

## Davos and Evian

**This feature looks at: Davos (Switzerland) - an account of the planned prevention of a demonstration and plans to combat protests at the Evian (France) G8 Summit meetings**

In the run-up to this year's World Economic Forum (WEF) in Switzerland, the authorities, in the canton of Graubünden, had promised more openness. In 2001, the demonstration in Davos had been banned altogether. In 2002, this private gathering of the powerful and their entourage fled to New York. This year was the first time a mass demonstration was legally permitted but the police prevented it.

Long before 25 January 2003 it became clear that it would not be easy to demonstrate in Davos. Already in the late autumn of 2002, the authorities estimated that additional security measures for the WEF would amount to 13.5 million Swiss Francs (about 7.5 million euro) - to be divided between the federation, the canton of Graubünden (three eighths each), the local authority of Davos and the WEF (one eighth each). A unique deployment of state power was thereby financed.

Between 1,200 and 2,000 police officers from all over Switzerland - precise numbers are not available - were concentrated in and around the winter sports centre. 1,300 soldiers - armed with assault rifles - provided protection for buildings, 320 professional soldiers of the *Festungswachtkorps* ("fortifications guard") were responsible for the protection of foreign politicians. The Swiss Air Force looked after the WEF's safety from terrorist attacks from above, six water cannons and 77 police officers from the German Länder of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg helped from below.

By the end of December, the "Service for Analysis and Prevention" (*Dienst für Analyse und Prävention*, DAP), the state political police, had banned over 100 foreign demonstrators from entry to the country. The DAP has not disclosed how many entry bans were finally issued. Also secret was the number of people against whom the police from Graubünden planned to issue a ban (*Aufenthaltsverbot*). Here also, intelligence was issued by the DAP, and the people concerned were by no means only those with former convictions, but also people who had merely been "noted by the police" - which means nothing other than that they were on the records of the political police of the federation or the cantons.

### The cattle gate in Fideris

During the winter, Davos is only accessible from one side, via the *Landwasser* valley, at the base of which the village of Landquart is located. Trains of the Federal Swiss Railway (SBB) run up to that point, anyone wanting to travel further has to change to the railway company *Rhätische Bahn* (RHB). In Fideris, which is half an hour before Davos, the police installed a special check point, through which all demonstrators had to pass: the plan was that RHB short-distance trains were supposed to stop at a specially constructed platform, which led to a square that was fenced in by gates on the one side and the Landwasser river on the other. The square could only be left through a tent on one side. In this tent, 12 corridors had been constructed with barrier fences, at the end of which employees of the Zurich airport police would search demonstrators for "dangerous objects". Behind them, police officers familiar with the "scene" would identify potential troublemakers, pick them out of the crowd and issue a travel ban (*Aufenthaltsverbot*). About 100 metres further, another train to Davos would already be waiting for those allowed to pass.

The organisers of the demonstration, the Olten Coalition, had inspected this control scenario one week before the

demonstration and had decided: "we will not pass through these cattle gates". They decided to negotiate in Fideris. If the police did not allow uncontrolled access to Davos, they would simply demonstrate in Landquart.

On Saturday, most WEF demonstrators arrived in Landquart station, which was surrounded by police, on the "Davos Social Express" (a special train of the SBB), which crossed the country from Geneva via Bern and Zurich. Around 200 of the Coalition delegation, changed to a RHB train at 10 am. At half past ten, the train stopped in Fideris and the passengers announced through the megaphone: "We are the delegation of the Olten Coalition. We will not get off the train and will not pass through the controls". Shortly afterwards, buses from the construction and industry trade union stopped on the street before the police control area. The trade unions expressed solidarity with the demands of the Coalition. Several hours of negotiation followed with the police officer-in-charge and the official representative of the cantonal authority, the Davos municipal council member Hans Peter Michel. A compromise was reached around 12.30 that there would only be luggage checks on the train. The police would abstain from person checks and nobody would be picked out of the crowd by police officers familiar with the "scene".

Before the "luggage inspectors" from the Zurich airport police boarded the train, the officer-in-charge checked with the Olten Coalition, if the people arriving in the other trains would also adhere to the arrangements agreed, pointing out to them that he did not want to negotiate a second time. The Coalition delegation then phoned the people in Landquart, and the deal was done. Mr. Michel announced the outcome over the megaphone and the train departed at 12.45.

Twenty minutes later, the officer-in-charge called the media and retracted the agreement. Before the next train arrived shortly after 2pm, it has become clear that the police were insisting on control checks. This decision had nothing to do with the fact that the train was crowded, or with the allegation that the "black bloc" is on board. All negotiations were useless, police refused to carry out the checks on the train or on the platform. At 15.17, the train with the demonstrators, returns to Landquart. Together with the buses and the first few trains, only 2,000 demonstrators made it to Davos. Escalations in Landquart and on the way to the Swiss lowlands was inevitable from then on.

### Landquart - Wollishofen - Bern

By 16.30, over 3,000 people were still waiting in Landquart station, which was still surrounded by police. When some people tried to block the motorway, which runs parallel to the tracks, the police used teargas, rubber bullets and water cannons against the crowd in the station. Around 5 pm, the SBB provided a train which stops in the Zurich suburban station of Wollishofen and finally in Bern. There, the police welcomed the demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets, claiming that property had been damaged as an excuse. Their only aim was to stop demonstrators reaching the city centre, to break up gatherings and to push people towards the autonomous cultural centre, *Reitschule*. At a press conference on Sunday, the police director of Bern spoke of "terrorists of the worst kind". The *Reitschule*, which had always been a thorn in the side of the authorities, was now a centre of "militancy".

### Political afterpains

In the run-up to the demonstration, all the media, including the otherwise left-liberal paper *Tagesanzeiger*, had attacked the Olten Coalition. The argument being that those not accepting checks and controls, did not want a peaceful demonstration but violence. The head of the Social Democratic Party used the same argument, making the Coalition and not the police responsible for the failure of the mass demonstration in Davos. Despite the massive presence of media in Fideris, the Sunday and Monday papers gave a distorted account of the negotiations between the Coalition and the police. The breach of promise by the police was either concealed or brushed under the media carpet. On Monday, the Construction and Industry Trade Union, the Democratic Lawyer's Association of Switzerland (*Demokratische JuristInnen Schweiz*) and left-wing social-democratic MPs tried to set the story straight.

Meanwhile, the Christian Democratic People's Party (*Christdemokratische Volkspartei*, CVP) has proposed a change in the law. A Federal Law should prescribe a ban on the wearing of balaclavas during demonstrations. For nationwide demonstrations, the Party wants to introduce control scenarios such as in Fideris as a general principle. The CVP further demanded that organisers of demonstrations take part in the identification of demonstrators. If public order disturbances during demonstrations are predicted, they will be "spatially relocated": for example, to an open field rather than sensitive inner city areas.

The next summit in line is the G8 summit in June. It will take place in Evian, on the French side of the Lake Geneva. The Swiss authorities have already calculated the cost of security measures for Switzerland as 40 million Swiss Francs. During its March session, the federal parliament most probably will agree to send 4,500 soldiers to support the police forces during the summit. The French police, the notorious *Compagnies Republicaines de Sécurité* (CRS), will, if necessary, be deployed on Swiss territory.

On the French side, the state will be deploying a massive military presence in order to prevent any trouble. A special working-group, headed by Jean-Claude Poimboeuf, ex-Australian ambassador and now General Secretary of G8, released a report in November 2002. According to excerpts published in *Journal du Dimanche* three army corps - Air Force, Navy and Army - will be mobilized. An "aeronautical bubble" will protect Evian from any possible action from the air such as

"dropping flyers from microlights or unexpected landings from paragliders".

Navy troops and GIGN SWAT teams will watch over the Lemanee lake. It is said that the authorities fear hijacking of tourists' boats or landing of hordes of small boats coming from the Swiss coast.

The Army will provide its: "electronic warfare know-how (basically the 44th and 54th Régiments of Transmissions) in order to disrupt protesters' communication means" and to locate any source trying to enter the reserved military radio spectrum. A common practise for international summits, except it is usually not advertised.

The theatre of operation includes three zones:

*Zone 1, Evian city, will be sealed off and access will be restricted to authorised participants, inhabitants and workers; every person above 13, will have to get personal badges.*

*Zone 2 is a restricted coast area dedicated to media facilities.*

*Zone 3, the rural areas surrounding Evian, will be heavily controlled.*

The French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, declared in January that he will make sure anti-globalisation groups "who want to can express themselves in a free and democratic way...and not under police surveillance". But the G8 working group mentioned earlier said that there was one condition, "that they stay far away". Swiss Confederation president Pascal Couchepin's answer in February was the protest "must happen on French soil. We are going to urge France to find a solution."

*Sources: Report by the Observation Delegation of the Demokratischen JuristInnen Schweiz (DJS) in Fideris from 25.1.2003 (www.djs-jds.ch), Wochenzeitung 23. and 30. January 2003 (www.woz.ch), Vorwärts 31.1.2003 (www.vorwaerts.info)*

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