while that might be inadvisable to say in the BRD due to the potential for fallout,<sup>6</sup> it wasn’t wrong as the person was through their actions a supporter of the Zionist project. The demo was organized by a coalition of groups including at least one Jewish one. My collective planned to write a letter to one of the organizing groups — one that was assumed to be the most Middle Eastern — stating that a condition for future mutual aid was that they disassociate from that individual, that they assert that they don’t support the BDS movement, and that they assert that *none of their members* support the BDS movement. I tried to gently push back, and the reaction was so hostile that I left the collective.

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<sup>6</sup>Specifically, the phrase “Jewish press” was used by the original nazi party, and those who continue to use it — no matter how accurately — are accused to explicitly being nazis.

Prior to the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack, many people on the left opposed BDS because of, as they claimed, the similarity to the Nazis' decree to "not buy Jewish." The phrase "from the river, to the sea, Palestine will be free" was called antisemitic on the grounds that it implied the destruction of Israel which made it implicitly an attack on all Jews. Graffiti of "Free Gaza" are often altered to say "Free Gaza from Hamas" as if they are the primary source of oppression. Palestinian solidarity events were demonized as antisemitic with the logic that Palestinians themselves are antisemitic, and to support them is no different than allying with fascists. The absurdity in many ways goes back further, where in the antifa demos in the '90s and '00s, one might see American flags or praise for Donald Rumsfeld.<sup>7</sup>

If the situation wasn't completely deranged before, in the last weeks it's escalated. Saying "Free Gaza," waving a Palestinian flag, or even wearing a keffiyeh is proof, not just to large parts the general population but also large parts of the left, that one is an antisemite. Before they even started, Palestine solidarity gatherings were declared by both the general population and lefties as being either antisemitic or pro-Hamas or full of terrorists on the logic that if they support Palestine then they *must* be antisemites. This gives way to the circular logic that implies everything mildly associated with Palestinian liberation is an antisemitic dog-whistle and hence why relatively innocuous phrases like "Free Gaza" are declared as antisemitic.

On Wednesday at the protest at the Foreign Office, a mixed crowd including Jews, sat in the street and chanted "Free Gaza from German guilt" as a way to assign the blame for the occupation on the BRD and the German people who support the Israeli state's violence. The German supporters of Israel took up arms suggesting that it meant Germans should be free of their collective guilt for their ancestors having committed the Shoah.<sup>8</sup> It, like so many social issues, is simply a rhetorical game where one battles until their side wins no matter how petty the specific matter is or how absurd the argumentation.

Greta Thunberg posted a photo of her and others holding Palestinian flags and signs that said free Gaza. Greta, someone with autism, had a frowning blue octopus plushie in the photo, and people in the BRD leapt at her saying that a octopus, especially a blue one, is an antisemitic trope. They plushie was invertible with blue/frowny and red/smiley sides and was designed to help autistic people express their emotions non-verbally. A spokesperson from the

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<sup>7</sup> A US Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush who oversaw the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

<sup>8</sup> And to be fair, they should be free of such guilt. Children should not be held responsible for the acts of their parents. What they *should not* be free of is the individual responsibility to prevent any and all other atrocities.



IOF felt compelled to comment on this saying “Whoever identifies with Greta in any way in the future, in my view, is a terror supporter.” German lefties felt the need to condemn Greta and Fridays for Future over this and to distance themselves from such alleged antisemitism. Antisemitism is all-too-present in the BRD and the rest of the world, but the lefties here go so far out of their way to spot it in everything that nothing is safe from allegations for antisemitism. Don’t casually refer to the predominantly white Christian billionaires who dictate so much national policy as “the elites” or you’ll be told off by some lefty for implying that they’re all Jewish.

German radicals have a particular kind of chauvinism where they speak over radical Jews from or living in Israel and insist that their cultural legacy makes them uniquely capable of dissecting the finer points of a conflict in a place few have ever even visited. They’re right about what is an isn’t anti-semitic or how we should relate to the Israeli state because of a deep guilt they feel and the experiences they had of growing up as a post-WWII German. The assumed hegemony of the spawn of the Anti-Ds was perfectly articulated in the start of this Kontrapolis<sup>9</sup> post from the 20<sup>th</sup> of October:<sup>10</sup>

we wanted to start this project for a long time but never found time for it. Now, as after another mass-murder of jews a wide front ranging from fascists, clerical-fascists (islamists) to („left“-identitarians and communists have nothing better to do than to celebrate „Free“ Palestine we think it is finally time for this project.

In recent years, all over Germany, but especially in Berlin, people with a different political socialization, outside of Germany, have flocked into the scene. We think this is good und actually brings us new experiences and advances the theoretical level. However, in the context of internationalism, we think that it causes regression. And we think that this regression has a lot to do with a lack of knowledge about past debates.

Dialogue, mutual understanding, and solidarity in such situations is beyond challenging.



I have no illusions that there is antisemitism in the Palestinian liberation movement. I’m also not denying that it was present at the riots or other demos. I saw it, and I heard it. I had conversations with people that ended with

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<sup>9</sup>Something like Indymedia.

<sup>10</sup> *Why are we social revolutionaries? A call to collectively create an english reader about the Antid/Palestine debate.* <https://kontrapolis.info/11488/>

antisemitic tropes. Some said they were sympathetic towards Hamas, though only one openly said they supported them.

I had a long conversation with an older Palestinian. He was decrying the violence on the streets of Neukölln as pointless. He and his friend talked about the neighborhood, about how Islam and Judaism are compatible, about his Jewish friends when he was younger in Palestine and today in Neukölln. He also said that all he wants is his land back, regardless of who gets it back for him, including if it was Hamas.

Hamas is not liberatory, their choice of attacking non-combatants is unacceptable, and that their choice of attack (even if the targets were somehow legitimate) wasn't "elimination of threats" but rape and torture is wholly disgusting.<sup>11</sup> That many anarchists would side with or praise them is unconscionable. I'm not offering critical support, nor any support at all. I'm also not saying that the man was justified in siding with them or that him having Jewish friends meant he couldn't be antisemitic.

I'm saying that for some, they see Hamas as the only viable option. Why are we as anarchists not offering an alternative? I don't mean that we should recruit them or pull them in to some lefty fold. We can become complicit with their causes and create bonds that will help all of us in the struggle for liberation. People often take the easiest path forward, and if we can propose an anarchic path, we might be able to entice people away from lending support to theocrats and nationalists.



The anti-Arab and Islamophobic environment perpetuated by the near totality of German society is where the riots of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> took place.

Not only did those who took to the streets of Neukölln lack solidarity from (almost all of) the left, they did so facing explicit demonization from almost the entire political spectrum. This lack of solidarity was present not just for those nights, but the void where that solidarity should have been over the past years was visible too. Streets medics who are omnipresent at left-wing demos weren't understood and were treated with suspicion. Legal hotlines were set up specifically for Palestinians because of the protests, but when their numbers were given to the friends or family of the arrested, they didn't see the need.

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<sup>11</sup>Update: This was written only days after the riots, weeks after October 7<sup>th</sup>, and by denouncing such acts, I regretfully repeated the Zionist propaganda that has since been widely discredited, namely that rape and torture were intentionally used as weapons of war. In reality, while there were cases, it was far fewer than originally reported, and the most obscene cases were fabricated. Rape and torture are often part of conflict, and it might have been naive of me to follow my feminist instincts and to believe it happened as reported. I hope to be more discerning in the future.

Maybe it's not just the lack of familiarity with these two common support roles, but maybe it's that the medics were all white or that as we tried to impress the need for qualified legal aid, we were only seen as white outsiders. And that wouldn't even be entirely wrong.

We can't change the past, but we can change tomorrow or the outcome of a conflict a year from now. What would the Neukölln riots have been like if there had been greater support from anarchists in the time leading up to them as well as during the riots themselves?

Many arrests occurred because of an unfamiliarity with police tactics. People were often unmasked while attacking the cops and may yet be arrested for what they did. The youth were so often livestreaming their criminalized activities and bragging about them. Greater damage will be done long term as a result of a lack of legal aid for the hundreds who were arrested. There were panicked retreats from police charges when people could have easily stood their ground. The people who attacked the cops often hit other protesters with rocks and fireworks. I saw people bleeding from their heads after friendly fire. I saw firecrackers thrown into the center of rings of cops around in-progress arrests. The most impressive salvo of fireworks against the cops, the one everyone saw on the internet, primarily hit other protesters leaving multiple with severe burns.<sup>12</sup>

If there was more engagement between the Neukölln residents and anarchists, could we have reduced these ills?



There is a stereotype that Germans love to follow rules, and the radicals of Berlin seem to have taken that to heart too. We seldom have unregistered demos, and most of our demos are simply A-to-B parades with a sprinkling of radical left vibes. We paint our banners, we wrap them around the head of the demo, and we walk straight into police brutality because no one dared to break rank and take autonomous steps. We plan our demos well in advance. We put up wheatpastes, submit them to Stressfaktor, post them on Twitter and Instagram, or send around in chain messages on Signal. When spontaneous things come up, often people don't attend because they had a meeting or some event they'd already agreed to go to regardless of how pressing or critical the new action might be. At demos and other events, we hand out vests to demo marshals or awareness teams who are given top-down orders on what sort of conduct is permitted via the so-called "awareness concept." We point our

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<sup>12</sup>I have seen a lot of friendly fire at "classic" left-wing demos too, but also there were far greater ratios of it in the Neukölln riots when compared to similar sized and intensity left-wing ones.

defenses inward instead of outwards in order to control the actions of others. The point of demos is more focused on getting to the destination without incident than it is on being a direct threat to the state. On multiple occasions, I've seen people leave a demo early because there was an announced post-demo review meeting scheduled for that demo itself. We're inflexible, controlling, and stuck doing the same repetitive actions over and over despite the fact that they objectively do not create change.<sup>13</sup>

We're on the defensive in Berlin. The pandemic, price-gouging (so-called "inflation"), and rising rents over the last few years have left their marks. A string of completely unsuccessful eviction defenses left us demoralized and defeated. There's fear and suspicion of others and a hesitancy to form new bonds because of police infiltrations and the Lina E. case.<sup>14</sup> The police that once feared the Black Bloc are bold and can control us at most of our actions. The "biggest" riots in Berlin these days are on the First of May, but this past year the cops had every side street walled off with vans, and the demo was effectively a moving kettle from Boddinstraße to Oranienplatz. We shout that we're ungovernable, and we declare ourselves as autonomous, but empirically we are not.



There might be tactics against police and their repression that the rioters of Neukölln could learn from us, but I am far more interested in what we could learn from them.

We need to rediscover autonomous and leaderless resistance. In 2019–20, the Hong Kong protesters deployed many tactics effectively against the Chinese state. Shortly after, those taking part in the George Floyd Insurrection in the US modeled tactics after Hong Kong. In the BRD, we looked to these two uprisings and tried to take inspiration from them. Umbrellas were deployed to protect the Bloc, yet of all the tactics we could have drawn from the periods of widespread insurrection in these two places, this was the least effective as Berlin cops are often within arm's reach of a demo, and they'd simply snatch them away and destroy them. The strategy that was most described in HK and the US was to "be water," to be formless and shapeless. Police departments in the US made statements that they could control the BLM demonstrations because it was one large mass but that if it was ten smaller masses they'd be

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<sup>13</sup>In some cases this is clearly a collective trauma response, but that being the ground for the behavior doesn't somehow make it politically effective.

<sup>14</sup>The abridged story is that an antifascist, after being betrayed by a misogynist ex-comrade, faced a lengthy sentence because of the §129 law that bans the participation in/informal organizations whose purpose is committing crimes. This law effectively criminalizes most "actually effective" antifascism.

overwhelmed. This strategy of small flowing groups was immediately adopted by the rioters of Neukölln because it is so *obviously* the strategy that works against a slow and heavily armored adversary. Often the closest we get to this is our ability to scatter when faced with police violence or even preemptively to avoid it, yet once we're in small groups away from the police, our energy often dissipates and the actions come to a close.

We need to abandon the loudspeakers reading off monotone emotionally flat academic recitations of the same hackneyed statistics and catchphrases of the left. We need to leave the alcohol<sup>15</sup> at home and turn the soundsystem off so it's not just social hour with musical accompaniment. This isn't an argument against fun or partying, but demos that have music and drinking as their central components tend to not threaten the state even if it's as little as causing the police to temporarily lose control. Demos where we wile out and manage to break normalcy tend to have less substance use and no soundtrack. But more than that, let us call into question the utility of planned demos *at all*.

More than anything, by engaging in the shared struggles with others, we can find ways to experience the *jouissance* of breaching the state's control. There is terror in the unknown when one breaks from normalcy, and while we can try to construct situations where these transgressions are able to manifest, they more often happen spontaneously. They can be coaxed into being through radical organizing and the building and strengthening of social networks, but they cannot be summoned at will. For comparison, comrades in the US who had been organizing for decades weren't able to predict the George Floyd Insurrection nor the burning down of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct in Minneapolis nor that a majority of the US supported it having happened! The riots of Neukölln gave space to experience insurrection and autonomy in a way that was remarkably alien from the rest of the struggles in Berlin, and it's not something we can anticipate or plan. We have to put in the work so that when lightening strikes, we are enabled to act decisively.

When discussing this with one comrade, and in particular the seeming lack of awareness of police repression, they said "The problem is that we know too much." Maybe that's true to some degree, but Hermannplatz, Hermannstraße, and Kottbusser Tor are KBOs<sup>16</sup> where the racist police have the power to stop and search anyone without suspicion of having committed a crime. To think

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<sup>15</sup> A bottle of Sterni is practically an accessory for lefties at demos and all too often so is ketamine. Notably absent from the riots of Neukölln were people drinking or obviously under the influence of drugs. This is likely attributed to religious beliefs and cultural norms rather than a sense of militancy. Regardless, the lack of substance use during or immediately prior to the riots led to a significant changes in their tenor.

<sup>16</sup> *Kriminalitätsbelasteter Ort*. Crime afflicted place.

a subaltern group like those who took to the streets of Neukölln is unaware of the consequences of fighting the police seems a little naive. It's far more likely that they knew exactly what they were up against, and that by committing rather than waiting for the perfect moment or a completely safe way to strike they were able to act meaningfully. The ascendancy of anarcho-nihilism in the so-called west and certainly in Berlin should have primed its followers to jump into such a struggle, and yet lefties of all flavors were mostly absent from this brief window of opportunity, one that quickly closed because of weather and a heavy police hand.

There can be joy in the struggle, and while there is temporary reprieve from the ills of capitalism and white supremacy to be found in the cracks, yet another soli-party in the face of genocide pales in comparison to the true bliss of seeing the social fabric tear and participating in what comes out of that rupture. Anarchism is plural, and we benefit from the shared experiences when interacting with other struggles. What I'm hoping for is the fusion of our knowledge and preparation with the full-hearted actions of the Neukölln rioters.

I wish again to see the smiling faces and joy in the Black Bloc as we struggle for a new world the way I did in while in the roiling crowds of Neukölln.



The unique situation of the BRD has led to only a pittance of support for Palestinians' liberation. The riots created impressive imagery, but it tells a tale that didn't quite happen. There was a spontaneous uprising from Palestinians and others in Neukölln, but it was almost outside of the sphere of the "classic" left. To see that claimed as anarchist struggle is to erase who actually participated and the further marginalization they face at the hands of the left and other anarchists. I hope that by writing this, I have helped to set the record straight for those outside the BRD.

For those within Berlin or those who find their local situation similar to ours, I hope that these words have illuminated a means of struggle that might not have been so apparent. Through our repetition of the same ol' same ol', we as the radicals have ended up in a rut. Pulling out of this will require new perspectives and new experiences. There can be a high social cost for supporting unpopular ideas, especially if its seen as opposition to the Israeli state. Antifascism is not and never will be popular, unless it's the watered down version that liberals of the BRD can get behind when opposing the AfD.<sup>17</sup> Liberation, itself and the struggle for it, can be full of terrors, but also of great

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<sup>17</sup> *Alternative für Deutschland*. Alternative for Germany. A fascist political party with significant representation in government.

joy.

“*Nie wieder Deutschland*” (“Never again, Germany”) is a slogan associated with the Anti-Deutsche but popular within the left, and it’s often meant that we should do what it takes to prevent the BRD from committing another Holocaust. At present, the BRD is directly assisting in the Israeli state’s genocide of Palestinians. What then, does “never again” actually mean?

We are not at a singular crossroads, nor have we passed some point of no return, not in this struggle nor in any other. We can choose to stay on our current path in our current ways, in relative comfort. Or, we can experiment and create new shared struggles and from these launch new lines of attack against the capitalist ecocidal white supremacist death cult. There are many small choices we make every day, and through the complex interaction of these choices, new possibilities emerge. There will be major and infrequent pivotal moments that allows us to bend the arc of history toward or away from liberation, but how we can leverage such moments depends on how we prepare.

This is then a call for autonomy. It’s a call for experimentation. Beyond the innumerable lectures about social movements in far away lands are actual struggles within our grasp. It is not enough to know of autonomy. One must live it.



On the one hand there is the existent, with its habits and certainties. And of certainty, that social poison, one can die.

On the other hand there is insurrection, the *unknown* bursting into the life of all. The possible beginning of an exaggerated practice of freedom.

— *At Daggers Drawn*



*Scrappy Capy Distro*

[scrappycapydistro.info](http://scrappycapydistro.info) / [scrappy-capy-distro@riseup.net](mailto:scrappy-capy-distro@riseup.net)