

Heiligendamm G8 Summit: a chronology of protest and repression

From 6 to 8 June this year, the annual G8 summit took place in Heiligendamm, a seaside resort near the northern German city of Rostock. Since the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999, meetings of representatives of industrialised states and businesses promoting and coordinating capitalist globalisation have met with mass resistance, which in turn has been met with heavy-handed policing, some argue, at an unprecedented scale for liberal democratic states. Protests shook Washington and Prague in 2000, Gothenburg and Genoa in 2001, Quito in 2002, Thessalonica, Evian and Cancún in 2003, Gleneagles, Mar del Plata and Hong Kong in 2005 and now Heiligendamm in 2007.

This latest summit also brought with it an unprecedented arsenal and scale of police violence, criminalisation of protest and many infringements of fundamental civil liberties. The scenes unfolding over the week were impressive: roughly 80,000 people demonstrated on 2 June in Rostock against G8's neo-liberal policies, 10,000 demonstrated on 4 June for the rights of migrants and refugees, and around 20,000 people remained for a whole week in three self-organised camps around Heiligendamm in order to block the summit at its main entry and exit roads. 10,000 people took part in peaceful blockades between 6 and 8 June. The protests were policed by a total of 17,800 officers from all over Germany and, according to some reports, 2,000 military personnel. The deployment of the latter, which is now being debated in parliament, was in violation of Germany's constitution. After two years of alter-globalisation activists in Germany and abroad preparing the protests, and the authorities' parallel attempt to criminalise them, protesters and civil liberties groups are drawing preliminary conclusions and preparing for lengthy court cases. Below is an incomplete chronology of the protests and their repression.

Stage 1: preliminary criminalisation

The first public attempt by the German authorities and police to de-legitimise the protests by way of criminalisation took place on 9 May this year in form of large-scale police raids. On the order of the Federal Public Prosecution (*Bundesanwaltschaft*), 1,000 police officers searched around 40 private homes and two social centres in Hamburg, Berlin and other cities in northern Germany. The target: politically active people between the age of 25 and 50, some of whom were involved in organising the protests against the summit. The reason given for the raids and confiscation of personal computers and address books, in some cases even cigarette butts and so-called "scent samples", was the accusation of the "formation of a terrorist organisation" under Article 129a of the German Criminal Code. "Scent sampling" was a technique that many believed had vanished with the Berlin wall, used by the East German Stasi secret police to track down dissidents with dogs. Article 129a is a well-known provision amongst activists as it is regularly applied by police and the public prosecution to legitimise this severe infringement of privacy without the police having any hard evidence that any of the victims took, or were planning to take, part in any criminal act. In this case also, the purpose of its application appeared to be a general information-gathering exercise targeting the political movement: police copied the hard disk of the left-wing server SO36.net, which hosts many mailing lists and websites as well as personal computers of third parties not accused at all. Press releases from the Republican Lawyers Association (*Republikanischer Anwälten- und Anwälteverein* - RAV) and groups affected pointed out that the intent of the operation was to disturb the communication structures of G8 critics, which

were in the final stages of preparing the logistics for the camps and demonstrations, all of who had, at that time, the relevant permissions of the authorities.

The suspicion that evidence to justify the police raids was lacking was hardened by the fact that the public prosecution claimed that a criminal procedure that was initiated against a group named *militante gruppe* some years ago in relation to several arson attacks on cars, was somehow related to the G8 protest organisers. There was, however, no indication that those whose homes were raided were under suspicion of being members of this group or in any way connected to arson, or even that the arson attacks had anything to do with the G8 protests. The RAV press release (10.05.07) concludes:

The [judge's] order for the house searches construes a relationship between an old 129a procedure and alleged plans to disturb of stop the G8 summit. As usual, the wide remit of an Article 129a procedure are being used to openly collect data with a great publicity effect. Article 129a procedures regularly lead to the collection of masses of information with a huge mobilisation of investigative forces. Convictions, however, very rarely take place.

But rather than insisting that concrete attacks were to be averted with the raids, the Federal Public Prosecution itself confirmed the indiscriminate nature of the action:

Today's investigations were intended to shed light on the structures and the personal composition of these groups and did not primarily serve the prevention of concrete attacks. There was no evidence for [such attacks]. We shot into the bush and now we will see who and what will come out.

With this rather crude justification, the general assessment of the police operation, not only in left-wing but also mainstream press circles, was that it represented an illegitimate and unfounded attempt by the authorities to criminalise the protest movement. This attempt, however, failed spectacularly in that even conservative newspapers did not take the terrorist allegations seriously and instead gave space to the protest press spokespersons, who used the opportunity to advertise the demonstrations, blockades and conferences during the summit. The liberal daily paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* even printed a comprehensive chronology of planned demonstrations and action days next to reporting on the house searches. The lawyer's association RAV and the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy (*Komitee für Grundrechte und Demokratie*) used the opportunity to reiterate their call for the abolition of provision 129a, as it was in violation with democratic principles in criminal proceedings and historically had been applied to criminalise political movements and not to avert or solve crimes.

Criminalisation is continuing after the protests, too. Using reports of violence during the G8 summit conservative politicians are now demanding a special police database on "Autonomous" activists and raids have again taken place in Berlin. Again no one was arrested, even though the allegation: formation of a terrorist organisation under Article 129a, was applied also here.

Dutch police arrests 100 cyclists

A similarly disproportionate infringement of civil liberties took place in the Netherlands on 5 May, a few days before the house raids in Germany, when the Dutch authorities decided to take action against a rather unthreatening group of around 100 cyclists from the *Gr8chaoskaravaan*, who were travelling from Belgium via Holland to the protests in Heiligendamm. The

whole group was arrested on its way out of the city, allegedly for not following police orders (that is, not to cycle on a cycle path). The press release (8.5.07) issued by the Caravan organisers describes the incident as follows:

The cyclists were surprised when without prior warning a special unit and police on horseback suddenly charged the bicycle ride with batons drawn, one police van even driving right into the cyclists and hitting a bicycle. The police then proceeded to arrest all members on the pretext of not using the bicycle path. Bicycles were confiscated and removed with many being damaged and locks broken. Demonstrators later reported that the police used disproportional violence during the arrests.

Ill-treatment continued during the arrest. For several hours the demonstrators were detained in overcrowded cells - 25 people in a 4x4 m cell - where they suffered from anoxia caused by lack of ventilation and were deprived of food. When the first demonstrators were released during the night a growing number of reports about police intimidation came in. "They told us that what they had done today was tolerant compared to what they would do if we continued to carry out the actions we had planned" says Antje, a caravan participant.

The arrests were as surprising for the international members of the caravan as they were for the Dutch activists. "It was a very unusual police action for Dutch circumstances" said Antje, Dutch activist and caravan member. "I have been doing bicycle actions for years and can't remember anything like this happening." Andree Narres from the info office of the bicycle caravans is outraged: "I can't find any other plausible explanation than politics and police doing what they can to prevent, harass and criminalise all protests even ahead of the G8 summit." According to him the action may have been planned to make the bicycle caravan's entry into Germany harder. "The police didn't charge the cyclists with the mere regulatory offence of not using the bicycle path but of not obeying police orders, an offence that leads to a court hearing.

The bike tour organisers and two victims of the police action have taken legal action on the grounds of indiscriminate use of violence and illegal arrest as well as. As surprising as the police action, however, was the lack of media coverage: the incident received uncritical local media coverage and almost no national media coverage. Only two members of local socialist and green parties criticised the incident and proposed a motion in the Utrecht city council to lodge parliamentary questions, which did not receive sufficient votes. The mayor, who is responsible for the local police force, denied any police wrongdoing before any inquiry into the matter.

"Stasi methods"

The next measure, applied from the prolific German law and order arsenal, was the routine opening of mail in Hamburg and an unorthodox attempt by police to pressurise a university lecturer into denouncing his students.

The investigation into the *militante gruppe* that served as an excuse for the mass house searches of 9 May continued with a comprehensive "snail mail" action by police, according to the daily newspaper *tageszeitung* (25.05.07) and later confirmed by the police. Dozens of officers from the regional Hamburg crime police authority (*Landeskriminalamt*) were opening and confiscating "suspicious looking" mail from specific city districts in the central Hamburg post office. The order was given by the Federal Crime Police Authority (*Bundeskriminalamt*) with the alleged aim of fishing out possible letters to newspapers or television stations claiming responsibility for attacks. Not even the terrorist provision 129a allows for this indiscriminate violation of privacy and interception of communication; the lawyer Sönke Hilbrans reacted with disbelief:

What more are citizens of whole city districts are to endure? Not only by taking scent samples but now also by controlling the post, the security agencies are increasingly and unashamedly resorting to Stasi

methods. It is evident that some ministers and police officers have lost any measure of acting within democratic and proportionate restraints. If the judiciary does not stop them, this country is on its way towards a different Republic.

Another police action denounced as a "scandal" by the lawyer's association RAV was the attempt to get a lecturer at Hamburg University to divulge names of students active in the G8 protest preparations. Two police officers approached the lecturer in the break of his talk entitled, ironically, "Fear as a social-disciplinary instrument". He refused and asked the police leave the premises and later proclaimed: "I believe the attempt to convince lecturers to denounce students who are politically active is a scandal. This massively infringes on the right to freedom of expression as well as scientific freedom." Interception, denunciation and political crimes, together with the erection of a 12 km long fence in eastern Germany to protect leaders from public criticism, have conjured up uneasy images in Germany of old Stasi methods that were thought a thing of the past.

Stage 2: fence off, ban, spin and provoke

Similar to earlier summits, the "red" security zone around the Heiligendamm meeting place was surrounded by a fence (in this case a 12 km long razor-wire "technical barrier") and in the red zone itself, regular civil liberties such as the right to assembly and freedom of expression were restricted. On 10 May, the Kavala police unit, specially set up in 2005 to police the protests, banned the demonstration planned for 7 June outside of the red zone as well: the authorities also issued a general banning order that forbade all assemblies within a second zone 10 km outside of the security fence. The general decree led to much criticism by politicians and civil liberties groups and was contested up to the Federal Constitutional Court. It ruled, one day before the planned demonstration, that the decree generally banning assemblies outside of the security zone was unconstitutional, and even explicitly criticised the police's "security concept" for being directed "against the creation of assemblies" as the "right to freedom of assembly was given no chance to be realised in an adequate manner". It nevertheless accepted the police's claim that the demonstration itself should be banned because of expected violence on part of the demonstrators.

On the general decree, Tobias Pflüger, the MEP for the left faction (GUE/NGL) of the European Parliament said that:

It is unacceptable that now even the fundamental right to assembly is being curtailed. I protest strongly against this decision and demand that those responsible return to the rules of democracy. Those who invite the G8, also invite the legitimate protest. The expression of protest has to be comprehensively protected, at the least to bring the message of the critique of the [political content] of G8 [policies] across [to the general public].

The Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy (18.5.07) pointed out that:

Such a precipitated banning order has to be based on current and concrete evidence that a direct threat to legally protected interests exists. There is, however, no sign of any evidence supporting this claim.

The fact that the Federal Constitutional Court used the escalation of violence at the end of the demonstration of 2 June to justify banning the 7 June demonstration has to be considered in light of later revelations of the use of *agent provocateurs* by the police and the claim by demonstration observers that the escalations on 2 June were initiated not only by some 'black block' demonstrators but also by undercover police in the demonstration. Furthermore, the violence appeared to have been hugely exaggerated: an attempt to corroborate the police claim of 200 severely injured police officers would later reveal that only two police officers were hospitalised for two days, one of whom had fallen down some stairs whilst chasing demonstrators. Also

allegations appearing in the mainstream media (such as *FAZ-Online*, *Deutsche Welle* and the *tagesspiegel*) quoting an unnamed "high-level security expert" who said that demonstrators attacked police with knives or were throwing potatoes spiked with nails were denied by police spokesman Manfred Lütjann of the Kavala police unit (see the website *Unspin the G8*, which is dedicated to media spin around the G8 and lists various similar incidents).

"Yesterday was yesterday - and today is today"

The ultimate scandal, however, was the discovery on 6 June that the German police had deployed *agent provocateurs*: it is ironic that on a demonstration that was banned by the police on grounds of expected violence, a group of five undercover police officers inciting stone throwing was identified by peaceful protesters. The five men, dressed as "black block" demonstrators, carried stones towards a group of people blockading the security fence and tried to convince them to start throwing them at the police. Angered by this, as the demonstration organised by the *Block G8* network was explicitly peaceful, (reiterated by the network in its numerous call-outs and on its website) activists started to question the motives of the men in black and asked for their identity and political background. The men refused to identify themselves and ran away. One of them, however, was stopped by demonstrators and challenged. From that moment he started addressing the protesters with the formal address "Sie" and refused to reply to questions. After intervention by the legal team as an angry crowd formed around him, with his agreement he was led to the police lines, which welcomed him amidst their ranks.

Immediately after the incident, police spokesman Manfred Lütjann categorically denied the use of *agents provocateurs*: "As an institution acting in accordance with the rule of law we are not allowed, and do not do, such a thing". Although German law does in principle allow for the use of *agent provocateurs*, Lütjann was adamant the discovered police officer was not sent by Kavala and added: "I do not know what other security agencies might be doing; I cannot represent any internal security service officers here" (*junge Welt*, 8.6.07). The next day, however, the evidence forced Kavala to retract its statement and Ulf Claassen, another Kavala spokesman, admitted to *Spiegel-Online* (8.6.07) that the police had used an undercover agent in the blockade in question, commenting on the embarrassing retraction with: "Yesterday was yesterday - and today is today". Green party MP Christian Ströbele said he would ask a parliamentary question on the incident and found that "if it appears to be true, the evaluation of many incidents of these past days would of course have to be seen in a different light". The Rostock public prosecution is currently assessing possible criminal proceedings against the undercover officer on grounds of incitement to commit crimes.

Stage 3: arrest and attack

This brings us to stage three in the chronology of policing summit protests: the use of disproportionate police violence and mass arrests. Protest groups and media activists have started collating evidence and eye witness reports on the police repression (www.gipfelsoli.de, <http://de.indymedia.org>). The balance drawn so far shows that the security operation entailed massive stop and search operations, mass detention in special cages, filming of arrestees in cages, preventative arrests, accelerated court procedures, use of pepper spray and baton charges on peaceful demonstrators, water canon use against peaceful blockades, confiscation of bicycles and personal belongings and a plethora of violent incidents and sexual assault.

One demonstrator, for example, reported on Bavarian Special Forces brutality during the arrests on 2 June:

As I was pushed into the car, I was told that I should "shut up,

otherwise there would be trouble" and that they were "fed up with stone throwers like me". On the way to the Police base, I was massively pressured to "admit everything" because they were "going to get us all anyway". I was kicked, beaten, shouted at and threatened: "when we get there we will take you off the list and drive with you into the woods, nobody will notice". All in all, the whole incident took 4 and a half hours, until I was released without charge.

The escalation from 2 June, exacerbated by police reports of hundreds of "severely injured" officers, was used by police to legitimise repression during the migration action day on 4 June. In the morning, the opening rally at a block of flats in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, commemorating the racist pogroms against asylum seekers in 1991 which saw hundreds of bystanders cheering on a gang of neo-nazis setting fire to a house full of refugees and foreign workers, was attacked by police without reason. The legal team reported that the police encircled peaceful demonstrators and pepper-sprayed them arbitrarily. Two demonstrators suffered serious eye injuries during a water cannon attack on a peaceful blockade at the West Gate of the security fence.

Further reports about police violence include:

* A number of people were arrested because they were carrying a banner with the slogan, "Free All Prisoners!" as they passed by a prison on their way to a demonstration. The police judged this as incitement to actively help people break out of prison.

* Two people were taken into detention at Kühlungsborn beach as they played in the sand near the fence. Police accused demonstrators of trying to dig a tunnel.

* According to the legal teams, there was an overwhelming use of violence during arrests, particularly by the Berlin police. Lawyers were also pushed around and insulted. One lawyer who had subjected a police officer to a stiff cross-examination in a previous court case was threatened during a demonstration. She was told that they knew her name and where she lived.

* During police transportation there were further abuses, as one victim describes: "The police took off the handcuffs cutting into my hands so that they could take off my rucksack, threatening to beat me if I moved. To underline their point, one of the police officers rammed my head against the cell wall. After the police finally left me and other detainees in the cell, we were told not to speak or else he would ensure that we "would never be able to speak again". "In one case a police unit stormed a tram as it stopped, police beat up everyone dressed in black and then left the tram again immediately", the legal team said on 4 June.

* During a police check one woman was grabbed in the crotch whilst officers made leery noises. Demonstrators were also sexually harassed near Wichmannsdorf camp. On a parking lot near the camp on 5 June, a group of women had to undress in front of all the police officers present.

* At the fifth police check point on the way to the airport a demonstrator's car was tampered with by the police. All of a sudden the fuel injection pump was missing and the vehicle would no longer start as the group of demonstrators was encircled by grinning police officers.

* A media bus from Holland was stopped on its way to a permitted demonstration at the airport and all passengers were detained, including a mother with her 3-year-old child, who was also photographed for the ID-check and put in the prison cages. The media bus was later confiscated for around 24 hours along with all of the journalists' equipment and material in the bus. One journalist and the bus driver were held overnight.

The treatment of prisoners or rather, detainees, during the summit received strong criticism by lawyers and legal teams, culminating in an unusual event on 7 June: the legal team organised a demonstration in front of the Rostock Industriestrasse detention centre to protest against the poor conditions for detainees and the fact that prisoners were denied contact with them. The lawyer's association RAV had issued a

press release a day earlier criticising the police for stopping legal teams from carrying out their tasks during the demonstrations. Two lawyers were pushed by police onto the street, in several cases lawyers were verbally threatened by police that if they would not "shut up" and stop asking arrestees for their names they would be beaten up. When the Kavala police unit announced the closure of the only lawyer's room at the detention centre, which was holding hundreds of detainees in cages (implying that lawyers would have to wait outside on the street until the police called them in to see their clients), the lawyers made their decision hold a demonstration. The law in Germany states that anyone detained by police has to be given a chance to speak to a lawyer and within four hours, he or she has to be presented to a judge who decides on the evidence and on which grounds the detainee will be held for longer. On 7 June, around 100 people were held in the Rostock detention centre, some for up to 12 hours, without access to a lawyer or being told what the charges against them were. Not a single one of them was presented to a lawyer or a judge.

The preliminary balance of arrests and convictions (collated by *Indymedia Germany*) reads as follows: In total, 1,057 persons were detained up to 8 June, in 140 cases, a judge decided on extending detention periods. The interior ministry announced that 850,000 people were checked at Schengen borders, 155 were refused entry and 57 people who had outstanding arrest warrants were arrested. During more intensive checks at the external Schengen borders, 401 people were refused entry into Germany. Rostock police announced it stopped 67 persons from entering the Rostock area. The justice ministry announced that 8 people were sentenced to between 6 and 10 months in prison in fast track procedures. Charges are: attempted and actual assault and severe breach of the peace. Two of these people have been released on parole, although the convictions are final. Two persons were remanded in custody awaiting trial. In 120 cases judges ordered long-term detention on the basis of people being considered 'dangerous'. These people were released at the end of the G8 summit. In the period from 2 to 10 June, a total of 103 persons (90 men and 13 women) were imprisoned, of these, 92 people received security and order rulings and 11 arrest warrants. The youngest person was 16, the oldest 41. Amongst these there were 41 foreigners, 40% of the total. Nationalities were: Belgian 2, British 8, Estonian 2, French 2, Irish 4, Italian 1, Canadian 1, Dutch 1, Polish 1, Russian 1, Swedish 14, Swiss 1, Spanish 2, US American 1, and German 62.

(Source: <http://de.indymedia.org/2007/06/185126.shtml>)

A testing ground for security measures: deploying the army internally

Finally, this summit, like other summits before it, served as a platform for ministers and police to test their toolkit of repressive measures. In addition to reinstating Schengen border controls, Interior Minister Schäuble, pushed for the deployment of armed forces inside of Germany to control protesters and other "security risks". It appears that the army had taken part in policing the protest with over 2,000 personnel, "armoured reconnaissance vehicles" (mobile armoured tanks used for intelligence and communications) and Tornado jets. The latter flew over one of the camp sites above the head of 3,000 activists on 5 June. The web-news service Spiegel-online reported on 16 June that the jet flew lower than the minimum height of 150 metres. The German air force has now started investigations against the two pilots for misconduct, who apparently ignored the warning signals that are automatically generated by undercutting the minimum height. Interior state secretary Peter Altmaier declared during parliamentary question time (13.6.07) that the use of "Tornado jets took place in the framework of mutual assistance [between authorities] in order to gather intelligence on possible interference on roads or the landscape. This is a common and

normal procedure. It has a sound legal basis". Journalists and activists reported military police patrolling the area on motorcycles and it was impossible to ignore dozens of air force helicopters continuously circling over Heiligendamm and particularly over the camp sites.

Far from being a common procedure with a sound legal basis, the deployment of armed forces internally has been debated in the media and by constitutional experts for more than a year. Green Party MP Christian Ströbele called the action a "precipitated praxis of the deployment of armed forces internally which interior minister Schäuble is obviously planning [to go ahead with]." Furthermore, the constitution regulates the deployment of armed forces over and above procedural regulations such as mutual assistance. Even the scientific service of the Lower House of Parliament finds that the constitution only allows for the army to assist the police and emergency services in cases of catastrophe, and then only with non-armed assistance such as emergency accommodation and medical services.

"Technical Mutual assistance" can only be granted with additional support equipment that the police already has at its disposal in its regular arsenal, that excludes Tornado jets and armoured tanks. In light of the jets flying below 150 metres and the threatening effect that would have on the demonstrators, Dieter Wiefelspütz, home affairs spokesman for the social democratic party SPD, said on 16 June that "From a current perspective, the deployment was not only politically insensitive but also unconstitutional".

Rather than representing a technical-legal issue, the use of the army against its own population represents an ideological shift away from democratic fundamental principles that should guide law enforcement and intelligence agencies, towards state of emergency principles. This is reflected in the fact that the government and responsible spokespersons adamantly deny the problematic nature of the conflation of army and police tasks. Franz Josef Jung, member of the conservative Party (CDU) and spokesperson for the ministry of defence argued that Heiligendamm served as a training ground for the army for war zones such as Afghanistan. He emphasized that the army thought it was out of the question that "we have to practise our skills, as you can see in Afghanistan" and claimed that police as well as army would benefit from the deployment of armed forces in Heiligendamm: "it is a win-win situation for the police as well as for us".

RAV press release archive: <http://www.rav.de/news/archive.php>; *Bike Caravan press release (8.5.07):* http://wiki.dissentnetwork.org/wiki/Bicycle-Caravan_%22West%22:press:2007-05-08; *Press release MEP Tobias Pflüger (10.5.07):*

<http://tobiaspflueger.twoday.net/stories/3712698/>; *The Media Gets the Message - the uneven battle over the media (Unspin the G8):*

<http://www.unspintheg8.org/media-gets-message-uneven-battle-over-media> *Spiegel-online video report on the successful blockade of 6 June and the discovery of the agent provocateur:* <http://www.spiegel.de/ideoplayer/0,6298,18864,00.html>; *Spiegel-online (8.6.07) on the agent provocateur:*

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,487554,00.html> *Chronicle (English) of police violence and state repression:*

<http://gipfelsoli.org/Multilanguage/English/3033.html>; *Other chronicles of repression (German):* <http://de.indymedia.org/2007/06/184905.shtml>

<http://de.indymedia.org/2007/06/183750.shtml>

Parliamentary questions and answers (13.6.2007) on the use of army jets and agent provocateurs: <http://www.bundestag.de/bic/plenarprotokolle/>

[plenarprotokolle/16102.html](http://www.sueddeutsche.de/deutschland/artikel/267/118135/); *Süddeutsche Zeitung (13.6.07) on the use of army jets:* <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/deutschland/artikel/267/118135/>; *Army jets fly lower than legal minimum height:*

http://www.tagesschau.de/aktuell/meldungen/0,1185,OID6965730_REF2,0,0.html; *Assessment of police violence in parliament by Green Party MPs, lawyers and the police trade union:*

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0%2C1518%2C488898%2C00.html>