

32

FROM GLENEAGLES TO HEILIGENDAMM

**Some people from the No G8 Coordination
Berlin**

People's impressions of the events in Scotland are very different. Our personal impressions are rather positive: we had good fun, met great people, got to know other cultures of resistance, were too smart and too fast for the British police and took part in some inspiring actions.

Having come back from walking in the Highlands, we feel various issues still require collective discussion. Was it a political success? Were the blockades successful? What did the actions achieve? What did we manage to get across to the 'public'? Critics say these discussions have hardly taken place. Neither in Scotland, nor before or after.

The main focus of this text, however, is an examination of the network that formed in the German-speaking countries – Austria, Switzerland and Germany – against the summit in Gleneagles. What did it achieve, what failed, what could we do in the future?

It all began at the European Social Forum in London, back in 2004, when some people from Germany and Switzerland attended the Day of Dissent. A mailing list was set up soon afterwards and we all kept in touch. Our goals were to spread awareness about the G8 meeting, encouraging people to take action either in Scotland or elsewhere, and to support the Dissent! network where possible. Beyond Scotland, the idea was to form a network which could facilitate resistance to the 2007 G8 summit in Germany.

Our networking remained primarily internet based, with all the advantages and disadvantages of this. Besides the mailinglists, a website was set up and people started using a wiki – a website whose content can be edited easily by anyone. We also met a few times in ‘real life’, at an international networking meeting in Tübingen and at the ‘Bundeskoordination Internationalismus’ (BUKO) conference in Hamburg. On top of this, there was a meeting of the German-speaking network in Mannheim.

We tried to use the wiki to share out the jobs that kept being left; we hoped that people would take on these tasks, and make sure what needed to be done got done. But the lack of people with time and energy often meant that nobody took responsibility. You can’t criticise a wiki for being lazy, so we resigned ourselves to the fact that it simply wouldn’t be possible to do all the things that we had hoped.

The fact that not everyone is familiar with using technologies such as wikis and email encryption created further problems – but at least we managed to spread knowledge about these things a little further within our own networks.

In general, however, the internet was a useful medium for communication for the sort of work that we were doing – which was mainly producing and distributing publicity and coordinating info-nights. All of this went fairly well. As well as in Berlin, there were well attended info-nights in cities across Germany and Switzerland, and some ten thousand stickers, posters and leaflets were designed, printed, sent out and distributed. It was exciting to see how quickly our publicity spread – our stickers encouraging people to ‘Form Autonomous Highland Gangs!’ could be found in toilets across Europe. On the other hand, none of us really know how many Highland gangs were actually formed (in toilets). But at the very least, people got to hear about the G8.

SUMMIT PERSPECTIVES

As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, the political debate about the goals of the G8 mobilisation – from a radical-left perspective – hardly took place at all in Germany, leading to heavy criticism. In Berlin, for example, there was only one public discussion about the question as to whether summit mobilisations still make sense. Apart from that, the ‘Glocal Group Hanau’ were the only ones to articulate their political strategies by discussing the pros and cons of big mobilisations in a discussion document. According to their text, international mobilisations like Gleneagles have empowering outcomes rarely seen in ‘ordinary’ campaign work. Other international gatherings (like caravans, ‘no borders’ camps, conferences and so on) have to complement confrontational events, but can’t replace them, as some experiences are only made possible through common action. So they propose a balance between local and international activities.

Their attempt to start a debate was welcomed by many, but there was little response from within the German-speaking network. Mainly this was because people were focused on structural debates and getting things done. We think these

strategic questions should be discussed more, including on an international level, but perhaps not during the summit when time is short.

At our first meetings in Berlin, we agreed to approach people outside the radical-left. We wanted an open anti-G8 network, in dialogue with churches, environmental groups and trade unions. However, we didn't really succeed in stepping outside of our own circles. Monthly open meetings didn't really help either, as we found that only people from a very similar background to us ended up coming along.

It was difficult to get people on board who didn't see the relevance of an event so geographically distant and it was hard to explain what they would get in return for their international solidarity. The problem was further compounded by the fact that the majority of people here had not heard about the Gleneagles summit – or, in some cases, the G8 at all – until Geldof announced the Live8 concerts in June.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

The 2007 G8 summit will take place in Eastern Germany, in the health resort Heiligendamm, close to Rostock, right on the Baltic Sea. The Berlin group is focusing on the mobilisation against this summit. The group is already far bigger than before, although there is still a need to inspire and involve a broader range of groups and individuals. We are continuing to organise within the Peoples' Global Action hallmarks, although this will be up for discussion later on. And we helped organise the first 2007 preparation meeting in Hamburg in October 2005 where over 200 people discussed strategies for radical resistance to the Heiligendamm summit.

People hope the campaign will have a positive impact on the left-wing movement in Germany which will last well beyond 2007. The initial focuses of the campaign will be the 2006 G8 summit in St. Petersburg, and the international resistance camp in 2006, just after the summit in Russia. This camp will be set up close to Heiligendamm.

The Initiative for an Interventionist Left (IL) has been set up independently from, but parallel to this mobilisation, and also comes from the radical-left. The IL hopes to use the summit as a focus for setting up a broad, movement orientated, horizontal grassroots alliance.

They write: 'The overall project of the G8 mobilisation in 2007 is so big and ambitious, that a single movement or organisation would be overstretched. Every solo attempt, or the domination by one tendency, would restrict the possibility to act and the political charisma of the actions at large... We therefore call for the forming of a broad alliance that takes on the organisation and coordination of the common tasks that can't be performed by a single group. Here initiatives from the whole range of left-wing struggle should unite: the local social forums, unemployed and social initiatives, antifascist and refugees groups, anarchist groups and

SHUT THEM DOWN!

other radicals of the movement, 3rd world solidarity- and church groups, Attac and the no-global networks, traditional communist and trotskyist organisations, trade union groups, youth organisations, Linkspartei/PDS [the socialist party], etc.¹

The IL suggest that the groups they list agree upon a minimum consensus of four points around which they could organise. First of all, a definitive 'delegitimation' of the G8. Secondly, the mutual acceptance of different forms of actions and resistance. Thirdly, a cooperation in solidarity and reliability. And finally, a clear and offensive separation from right populist and right-wing forces. The IL are planning on organising, around these proposed principles, a large conference in spring 2006.

At present, then, there are two approaches being taken to resisting the 2007 G8 summit: on the one hand, a broad alliance, and on the other, a radical network. The two approaches are not, of course, mutually exclusive and will hopefully complement each other. Whether or not the network will become part of the alliance remains to be seen in the coming months. All that is certain now is that the summit will not pass by unnoticed. International campaigns and networks will be built, actions planned and productive political arguments put forward. We hope to meet you there!

1 *More information about the alliance can be found on their website: www.g8-2007.de*