

**To plan actions** against the IMF and World Bank's meetings in Prague, activists from across Europe and the US came together months earlier and developed a plan to lay siege to the conference centre, blockading the bankers and delegates inside. Because of the diverse nature of the crowd, a 'diversity of tactics' was agreed upon, and 20,000 people divided into four separate marches: blue for those who engaged in more aggressive tactics on the West side, pink for the socialist contingent which carried placards around from the East, yellow for staging a highly visible yet impossible push from the North, and pink and silver, for a carnivalesque approach from the South.

It was here that a powerful vision emerged, a vision developed by 12 women, who joined forces with a samba band to create Tactical Frivolity. Their idea: to dress up in outrageous costumes – half Bacchanalian ball-gown, half Rio carnival dancer – and confront the police, unmasked, and armed only with feminism and feather dusters. By exposing their vulnerability, dancing and singing, and generally being silly, they not only subverted the idea of confrontation, but also demanded that the police see them as human beings.

The force of their humour was unstoppable. Hilariously, one tactically frivolous woman was seen alone, advancing on a cluster of cops, who retreated clumsily uphill before the power of her magic wand-like feather duster. Many policemen endured a fierce struggle not to laugh, failing to maintain the grim, deadly serious posture demanded by their position. A few were even caught dancing!

The delegates eventually escaped from their meeting, hours late, and on public transport – probably the first time many of them had seen the inside of a subway. The actions ended in success, with the last day's meetings cancelled after poor attendance the previous day.

## It's Got To Be Silver and Pink: on the road with Tactical Frivolity

by Kate Evans

**London.** Twelve women, two trucks, two men, one ultimately useful journalist. I realize something is different. Usually people tat down to just one small rucksack for a journey. Not this time. Everyone brought everything: tent poles, sewing machines, brewery tubing, tin foil, space blankets, medical kits, gaffer tape, glue, whatever we thought might be useful, plus personal tat. All in a pile on the floor of my truck. Fuck. Packed it really badly and headed off to Calais with the vehicle leaning five degrees to the left.

**Calais.** Really fucked already. We park up on the sand dunes to make breakfast for 15 people. Carla performs miracles on the all the tat; ruthlessly subdividing the available space, folding, sorting and beating it into the corners, leaving us with an almost liveable space in the middle. Which is great, but for the rest of the journey we have to ask her where anything is. The rest of us head to the dunes and the sunshine, dragging piles of clothes and fabric. It looks amazing; the hills are strewn with yards of flashing silver and lurid pink. We dig out silver leggings, fluffy waistcoats, frocks, socks, gloves, and hold them up to each other. This is going to be silly. This is going to be good. The journalist wanders around the periphery, sucking a pencil and making notes:

"First night is the beach outside Calais. By 11.00 am three French botanists studying dune life have stopped in their tracks, dumbfounded. One hundred feet away the women are acting Priscilla of the Desert. Out of the lorry have poured sacks of pink and grey cloth, glitter, bo-peep outfits, sequins, g-strings, bras, fur, crushed velvet, lycra, giant metal costume structures, wings, trimmings and hats.

"C'est cool", says Pierre, speechless.

"Glam it up, girls. Pink is power. Wearing pink in threatening situations changes everything. It calms the anarchists and the cops," says Kate. "You change minds much faster by celebration and smashing peoples' sense of reality." – **the journalist**

The drive was a rush. Up by seven, on the move by ten. Two trucks traveling in convoy, one divining the route, the other following the exhaust. Late at night, parking under a tree, in a field, in a forest, building a fire, some singing, some talking, some crying. Got pulled over by the police just before the Czech border, and they were very amused by our singing, wise cracking, dance routines. They checked our passports and waved us on. Let that be the Czech police's

problem, they thought.

At the border everything was different. A lot colder. We suddenly felt stupid in our random silver clothing. And fucking freezing too. Men in black shut me out of my truck and searched it inch by inch for drugs, which freaked me right out, cause they could plant anything. They shook my homeopathy suspiciously, sampled my St John's Wort oil (hope it cheered them up), and stopped just short of searching the drawer with my pink sparkly vibrator in it, for which I was extremely grateful. They said we couldn't come into the Czech Republic unless we had money for our stay. Max, quite miraculously, produced £900 from his bum bag which he hadn't wanted to leave behind in his squat. They said our vehicles were not roadworthy. We pointed out that the large black patch under Mel's truck was in fact, not oil, but the overflow from the washing up. They said they did not like campers in the Czech Republic (as another Winnebago sped past) and said they would confiscate our tools and knives. I was hiding my adjustable spanner in my sock when the journalist wandered over to the head of customs, showed him his press card and World Bank

---

destroy more of it," says Bové, who is sentenced to three months in prison.

>> **July 17** >> The Earth Liberation Front destroys two acres of genetically engineered corn and several greenhouses of seedlings in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, US. Graffiti highlighting the hazards of GE adorns the walls.

>> **July 21-23** >> The G8 meet in a luxury beach resort

on a remote peninsula in Okinawa, Japan, protected by 20,000 heavily armed police, six navy warships and a mile and a half nautical exclusion zone. Debt campaigners send 200,000 protest emails to the G8, protesting that the \$750 million cost of the summit would have been enough to cancel the servicing of one year's debt from Guyana, Rwanda, Laos, Zambia, Nicaragua, Benin, Cambodia, and Haiti. Numerous

counter-summits and protests take place, including a human chain of 27,000 Okinawans with gags over their mouths surrounding the US' Kadena Air Force Base, demanding the withdrawal of the 26,000 US troops permanently stationed on the island.

>> **August 3** >> Over 700,000 Colombian workers go on a 24 hour general strike to protest IMF-imposed austerity measures. The 2001 budget is announced by



Katherine Anger

The pink and silver posse brightens up the streets. Prague, Czech Republic

**“The agenda had been taken over by the protesters. Prague created quite an impression with the World Bank/IMF bureaucracy. I sensed that after Prague, the words of civil society will be taken much more seriously...”**

– World Bank staffer, October 2000

Conference accreditation, and asked if that meant he wasn't allowed in either. The poor man's face crumbled. “But you are not, with ... them?” he whispered incredulously. The journalist replied that he was, actually. And we were allowed in.

That set the tone for our experiences with the Czech authorities. Police arrived at our park-up that night. Plainclothes police probably followed us into Praha the next afternoon. We were pulled over twice more before we found a camp site and secret police tailed us indiscreetly to the pub. We started a book on how many times we'd been asked to show our passports. “It does make you feel safe”, said Kim. “Mm”, agreed Ronni, “we're sure not to be raped or mugged”. The constant surveillance had taken its toll on fellow activists. We phoned the number on the flyer when we got into Prague, to be told not to leave the vehicles on the street, or in a secure lock-up, they would be impounded,

what were we doing bringing our homes with us anyway? And meet Someone (who was using a code name for this operation) in a Chinese restaurant, opposite a certain metro station, for further instructions which it would be unsafe to issue over the phone. Very fucking cloak and dagger. Some of us went off to meet Agent Paranoia, most of us went to the laundrette, and I napped in the back of the truck.

Where were we going to put the vehicles? I thought bringing my home would be an asset, not a liability. But now we realized we couldn't just expect there to be a traveller site in the middle of Prague. Squatting was illegal; campsites expensive; we couldn't even park on the street for an hour and every time we moved them we got pigged. There was a real possibility I was going to spend September 26 babysitting my truck. Then we got lucky again. Friends told us of Ladronka, a crumbly squatted farmhouse in the middle of a park to the West of the city. With a yard (hee hee). It was inhabited by an indefinable number of people who weren't particularly into being associated with the protest and possibly risking their home, but we met them, and fortunately they all fancied Carla. So we were in.

The convergence centre opened and filled with activists from around the world. So many groovy people! So many sexy groovy people! Unfortunately we wasted all our precious socializing time having interminable, slightly pointless seven-hour meetings in five languages about where we would be on the day. What we didn't discuss was what we would do when we got to where we couldn't agree we would be. And I suppose that was good, because we didn't have interminable, divisive, and slightly pointless discussions about violence versus nonviolence, man, and what is violence anyway when the State is like killing people every day, man. And the people in the World Bank eat Third World babies for breakfast, so if they get bricked then hey, that's their fault, although, of course, symbolically placing a flower on each of their breasts would be great. Yeah, I was quite glad we avoided having a general 'fluffy' versus 'spiky' debate, but afterwards I wished that our affinity group had a chat about what we would do at the police lines.

Back at Ladronka, a riot of pink and silver had erupted from the back of the vans. Vi was going to be a butterfly,

---

the Finance Minister as "the budget of sweat and tears," with 5,000 public sector jobs to go and wage increases to be kept below the rate of inflation. The conditions laid out in the \$2.7 billion IMF loan require Colombia to further open its economy, privatize public companies and cut back spending. "This is a protest strike, it's a political strike, to call the Colombian peoples' attention to the need to tell the government that we are not

inclined to keep carrying the rich people of this country on our shoulders," says the president of the National Federation of State Service Workers, Wilson Borja.

>> **August 16** >> The Biotic Baking Brigade's division on Prince Edward Island successfully carries out Operation "Pie Minister", launching a Roundup-Ready Frankencream pie in the face of Canadian Prime Minister (and first head of state to be pied) Jean

Chrétien, in an effort to highlight his failure to take a stand against the introduction of genetically engineered foods into Canada.

>> **August 24** >> A 24-hour general strike opposing IMF-backed economic reforms sweeps across Honduras. Organized by the Popular Bloc, and comprising farmers, workers, and students, the protest closes universities, affecting 60,000 students, and blocks services at

Dee a bird; Ronni made a huge spiral dress with polka dot skirts and a feather duster fairy-godmother wand. Caz started constructing nine-foot high samba dancer fantails which filled half the yard. A two-foot pink Marie Antoinette wig, a silver flash Superman costume, a floor length tinsel ball gown. Natalie was in pink shin pads and soldier's helmet; Jane was a scaly silver bat-winged thing. The lads in the house would wander through from time to time, shooting us bemused and incredulous glances. One afternoon we were bent over sewing machines in the slanting autumn sunshine, splashes of pink unrolled around us, and crumpled silver foil escaping across the yard. A police helicopter suddenly rose over the rooftop and hovered 80 feet above us with a camera. It must be such a picture. Tuesday came. We all dressed up. We rocked.

What was the action like? I can't really describe it. It was pink. Our whole fucking march was pink. We'd decked out so many people in a totally silly, non-threatening colour, and it had all happened because Caz had been wandering through the scrap store three months earlier, thinking "It's got to be silver and pink."

Doing an action in a carnival costume is mental. For women, facing all-male riot police, it is a way of exploiting our vulnerability, making them see that we're people, not just things to be hit. We all got hit anyway, but there were some charmed moments. Caz hung back when others ran, walking in her huge silver costume. With her pink confection of hair and voluminous skirts she was like the figurehead of our march, a woman, alone. She and the line

of pigs met, and they didn't hit her, it was as if, for a moment, they couldn't hit her; they pushed her instead. She fell, and the crowd surged back for her, and the police were checked for a moment, seeing us all move. The next instant she was up again, but her wig came off; her head looked naked without it. The crowd surged again for the wig and a copper booted it back to us. Caz was restored to full glory. She kept going, she really had no fear.

*"I've become aware that I carry fear, everybody carries fear, you know, but I'll have fear in instances that I don't think I should, like fear of talking to strangers. I've tracked down my fear to see what's at the end of it and it's a man who's faceless who's going to hurt me in some way. That is what I'm ultimately frightened of. I'm not frightened of being on my own or of nature, you know, I'm frightened that some man is going to hurt me. I was aware of this before I went to Prague – that I was actually in some way going there to face this fear because I would end up facing a man in black who had an intention to hurt me at the end of the day.*

*"So these riot police protecting the World Bank and the IMF had sort of become symbolic for all my fears, all the men out there that might hurt me, and I was actually quite up for it, I wanted to face that, I wanted to go and stand up against the faceless man and just see what happened, you know. But we all got dressed up in our pink and silver and we went on the subway and were whooping and excited, and when we got to the park there was just pink and silver everywhere. And there wasn't time to be fearful." – Ronni, Tactical Frivolity*

I was dancing alone in a side street while the crowd streamed past me. There was a line of police there and I didn't want them to surge out and attack the crowd from the side. A sweet looking guy in a green camouflage vest tapped me on the elbow. "You come with me, I know a way in. I think it will be a good action, yes?" Fuck yes! He ducked through a door in a side street and gave me a leg up onto the roof of a garage. "I make graffiti often in my home town. And this, I think, makes it easy for me to see a way across the roofs." I scrambled like a spider under a three-foot gap beneath an apple tree (with my fan tail) and through a dark corridor. My companion paused with his hand on the handle of a door. Concussion grenades were going off outside. We emerged slickly into the sunshine and joined a waiting crowd of delegates as inconspicuously as one possibly can in a floor-length silver tinsel dress, pink Ascot hat, and a nine-foot fantail of silver streamers. Cop after cop thundered past us to reinforce their lines. The pink march was within 400 yards of the doors of the Congress Centre. The police were moving in with water cannons and [tear] gas. Two women

---

hospitals and major highways.

>> **September 7** >> Over five million people vote on an independently organized referendum asking if Brazil should discontinue IMF reforms. Organized by the National Council of Bishops and Jubilee 2000, the 'unofficial' referendum is an overwhelming success, with nearly everyone rejecting the IMF presence. To mark the end of six days of voting and Brazil's

Independence Day, a demonstration draws thousands of protesters under the banner of 'Cry of the Excluded'. All of Brazil's major cities see widespread participation, with more than 100,000 people in São Paulo, despite the government's assertion that the referendum was "a stupid, isolated project undertaken by 'minorities'." Solidarity marches take place simultaneously in Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia,

were bundled past with blood flowing down their faces. And there we were, standing with a line of delegates who were waiting for the metro. Very unfortunately, I did not at this point manage to think of single politically incisive statement. High on adrenaline, I made meaningless small talk with a man from the Royal Canadian mint. Then someone asked me what I thought of the World Bank, so I had a little rant at her, but then I realized she was a journalist. The delegates melted away, leaving only newshounds, hungry for pictures of violence, [which I, with my pink feather boa, did not have to offer].

**Kate Evans is a cartoonist. Her work includes *Copse*, the *Cartoon Book of Tree Protesting*, and *Funny Weather We're Having at the Moment***

---

**Resources:**

» **Kate Evans' cartoons:** [www.kartoonkate.co.uk](http://www.kartoonkate.co.uk)

» **Since Prague, Pink and Silver has become the colour of creative resistance blocs. For Pink and Silver reports and pics:**

[www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/rhythms-of-resistance.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/sotw/rhythms-of-resistance.htm)

[www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/aggp/free/genoa/pinksilver.htm](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/aggp/free/genoa/pinksilver.htm)

---

Argentina, Mexico, Honduras, and Paraguay.

>> **September 11-13** >> A week-long Carnival for Global Justice takes place in resistance to the World Economic Forum meeting in Melbourne Australia. Activists erect a tent city opposite the casino where the Forum is meeting, and 30,000 activists surround it, preventing one-third of the delegates from entering, and forcing a quick cancellation of the delegates'