For decades, young people tried to get the city to fund an autonomous youth center. All their proposals were stonewalled. Then, in 1980, a CHF 60 million loan was approved to renovate Zurich’s opera house: a bundle was to be forked out for “serious” bourgeois culture and zilch for the city’s youth. That was the last straw: On May 30, 1980, protestors held a demonstration in front of the opera house that turned into a street riot and eventually a city-wide protest movement spearheaded and fueled by autonomous groups. Over the course of the following weeks, the protests turned uglier, and so did the police’s aggressive attempts to quell the commotion.

Zürcher Bewegung, Band 32 (Zurich Movement, Vol. 32), published by Verlag ohne Zukunft in 1981, is an illustrated timeline of the “Opera House Riots” that wreaked havoc in Zurich back in 1980. The book opens with the violent climax of the protests, the demo in front of the opera house, and closes on December 31 of that year with a stink bomb attack during the New Year's Eve performance of a play at Zurich's Schauspielhaus.

The book combines raw candid black-and-white photos with facsimiled news clippings of tabloid headlines as well as quotes from Swiss politicos and police officers, forming a sort of fragmentary running commentary on the documentary photographic material.

Olivia Heussler, Malou Muralt, Dieter Oswald, Daniel Schäublin, Andi Zai et al. shot the pictures and edited the book. They wrote: „The book: not souvenirs to dull our own recollections, but raw photos of a battered city. Today, thanks to beautiful chaos, we’re in a state of emergency. “

Now, to mark the 40th anniversary of the 1980 Opera House Riots, Edition Patrick Frey has taken up an idea floated by Fredy Meier to print a facsimile of this very first book about the Zürcher Bewegung. It’s available for the same price it sold for then: 12 Swiss francs.
Press Release

Fredy Meier
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