

# **To Our Compas in Buenos Aires**

**A Full Retrospective on the 2017 G20 Protests in Hamburg**

CrimethInc.

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Comrades in Germany, France, and elsewhere have prepared the following overview of the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg and the resistance it provoked. As a gesture of solidarity with others who fought the G20 and with those who will face it in Buenos Aires this November, we present their text here.

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This is a detailed report and reflection on what happened before, during, and after the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany. At the same time, it is a letter addressed to the activists and residents of Buenos Aires, Argentina—where the next summit (protest) will soon take place.

The authors come from Paris and Hamburg; they took part in the protest week together. They began working on this book in September 2017, discussing and composing everything clandestinely because politicians and police have been alleging that an “international conspiracy” was responsible for the militant resistance. Organizing in different locations and languages took a lot of time. In the end, about 25 people from four continents participated.

The people who worked on this project all come from different political backgrounds and attitudes; some see themselves as militants, others as explicitly non-violent. The narrative they have composed of their shared experience of the events is a contribution to the historiography of the G20, casting light on events that have remained clouded by the smoke of tear gas, burning barricades, and above all, media representation.

For the Compas in Buenos Aires, this letter should help to prepare for similar situations—in order to avoid repeating mistakes and to make the most of the opportunities.

Proceeds from the sale of these books in Europe will go to support those targeted by repression in Buenos Aires.

## **Preamble**

### **Hello Buenos Aires, hello all,**

We are writing to you to share our experiences of and to critically self-reflect on what happened in July 2017 at the G20 summit in Hamburg and in its wake. We regard its context a global one and, at the same time, we want to focus on concrete events.

We want to try to provide a context for the upcoming G20 summit in Buenos Aires. We want to express our solidarity to you as well as encourage you to organize resistance. We are on your side. Presumably, we will not be able to come directly to Buenos Aires, but we will try to get involved from here as directly as possible.

We come from Paris and from Hamburg, from left and radical left movements, from antifascist, ecological, refugee, squatting, and Right to the City movements. Accordingly, our respective histories and perspectives are quite different. We will discuss this in more detail later.

We assess the G20 protests in Hamburg as generally positive, but, there were also bad experiences and, of course, mistakes. Vehement state repression is ongoing, focusing particularly on trans-European connections like ours. Therefore, this “open letter” is anonymous. It has been written in a conspiratorial way.

In this open letter to you, French and German are the source languages. The third language, English, is used as a “bridge” language since we can write it reasonably well. Finally, there is Spanish which some of us speak fairly well. For English and Spanish, we have also consulted

native speakers. Multilingualism is, in our view, now key to international movements, since English is the most widespread second language in the world. Therefore, we have added it to each of the different language editions with the same illustrations.

Our letter to you should also be a contribution to the discussion and collective memory of both this G20 summit and the protests against it. In this respect, it also contains some details that may be less exciting for you in Buenos Aires, but are much more so for those who were in Hamburg. In addition, the public debate in Hamburg and in Germany has been dominated by many skewed or simply wrong representations of the events. With this open letter, we aim to counteract this trend.

So as to avoid any wrong impressions, we would like to highlight from the start that we cannot speak for the whole movement, nor do we wish to. Our perception is by no means universally valid. On the contrary: we deliberately show here a variety of sometimes contradictory views. In addition, there are countless other considerations. Our literary as well as linguistic competence is limited. But perhaps this is a world-first: “passing the torch” of summit protest organizing in five languages, with a project that originated in two different cultural contexts (France and Germany) and was completed with the participation of people from four continents. It may also be the first letter of this length written by movements in Europe to movements in Latin America on behalf of a common protest.

From our point of view, resistance and protests at summits, especially on the occasion of the G20, should link up internationally and learn about and refer to each other. We have informed ourselves as much as possible about previous summit protests and repression: for example, the 2014 G20 summit in Brisbane, Australia. Some of us from France, and especially those from Paris, were present in 2007 at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany; some of us from Hamburg travelled to Paris in 2016 to join the international demonstration against the “Loi Travail.”<sup>1</sup> We are following the movements and fights in Latin America as closely as we can. We are trying to go ahead and develop a common understanding in spite of all our differences.

We don’t think that the G20 is a kind of world government—to us, this simply does not exist. In fact, the global system of repression and exploitation has developed automated mechanisms. Clearly, we ourselves are part of it extensively. The times of the easy front lines are over. The G20 and other global meetings are an attempt to legitimize the existing conditions and those who represent them, even though they do so under the pretense of looking seriously at the problems of planet Earth and its inhabitants. However, in this world of destruction and chaos, where predatory capitalism is becoming more and more ruinous, this claim is less and less plausible, and there is little sincere talk of real, positive “progress.” In fact, the G20 is exclusively concerned with coordinating their common interests along with a demonstration of their power. Both attempts thoroughly failed in Hamburg—due to both the increasingly evident disunity and fragmentation of the respective political elites and also to our common resistance.

The only concrete result of the summit was the so-called “Compact for Africa.” Nothing was done to change the process of Europe closing its borders to the African continent, where people are becoming ever more impoverished. The goal was only to put an end to the circulation of photos depicting tens of thousands of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. Africa itself was not even involved in that deliberation at all.

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<sup>1</sup> The controversial reform of the French labor law.



At the same time, the streets and plazas of Hamburg were dominated by both colorful and militant protests. In the course of events, the aggregated German police, with all their expensive technology, lost control of the situation. While the heads of government listened to Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in the brand-new ultra-expensive concert hall, we took over the city.

## **Before the Summit**

### **Where We Come from**

We come from two strategically central countries and cities of Europe: politically, historically, economically, and culturally. In centralist France, anything of importance happens in Paris, whereas Hamburg—the self-styled “world champion of exports”—is the trade hub par excellence for Germany.

We come from the East of Paris, where the French revolution started, and the Paris Commune has its roots. We also come from the “Banlieues,” the dreary suburbs of “Paname”<sup>2</sup> where there is no work, where the cops harass and sometimes even murder youngsters with African roots. We come from Hamburg, Germany's so-called “gate to the world.” The city is socially split like no other in Germany. Moreover, while Berlin is first and foremost a city of government and administration, Hamburg, with its big harbor, is the commercial metropolis as well as the media capital—most importantly, it has been the protest stronghold of Germany for some decades.

Most conflicts in recent years have taken place in the St. Pauli and the adjoining Schanze quarters. In 1987, we succeeded in creating a whole series of occupied houses by building up barricades. The autonomous, radical left cultural center “Rote Flora“ has been squatted since 1989. In 2009, when the “right to the city“ network was established, activists successfully squatted Gängeviertel. There are also several other left projects in town. However, these quarters are in the process of changing. Rents have exploded and forced many to move. But who are we to say this when the apartment situation is at least as bad in Buenos Aires?

In Hamburg, especially in the St. Pauli and Schanze quarters, the police regularly enact sprees of violence, brutally attacking demonstrations and street parties. After an escalated demonstration in 2014, the whole quarter was declared a “danger zone” for ten days. 80,000 people were affected when the state suspended several fundamental rights. They forbade demonstrations and searched the inhabitants without cause, especially youngsters and young adults. That didn't stop us from organizing wild demonstrations against the “area of danger” every night, even if the demonstrations were undeclared and therefore illegal. In ten days, we wore out the cops so much that they eventually they gave up. Our protest symbols at the time were toilet brushes that we constantly carried as a “weapon” and waved during the demos.

Otherwise, in Hamburg there was and still is quite a well-organized “Antifa” (antifascist movement); for many years, they have succeeded in effectively disturbing fascistic, racist, or right-wing populist marches—sometimes even preventing them completely. An important part of “Antifa” is the leftist fan scene around the St. Pauli football team, our wonderful football club that is known throughout Europe. Even in Buenos Aires, there is an officially registered fan club with the excellent-sounding name, “Los Piratas Del Sur.”

## Global Disaster

Many of you might think that life here, generally, is a lot better than in Argentina. Of course, there are gigantic differences. The average income is comparatively higher in France or Germany than, for example, in Argentina or Brazil. And there is a higher standard of social security, education facilities, and health services here in Europe compared to your country or, more generally, to your continent. We are far from denying that these are quite fundamental differences for the people that live in such conditions. But we also know that in Latin America, the images of life here in Europe are often simplified and, worse, depicted as unrealistically positive. The reality looks very different from how it is presented by the media.

Like the societies of your continent, here, too, the societies are socially divided. Here, there are more and more people who live on the street, cut off from all social protections. There are even more people who suffer from the pressure of the system, some of them becoming ill due to their despair. In addition, increased social impoverishment leads to social isolation, which is often covered up by the illusions created by the new media. The economic pressure has strongly increased for many people. In large parts of Europe, youth unemployment exceeds 50%. Evidently, there were good reasons for the powerful youth revolts in Greece and Spain in recent years and in France in 2016. Labor legislation is being eroded everywhere and social benefits are being cut. In short, the situation in Europe is becoming increasingly precarious for more and more people.

Equally fictitious is the image of an ecologically advanced Europe. In France, one dangerous over-aged nuclear reactor stands beside another—in total, there are 54 of them. And in Germany, the supposed European leader of clean energy, dirty brown coal-fired power stations continue to smolder and cause extreme climate damage, even though alternatives have been available for a long time. It becomes downright vulgar if we take a look at the respective roles and responsibilities in global politics. France, recently supported by the German military in Mali, merrily carries on with its “post-colonial mode” in West Africa. Germany, on the other hand, supplies authoritarian regimes like Saudi Arabia with large quantities of arms: in particular, with small weapons suitable for civil wars, as well as bigger equipment like tanks or frigates.

There is no war, no stream of refugees, no misery on this planet that has not been at least decisively co-produced by “our” countries. In the final analysis, Germany even profits in a perverted manner from the stream of refugees. Currently, the biggest refugee groups come from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. They consist almost exclusively of young, highly-motivated, well-qualified people of the middle class, which is rather small in those countries. While they are useful for capitalist labor needs in Germany, their absence in their home countries adds to the disaster there—the unproductive elites as well as the poorest remain. At the same time, refugees who are regarded as “useless” are unscrupulously deported to so-called “safe countries of origin,” like Afghanistan.

The whole world, planet Earth, is being driven to the brink of disaster without any Plan B. Most likely, there won't be any natural resources left for the next and subsequent generations. Ethically, economically, and organizationally, it has become clear that today's capitalistic system has no reasonable answers.

In our era, there is no longer a general shortage of information. In the age of the Internet, many know about the main facts and understand the mechanisms of capitalism. We simply should—no,

must act, intervene, and overcome our fear. You could say that here in Europe, we live in the “belly of the beast,” while you in Latin America are allegorically in the “claws of the beast.”

## **Paname-Pauli-B‘Aires-Connection**

In spring 2016, we in Hamburg took notice of what was happening in Paris. The young and obviously uncontrollable “Nuit Debout“ movement took the streets and territories of “Paname.” Pictures of street battles, strikes, and blockades reached us, in addition to several texts, for example, ones written by the “Invisible Committee.”

For many activists in Hamburg, France and the movements there seemed to be far away, while there already was an active exchange with movements in Spain, Catalonia, and also Greece. This sense of distance was also caused by a language barrier. In Hamburg, not many people are able to understand or speak French fluently. Then again, most French people traditionally spoke no or little English, which, fortunately, is changing with the younger generation. Accordingly, the initial English-speaking email list for the international mobilization was nearly “French-less.” However, their presence during the protest week was quite different. Presumably, there have never been so many French people protesting in Germany before. Many “movement-Germans” probably thought “Oh my goodness! Where are all these people coming from?!”—it was wonderful.

Several of our friends had already been to B‘Aires, and some of them live there. We have a certain idea about how life is there, even though it is surely limited. We know that sometimes in the evening, the lights are switched off in the universities because the electricity cannot be paid. We have heard that young mothers are sometimes forced to sell their children just to survive. We noticed that the social conflicts have increased since Macri came to power and started to unrelentingly push capitalist interests: those of his own family, of the ruling clans that support him, but also international interests—in particular, after the election of Trump, US-American ones.

Not only are the needs of large parts of the population and the common welfare of the country more and more neglected: the state dismantles itself in a dizzying spell of new debts and sell-outs. Ricardo Aronskind, a professor at La Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, calls the current development of Argentina a “path to making a semi-colony of international capitalism.”

However, we have also seen pictures of demonstrations, of street battles with the police, and of a women’s demonstration against sexual violence. Of course, we have heard often that B‘Aires, as you sometimes call your city, is quite an unbelievable metropolis: full of energy, culture, and a remarkable chaotic stubbornness. In addition, the porteñxs (people of Buenos Aires) are well known as cosmopolitan, but also as nearly ungovernable. That is really super! These are the best preconditions for a successful summit protest, and that spurred us to write you this letter.

## **Declaration of War**

The decision to make Hamburg the place for the 2017 summit place was made in Autumn 2015 in Berlin. German Chancellor Angela Merkel supposedly expected the city to give the summit a cosmopolitan feel. This decision had been coordinated with the mayor of Hamburg, Olaf Scholz, prior to the announcement. He hoped to strengthen Hamburg’s 2024 Olympic bid by hosting the

G20 summit. However, the Olympic bid was rejected at the end of 2015 by a Hamburg referendum that had a slight majority against hosting the 2024 Olympics.

In February 2016, when Merkel publicly announced the G20 decision at a traditional feudal dinner in Hamburg, we could hardly believe it at first. The media, as well as different security experts, criticized the choice as “fatally wrong,” mainly because Hamburg is well-known as a hotbed of protest. Not to mention that the suggested summit convention place in the “exhibition halls” is directly adjacent to quarters that are known for protests and the occasional riot.

Why not somewhere else in the country, like the previous large political summits in Germany? Why not in the slightly calmer Berlin? Why here? For us, it was a plain declaration of war—it was quite clear from the beginning that everything in Germany with a blue light on top would be sent to Hamburg.

Apparently, the summit was meant to be a party for the monsters of the world: a showcase of their power right on our doorsteps. They must present Europe, and first of all Germany, as a “stable, liberal, and reasonable” part of their “world order.” When they do so, “constructive” criticism of single issues and “peaceful” protests are welcome, because those legitimize their power and limit the potential growth of an authentic protest movement. First of all, they want to demonstrate that they are, anywhere and anytime, capable of pulling off their spectacle: that these are their cities, streets, and territories that they dominate and control. To that effect, they need images of powerlessness. They need to transform large parts of the city into a state of emergency to deter us from resistance. This is exactly what happened at the last big summit of this kind in a large Western European city—the 2001 G8 in Genoa, Italy. The police were unbelievably excessive with their use of force. One demonstrator died: a police officer murdered 23-year-old Carlo Giuliani by shooting him in the head. From the beginning, we saw the G20 as a chance to clarify and demonstrate, before the global public, what we think of their ailing, futureless system. We saw it as a chance to emphasize the fact that they do not have everything under control—not even in Europe and in Germany, let alone in Hamburg—and that in the long run, our solidarity and our rage are stronger than their violent power. They put all their eggs in one basket—counting on repression and power. We saw that materialize in the months following the announcement. They appointed Hartmut Dudde, known in Hamburg as an especially brutal police leader, as the chief of command of all operations. Dudde immediately started releasing pithy statements in order to spread fear and anxiety. Nevertheless, this seemingly unimaginative decision only increased the polarization in the city. Similarly uninspired and easy to figure out were the attempts to present the nearby residents an image that the G20 summit would cause no fundamental problems or disturbances. The mayor of Hamburg even dared to predict that the G20 would be like a “big colorful public festival, like the annual harbor birthday.” In any case, the police would keep everything under control—if necessary, with the “full rigor of the law.” This constellation of forces seemed rather favorable for us. Our direct opponents were obviously “not completely up to snuff,” strategically, tactically, or personnel-wise. Instead, their disposition was rather “Germanic dull.” It was relatively easy for us to prepare ourselves for the things to come, and then to mobilize against them. To be fair, all these threats did seem to deter some people. Even if the menacing threats discouraged many, they ultimately allowed for more cohesion among the opponents of the G20 in the affected neighborhoods and beyond.

## **Quite a long time before the summit: Organizing and Campaign**

On either side, the preparations for the summit started early. On the side of the opponents, several Anti-G20 platforms were built. The largest one, the “No G20 International,” included NGOs, whereas the most radical, “Welcome to Hell,” was a coordination of antifascist and autonomist groups. These different platforms gathered every two or three months for international action conferences. Additionally, in Germany, there were meetings almost every week, and, towards the end of preparations, in Hamburg every day.

Without hesitation, numerous German comrades travelled to France, Italy, Greece, Spain, Sweden, and Denmark. More and more meetings, debates, and events concerning the G20 summit took place in these territories. Our comrades helped many people understand the schemes for planned actions, as well as informed others about the localities for the planned resistance week. In addition, one can clearly appreciate the work of the German comrades who did not hesitate in taking risks: from clips of their graffiti campaigns up to direct actions that constantly increased as the summit approached.

Of course, there have been quite different forms and levels of organization.

### **The district**

We share a long history and have many experiences, above all with state violence. One of our most important institutions here is the “quarter assembly,” in which the people discuss and argue about questions directly concerning the quarter. It normally takes place once or twice a year. In November 2016, at one of these assemblies that attracted about 500 people, the assembled unanimously approved the following resolutions by a show of hands:

- We reject the G20 summit and its state of emergency!
- We live, reside, and work here—we stay in the streets whether the summit takes place or not!
- Together with friends from all over the world, we will show that another world is possible!

Furthermore, working groups were formed to promote and to prepare for protests, for example, “Arrivati Park”—but more on that later.

### **The autonomist scene**

A part of the “autonomist scene” had been preparing the Welcome to Hell demonstration since autumn 2016. The demo was planned to take place on the eve of the summit. It was planned to be an expression of our capacity combined with a fundamental criticism of the capitalist system. The call was approved by many in the scene and quickly translated into different languages and sent around. This certainly contributed to making the radical left in Europe mobilize for Hamburg.

However, some—especially in Hamburg—decided to distance themselves, albeit individually, from this demonstration. One reason given was that the organizational framework was perceived as kind of “closed club.” Other parts of the autonomist scene focused on international mobilization, or on direct actions in advance of the summit. Still others founded another radical alliance called “Raiding G20” (“G20 entern”).

### **The “Triad”**

The “Triad” was a centerpiece of the whole mobilization campaign. It consisted of:

1) An alternative (counter-) summit<sup>2</sup>) Civil disobedience and blockades 3) A big alliance demonstration

From the beginning, structures across Germany were decisive in setting up this program. It was simply not possible to organize such a huge project without comrades from Berlin and other parts of the country. Our foundation was the experiences and connections formed during the mobilizations against the G8 in Heiligendamm in 2007, Blockupy in Frankfurt in 2015, as well as decades-long fights over the planned nuclear disposal site in Gorleben (between Hamburg and Berlin). The key players of the “triad” organization reflected these connections, which already had been central to previous protests:

a) The Interventionist Left (IL) – a grassroots left-wing radical organization in Germany b) Attac – an international organization based in Paris critical of globalization c) Party “Die Linke” (The Left Party) – a political party in Germany with 9% of the votes at a national level

In addition, various grassroots organizations, initiatives, trade union groups, and autonomist groups were part of the central mobilization. Here, we were talking about direct interventions that would directly disturb the summit, and, also, how to convey ideas of another world (or at least ideas against the summit). Simply, it was explicitly about shaping the protest successfully.

The most frequently discussed tactic was blockades, which is to say, obstructing the routes of the “G20 monsters” and their “Sherpas”—or, even better, stopping them from getting through at all. It was also about blocking the city’s main economic arteries, like the second largest port of Europe, or, at a minimum, some especially scandalous parts of the port. The groups discussed which routes the state leaders might take between the airport, their hotels, and, of course, the summit convention center. The focus of many discussions and action trainings became preparing for possible scenarios, such as police barriers on the transfer routes or general demo ban zones.

For the central blockade action on Friday, July 7, the Interventionist Left wrote a remarkable call: “Color the red zone.”

The “Summit of Global Solidarity,” planned for Wednesday and Thursday, was proposed to form a counterbalance to the official topics: a sort of think tank for alternatives to the ruling logic and politics of the G20. At the big demonstration on Saturday, the entire protest was supposed to take to the streets together on a massive scale. The demonstration would then end as close to the summit location as possible.

## The Logistics

The self-managed leftist social centers prepared themselves to be contact points for foreign activists. The centers set up info points, restrooms, and first-aid stations. In addition to this, folks from all over the country installed large mobile kitchens. The Legal Team launched a preemptive information campaign with concrete tips about how to handle repression. As well, folks organized an emergency lawyer service and a telephone hotline for lawyers that would be staffed during the whole week of action.

In one part of the St. Pauli Stadium, an alternative media infrastructure materialized to provide direct information to the activists, and to counterbalance the one-sided coverage anticipated from the mass media. The plan was to establish a massive coordinated protest camp. It was clear from the beginning that it would be difficult to achieve this. As the summit approached, the camp

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<sup>2</sup> The popular name the inhabitants of Paris use for their large chaotic, wild, and disillusioning city.

organizers split on the question of whether or not the camp should be called “anti-capitalist.” That division weakened the original intention of the camp. Overall, the logistics tied up a lot of the local forces, but in the end, it panned out quite well.

### **“All for All”**

This was the slogan of a mobilization of the so-called “hedonist” left, as well as musicians, artists, and several others. In recent years, they have been an important and especially creative part of the protest culture in Hamburg. They avoid direct conflicts with State power and deeply ideological debates. Instead, they focus on political actions that should be fun, the production of meaningful images, and inviting others to join in political actions. They had planned several actions for the protest week. In particular, Tuesday and Wednesday—the first lap of the protest week—was mainly designed by “All for All:” first the “Hardcornern”—a reclaim-the-streets action involving mass public drinking; then this was followed by a huge protest rave and the performance piece “1000 figures”—an artistic protest against a decrepit, isolating society.

### **The Queer-Feminist Alliance**

The Queer-Feminist Alliance participated in various preparations with their own issues at the Welcome to Hell demo, the protest rave, the blockades, and also as a separate bloc during the big demo on Saturday. They were a natural part of the movement during the protest week with an independent point of contact in a formerly occupied house.

### **The St. Pauli fan organizations**

The St. Pauli fan organizations have also been a very important factor in mobilizing and organizing the protests. There were various protest “Choreos” [choreographies] and discussion events in the stadium prior to the summit. They also mobilized vigorously within their own structures. During the protest week itself, the fan rooms served as one of the info-points and also provided food. Lastly, they organized a protest football tournament and a subsequent open-air concert to take place in the immediate vicinity of the summit convention center.

### **Youth against G20**

Youth against G20 took part in almost all of the protest actions, but especially in the “triad.” They mobilized pupils and students both in Hamburg and around all of Germany. As an independent action, they set up an education strike with its own demonstration on the “blockade Friday.”

### **“Mexicans against Trump”**

Our quarter has one of the highest pub densities in Europe. We have a special shot called the Mexican: a home-brewed schnapps mixture made from Vodka, tomato, and spices. In the end, more than 150 pubs—not only in Hamburg but also even in Mexico—participated in this campaign, and subsequently donated all of the proceeds to the campaign costs.

## **Right to the City**

Right to the City is a network in which numerous initiatives and groups in Hamburg have been acting under together since 2009. The foci of their work ranges from gentrification, non-commercial open spaces, and democratic urban planning to urban ecology and to creating a city that welcomes all refugees. At its core, it is about defending our right to the city against the rulers: to constantly strengthen the city with our own positive initiatives and projects, and to build up a broad urban movement without hierarchies. In recent years, the Right to the City network has triggered various actions, including occupations. By doing so, it has influenced several debates in Hamburg politics and founded some independent projects—for example, the Gängeviertel.

The immanent occupation of our city by a “Parade of Monsters” was therefore the exact opposite of the ideas they espoused. Accordingly, the network set all levers in motion. People from the network decisively cooperated in the infrastructure of the protest week at nearly all locations of the logistics, but especially at Arrivati Park. Some of them took part in the international mobilization, the quarter assemblies, the “All for All” actions, the blockades, and, of course, in the big demonstration on Saturday, too.

## **The international mobilization**

The different structures, such as fans of FC St. Pauli, the “IL,” or autonomist groups, started their mobilizations within their own contacts, but eventually went on to connecting into international networks. In addition, there was an open mailing list with its own discussions, working groups, and telephone conferences. The international call to action was written in English, then translated into French, Russian, Italian, Greek, Dutch and Spanish.

In April, as part of the big action conference, activists from all over Europe met to deal specifically with the international mobilization, with the various special concerns or simply questions from the internationals. Among other things, they discussed and ultimately decided to write an open letter addressed directly to the people of Hamburg. It was very well-written, but, unfortunately, it was only published in German.

## **The “bourgeois, reformist protest”**

To our mind, the reformist protest played no relevant role, and only brought a few people into the streets. But in the run-up to the G20, there were at least critical discussions in trade unions, nature conservation associations, within the Green Party (which is part of Hamburg’s city government), and in Protestant church groups.

## **Decentralized, militant actions**

In the lead up to the summit, a wave of different actions took place. According to a German domestic secret service publication, 152 so-called “crimes” against the upcoming summit took place in Hamburg alone by May 31, one month before the actual protest week started. In addition, there were 87 more “crimes” elsewhere in Germany associated with an anti-G20 sentiment. We think these numbers are quite realistic. While even “attacks” with “color-eggs” [eggs, glasses, or Christmas ornaments filled with paint] were counted, there were numerous riskier attacks,



for example, ones on the cars and homes of politicians, fire attacks on police stations and multinational corporations, and, twice on the summit convention center itself. In one incident, half of a portal gate was burned after an attack involving perhaps 30 masked people.

As far as we know, this scale of “crime” had never happened in Hamburg before, and, in Germany, not since the 1980s. The good thing is that there were no arrests, nor were any people harmed. Moreover, many of the actions were accompanied by explanations; in other cases, the deed provided the statement. Similar actions also took place in other European cities, such as Athens. There, they referred mostly to a local concern, but at the same time made a reference to the G20.

The local press and politicians tried to use these militant groups’ actions to defame the entire “No-G20” campaign as “violent in any case.” They demanded more police, and urged non-violent protest groups to distance themselves from militant ones. The latter initiative did not succeed: only one online campaigning organization (“Campact”) and the Green Party left the alliance for the mass demonstration on Saturday. This did not appear to affect the overall mobilization.

### **As the summit approached**

As the summit approached, the number of militant attacks increased, as well as the meetings for preparations and varied mobilization actions. While we were acting, the State seemed to be a little bit uninspired.

On March 17, 2017, Mayor Scholz’s guards’ police van was burned. On March 27, there was an intense attack on a police station. In the Eimsbüttel district, close to the city, eight police cars went up in flames. The next day, in one of the noble parts of town called Blankenese, three luxury cars of ultra-rich Investment and Energy Managers burned.

April 2017 had already been announced as a “month of action.” Indeed, there were nearly daily attacks in almost all the larger towns in Germany that referenced the G20: on private security offices, bailiffs, job centers, the advertising company that designed the official G20 logo, bank branches, vehicles of the Customs Authority and the Federal Police, international corporations, and more.

## **The Final Countdown**

### **June 1, 2017: Police order a demo ban zone**

The 66-page ordinance released by the Hamburg Police was quite a scorcher. For the two summit days, the police forbade all public meetings and demonstrations in a 38 km<sup>2</sup> area. This “blue zone” included the airport and extended to the Elbe river in a strip between 4 to 6 km wide. The blue zone included the whole historic city center, the summit convention center, and the hotels of G20 delegations, as well as all possible routes from them. The size of the ban zone easily overshadowed any similar prohibition in Germany, or even at previous summits elsewhere. The whole issue was justified by a supposed “extremely dangerous situation” that would primarily be caused by the expected “massive and violent protests.” Police, politicians, and the media outlined in advance a terrifying picture of “black hordes from everywhere that will attack Hamburg.” For this, “the right to demonstrate must be abandoned”; one could exercise it “beyond the zone.”

The protection of the so-called “protocol routes” seemed to be the most important consideration for the police. Specifically, we are talking about the routes of all of the politicians and their several thousand “high-ranking delegates”: from the airport to the hotels, from the hotels to the meeting place, from there to the gala evening, and so on. Blockades or any other annoyances on these transfer routes, whether peaceful or violent, were obviously the most feared contingency for the Hamburg police, who had only experienced a handful of those kind of challenges before. In order to prevent any disturbance, the State directly, immediately, and without any juridical restrictions cancelled an important part of the German Basic Law.

### **June 9: Trump’s hotel search is finished**

The Hamburg City Government offered to provide their guesthouse to Trump. The guesthouse is a relatively contemplative, rather small property—also, apparently, a makeshift one. There had been serious speculation that Trump would have to commute from Berlin to Hamburg. There were even running jokes that we would have to accommodate Trump in a protest camp. It was assumed that Trump would damage the image of a first-class hotel: the hotelkeepers surely did not want to put themselves into the focus of the protests by housing him. Whereas Trump would leave soon, the local radical protest scene would remain after, and it has already attacked certain five-star hotels with direct actions in Hamburg.

### **June 19: Sabotage on the railroad tracks**

The headline news: various central railroad tracks have been completely stopped in Germany because of a clearly nationally-coordinated sabotage, in which several big cable canals next to the main tracks were burnt. The action is in the context of “Resistance against G20.” In an explanation, the group cites the Invisible Committee: “No longer waiting. Not only just hoping. Acting. Trying, failing, and trying once more, failing better. Winning, maybe. In any case, getting ahead. Going our way. Just living—Now!”

### **June 23: Water battle at the future Arrivati Park**

Under the motto “Wet the Blue Zone,” approximately 200 people assembled and organized an “internal water battle”—everybody against everybody. It was fun and it got quite wet. The police watched suspiciously from a distance.

### **June 24: Gesa\*\*\* to hell and Refugee demo**

On June 24, approximately 500 people moved through Hamburg up to the “Central prisoner point” especially established for the G20, abbreviated to “Gesa.”<sup>3</sup> In an area fenced in with barbed wire, the police had installed cells for up to 400 prisoners, as well as rooms for quick trials. A gigantic police platoon accompanied the demo, which acted under the motto “Gesa to Hell.” For a few hours, approximately 1000 people—among them, many refugees—demonstrated in the city center under the motto “We are here—Refugees and migrants demand: Stop colonization, exploitation, and war!” This banner referred to the forthcoming G20 summit.

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<sup>3</sup> Short for “Gefangenen-Sammelstelle” (“prisoner collection point”)

## **June 26: Attempting to build a camp at “Stadtspark”**

The State prohibited the camp in the Stadtspark (Town Park) on the pretext that the green areas there would be damaged. By contrast, a Rolling Stones open-air concert on the exact same giant meadow ten days after the G20 was considered “harmless” and permitted. After several other ban orders by the police and several complaints against them, the following juridical status emerged: on one hand, a camp must be generally allowed; on the other hand, the police could declare any restriction on how to camp. One of these was that sleeping tents were completely prohibited—which, as you know, is essential to a camp.

To no one’s surprise, the police blocked the area completely and prevented the first attempt to erect a camp. To police-logic, this seemed like an understandable step at this time: the Hamburg Stadtspark was situated exactly in the middle of their gigantic demo ban zone. In addition, the politicians’ routes from the airport to the city center were in walking distance of the park. But instead of compromising and offering a less problematic alternative, the police drew a new red line: “sleeping tents are not allowed in the whole city.” So we could be sure that, after setting up two or three tents in any park or front garden, there would be a police presence, at the latest, within a half hour. By the way, for the police, this was a rather unpopular and exhausting task.

## **June 27: Riot cops from Berlin have a scandalous party**

Apparently, 300 police officers from Berlin, in groups of 100, threw a wild party in their hotel accommodations: a belligerent one that included urinating en masse, public sex, table dancing with a gun, and noisy screaming and chanting. They even had security guards who were ordered to look over this well-known “infamous troop from the capital,” and the guards documented everything with cameras. To partially restore the public image of the police, the three groups of 100 policemen were sent back home at once. We thought: *Oh, that’s great!—300 fewer ugly hooligans in uniforms.* During the protest week, we often joked with the increasingly irritated police: “Just have a wild party—then you can be sent home!”

## **June 27: Another large assembly in St. Pauli**

Meanwhile, masses of police units were converging in Hamburg. The anticipated state of emergency for the quarter had become a reality. We came together to make our last commitments to each other. In a way it was an oath to one another: a promise that we would stand together and not let them prevent us from protesting. We went over the planned actions of the protest week. It was also finally clarified that, in spite of all the camp bans, we would be capable of sufficiently accommodating outside guests—even though it might mean that every shared space would have to accommodate twice as many people.

## **June 28: Activists hang a large banner on the main bridge of the Elbe**

The banner appeared in the early morning hours. It read, in big letters “BUILD BRIDGES NOT WALLS.” The banner was within the context of the G20, but also directed at the Trumps and others who want to exacerbate the situation for refugees. We began to see signs that those who practice solidarity with refugees had arrived, including an activist action unit of “Youth Saves” and another from “Seawatch”—groups that directly rescue refugees in the Mediterranean Sea

from distress at sea—and “Never Mind the Papers,” a group involved in the “Right to the City” network.

### **June 28: The cops lift our water cannon**

Then came the presentation of a discarded historic water cannon with the greatest registration plate: “AC-AB 1910.”<sup>4</sup> It was subsequently recaptured by the police, probably because it had been parked near the flat of Andy Grote, Senator of the Interior of Hamburg. It’s a pity that we didn’t keep it until the protest days! Several weeks after, a judge decided that as the vehicle was declared and registered completely legally, the seizure had been illegal.

### **June 28: The Federal Constitutional Court permits a protest camp**

The Federal Constitutional Court permitted a protest camp, but only as a “political assembly.” Nevertheless, this decision from the highest German court forced the police to the negotiating table once more. The police refused to concede their red lines: “no Stadtpark“ and “no sleeping tents.”

### **Starting June 29: Installation of movement kitchens and info points**

There are several collective kitchen groups in Germany and in France that deploy mobile mostly vegetarian kitchens to political mobilizations to feed activists. They had planned to cook in the camps; a week before the summit started, they moved into left housing projects. This was cool for local activists because it meant a direct strengthening in their everyday structures. These enlarged culinary capacities enabled the production of 100 to 500 meals every day from each of perhaps 10 or 12 kitchens. Some were there during the whole protest week, others “only” from Thursday until Saturday.

The info points were linked with the alternative media center. Most of them were located in the same places as the kitchens. Here, people could find pamphlets and topical information and view the Livestream. In addition, there were PCs with Internet access, charging stations for mobile phones, and often showers or clothes-changing stations. There were also town maps, practical tips, and, later, contacts for the Legal Team and offers for sleeping places.

Some of these centers even offered free bicycles for lending. Approximately 80 old scrap bikes had already been repaired months in advance specifically for the G20. The bikes increased the mobility of visiting activists, and made it easier for them to obtain knowledge of the local area. (Later, some of the bikes were transformed into an “express blockade” by chaining them together.)

In these centers, there was always the possibility of an escalation—which we tried to avoid whenever possible. The goal of such sites was one of regeneration, reflection, and discussion, not direct conflict.

### **Starting June 30: Legal Team and first aid facilities**

The Legal Team had installed a constantly accessible phone connection. They also provided many voluntary lawyers who were initially all working in a qualified legal capacity—a well-functioning

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<sup>4</sup> The founding year of the FC St. Pauli.

structure that has existed in Hamburg for a long time. However, none had experienced this particular level of conflict before.

In addition, so-called “Demo Sanis” (first aid movement paramedics) from around the whole republic arrived and plugged into local structures to form a network for emergency care, which were mostly connected to the already-mentioned social centers. Moreover, “Out of Action,” a relatively new structure, formed to help people who had been traumatized by police violence. This way, our friends would not be left on their own and could obtain some advice for processing trauma.

### **June 30: Police permit a small camp far outside**

A camp after all? At least some kitchen tents and meeting tents could be built near the so-called “Volkspark” (People’s Park). At the beginning, the police only allowed a few sleeping tents, but, later on, there ended up being several hundred. Since the camp was far away from the city center, the path to between the two led mostly through uninhabited, industrial areas. Thus, it could be easily supervised and controlled and could turn out later to be a trap. From the start, we thought that it was absolutely irresponsible to plan a camp there and urgently advised visiting friends not to sleep there.

### **Raids, border controls, red lines, macho baboons**

The police got their first head rush: early on June 29, they carried out several raids against a group called “Roter Aufbau Hamburg” (“Red Construction Hamburg”). At the same time, the police established border controls for France, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, and the Netherlands—all of which are EU member countries that haven’t had border controls in a long time. The justification: “Foreign violent criminals should be stopped on their journey to Hamburg.” We had expected this and were prepared for it. With some energy and cunning, we could avoid all controls—this was not particularly difficult.

Again, the police held press conferences and interviews reiterating their “hard line”; they proclaimed that there were about “8000 violent criminals expected.” All their numerous “red lines” piled up so much that they could almost be perceived as a “red surface”—38 km<sup>2</sup> of the demoban zone, no sleeping tents in the city center, immediate intervention for any “law breakers,” etc. Head of the police operations Hartmut Dudde took to the new rhetoric of repression like a duck to water: “We have everything here [police equipment], and we are also willing to unpack everything if necessary”—“Our water cannons have no reverse gear”—“I want to hear no announcements about blockades, but only that they were removed.”

In a bizarre manner, the “press office” (i.e., the spokesman) of the “Welcome to Hell” demo even took up this macho tone. Instead of expressing themselves responsibly and realistically, they cheerfully announced to the press the “biggest black bloc ever.” Perhaps this was a casual remark; however, it was not really perceived as such in the public.

### **June 30: Concert of “Irie Révoltés” in “Rote Flora”**

Apart from the fact that it poured rain and the whole event had to be moved inside, the concert was a success and a nice prelude to the next week. It was also really great that it was a protest band that had lyrics in French and in German. Unfortunately, it was probably their farewell tour.

## **Saturday, July 1: Final preparations**

There were 1001 things to manage, both little and big: the concrete preparation of actions, kitchen equipment, or info points; picking up and welcoming guests; attending the plenaries yet again; or facing normal everyday life one last time before the hard week started.

The mood was down a little bit—certainly not combative or euphoric, as it was constantly raining. We had done a lot, given our very best, and the run up wasn't so bad. However, the question was: what would happen? Would the police storm our social centers the next morning? Would people be arrested? Would a lot of people come, or would it be a flop in the end? How would we explain to the comrades why we failed at our task? And how could we get the job done?

Official news of the day: A Hamburg district court confirmed and clarified the decision of the highest Federal Constitutional Court to allow another camp with 300 sleeping places in the so-called "Entenwerder Elbpark."

Meanwhile, the external police forces started taking positions everywhere. We were in the state of emergency: the police helicopters were constantly circling above us and police were lingering around every corner. And yes, we were impressed, but also frightened a little bit. On Saturday evening and on the night of July 1, the police forces were apparently occupied by a wild demonstration. In any case, the police moved around the quarter quite hectically.

## **During the Summit**

### **Reader and Maps**

Here, we are going to document parts of the "Reader" in English (it was also published in German). Both papers were handed out to the arriving activists. The Reader details the whole protest week, complete with events, routes, meeting places, info-points, drop-in centers, public kitchens, etc.

The Reader contained a lot of practical information about how to behave and act in demonstrations in general. For example, it presented information about preventive measures, affinity groups, first aid tips, etc. including nonverbal communication. It also took a clear position about the international G20 context. In addition, the Reader expressed a very lively understanding of protests, as well as an irreconcilable position in relation to the power structure and its repression: "Nobody has the right to obey"—a quote by Hannah Arendt. The concluding sentence: "See you at the barricades." And yes, the crossed toothbrushes on the first page of the Reader symbolized that we expected that to be arrested at any time—but that did not deter us. Rather, we always carry our toothbrush with us.

The protest town maps—double-page printed in A3 and folded to A6—seemed a little bit confusing. But they were full of useful information, especially for out-of-town activists. In particular, the Reader showed the politicians' possible routes and hotels, which might have contributed to an unrelaxed mood in the police headquarters.

Conspicuously, barely any construction sites remained near the routes and hotels at the time; they had been removed or previously scaled down. The G20 state guests were provided with a private area and terminal with its own exit at the airport.

As a French and German community, we found the "Hamburggallic survival tips" of the "airport-map" in the style of Astérix especially funny. The media were excited because the map

marked the rich quarters, police stations, and central management and production locations in the town.

Overall, it was really cool that the Reader detailed all of the aspects of the protest week, in addition to the town maps. All the logistics associated with the Reader were put into effect—except for the “Welcome to Hell” demo, but more on that later.

## **Week of Resistance: Sunday, July 2, 2017**

### **The so-called “Protest wave”**

The demonstration of the pacifistic Campact campaign did not draw much participation from the local scene. With about 8000 participants, it fell far below the expectations of the organizers. Moreover, this result is interesting, because it seems to express that a majority of protestors did not necessarily support that position. It was more or less a defeat for the organizations who had led the alliance for the big common demo on July 8: this also meant Greenpeace, the BUND, the largest German nature conservation association, and the Green Party. As far as street presence goes, it illustrated their low mobilization ability.

In addition, at least half of the demonstrators, often the youngsters, took part in other demonstrations or actions later. Of course, the police were mostly reserved at that demo; however, they intervened immediately when some people on the outskirts tried to erect some tents at the square in front of the city hall. The “wave of protest” demo may have unintentionally contributed to their radicalization afterwards. It was too obvious that the ruling class dominated this sort of demo, and that it ultimately had no real effect. Many, including youngsters, said to themselves afterwards: “So this doesn’t work—clearly, we must become more disobedient.”

### **Picnic in the future Arrivatipark**

The weather cleared up and we spread out our blankets and picnic baskets. We were maybe about 50 people at the time and, in addition, there were constant arrivals and walking. It was just a good mixture of all kind of activists, creative people, and neighbors.

The small central green space is bordered by round stands; it is situated at the Pferdemarkt, the largest and most important intersection in the district. It is the “hinge” of the quarters Schanze, St. Pauli, Altona, and Karolinenviertel. It is five minutes on foot from the “Rote Flora,”<sup>5</sup> and ten minutes to the G20 meeting place and the Reeperbahn, the internationally known entertainment avenue in St. Pauli. While much of the Pferdemarkt, including all of its streets, was inside of the demo-ban zone, “our part” was very close by. So we could assemble here and hold political speeches. No sleeping tents were permitted, but a picnic still seemed to be permitted apparently.

Of course, we were under the constant and careful observation of the police. As experience shows, we could become much more numerous, and at any moment quickly become uncontrollable. But the cops tolerated our presence. To our great relief, we could gather in public, even in a political spirit.

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<sup>5</sup> Hamburg’s historic occupied autonomous center.

## **Next attempt for a camp—this time, brutally evicted**

The so-called “anti-capitalist” camp wanted to exhibit a more radical stance. A second camping group aimed to be more moderate. Traditionally, in protest camps, the camp goes in procession to join the big demonstration or to organize other illegal actions.

After negotiations and a court order, this camp was scheduled to be moved to the “Elbpark.” But during the attempt to build it, police attacked the camp with batons and tear gas. This was still before the arrival of most foreign activists. The police injured people and confiscated or destroyed equipment (tents, streamers, tables, chairs, etc.). It was a cruel and brutal attack on about 400 people who had behaved peacefully thus far. It was the first time, as far as we know, that the police ignored a decision of the German Constitutional Court. Maybe they had heard our old German demo slogan too many times: “legal, illegal—we don’t give a shit.”

In the following days, we witnessed actions that we had seen before—the ones that hindered “Nuit Debout”: confiscation of equipment, controls, obstructing food delivery, etc. The police harassment was constant, oppressive, effective, and illegal.

## **Week of Resistance: Monday, July 3**

### **Early in the morning: Paint attack on the house of the Vice Mayor**

This was already the second time in a short span that the Green politician received such a visit. As one of the ruling parties, the “Greens” had to take political responsibility for the brutal camp clearing the day before.

### **Arrivati opens**

The small green space at the so-called “Pferdemarkt” becomes, officially, “Arrivatipark” (“Park of the arrived”). It was so named because all of the protest guests from all over the world came there. Also, we were concerned about the plight of the many refugees and people deprived of their rights who should also “arrive there.” In the evening, Arrivatipark hosted the first open-air concert. The police were decent for a change—for the last time.

### **Sleeping place exchange**

Since the previous day, it had become clear that there would be no acceptable big camp solution. Instead, we opened up a “sleeping place exchange.” This was a way to connect those who wanted to welcome guests and those who were looking for a place to sleep. This idea quickly took hold. Many residents spontaneously decided to offer their places and welcome foreign guests: at the beginning, there were around 1500 places offered. Among them were rather bourgeois people, associations, cultural facilities, and families. In addition, we had already estimated from the start that there would maybe be 2000 places—as we and many of our friends and neighbors were already offering housing.



## **The public discussion on Monday**

The discussion on Monday revolved around the previous day's controversial camp eviction. The leading editorial in one of the biggest Hamburg newspapers began:

“The week of the summit begins in Hamburg—and the Senate delivers a scandalous spectacle. The Mayor rolls out the red carpet for the autocrats, kings, and Democratic-critics of this world, and he will greet them with a handshake, bask in the crackling flashbulbs, and proudly present the Elbphilharmonie. He invites Donald Trump to the guest house of the Senate—but for the citizens, who want to demonstrate against Erdogan and company; he does not even have a meadow for camping...”

The governing Greens and the ruling Social Democrat youth organization also criticized the police operation against the camp the previous day. The famous drag queen of Hamburg, Queen Olivia Jones, and some other bar managers in Saint Pauli declared publicly that their establishments were not open “to despots, like Erdogan, Trump, Putin, and company.” One despot, Salman—the old king of Saudi Arabia—cancelled his visit, even though camels had been flown in specifically to supply him with fresh camel milk. Another Head of State, Michel Temer from Brazil, finally decided to come to Hamburg, even though he had previously considered canceling his visit because of a corruption scandal.

Meanwhile the rampage of bannings continued. Access to the square where the Saturday demo was scheduled to end was prohibited; a demonstration called for by Attac for Friday was also banned, along with a “permanent protest” announced by the left-wing cultural center “Gängeviertel.”

## **Week of Resistance: Tuesday, July 4**

### **The police commence a last big maneuver**

Very early in the morning, the police sent numerous helicopters overhead. They also made moves on the ground, blocking streets and sending dummy convoys to simulate the ones conveying politicians.

### **We still don't have enough sleeping places**

Hamburg's biggest theater, the Schauspielhaus, opened its doors; it could accommodate 300 people. The FC Saint Pauli made a similar move, offering 200 places. Meanwhile, the trade union federation and the Protestant church in Hamburg called on their members to provide housing to protestors.

People still attempted to set up camps in the city center, but those were immediately thwarted by the police. In the face of the police, a pastor defended the demonstrators who camped in the park around his Church: “The Protestant Church decides who can reside here, not the police. The campers are welcome here, especially since they are obviously in a dire situation that is not their fault.”

Other Protestant pastors and parishes followed his example. Little by little, folks built small camps in the neighborhood—one of them housed more than 1000 people. How scandalous and shameful for the police! For them, the situation was worse than a central, manageable, and easy-to-close camp, like the attempted encampment of the remote Elbpark.

Since the police prevented people from building a centralized camp, the entire program of workshops, discussions, talks, etc. had to be cancelled. The same was true for the good old tradition of protest camp culture in which people dance barefoot around the fire to the rhythm of drums. As convinced metropolitans, we considered it positive that everyone was already immediately on the street.

### **Arrivatipark**

For example, Arrivatipark became the central hangout and meeting place every day after noon. This was not only for activists, but also for neighbors and kids from the quarter who liked to hang out at night. Surprisingly, the neighboring police station, responsible for issuing the permits for the Arrivatipark assemblies, was cooperative: they knew they would have to coexist with us after the G20.

The meeting place was Pferdemarkt, renamed “Arrivati Park” for the occasion. There was an exhibition, a concert, speeches, and people prepared protest materials such as signs and banners.

In addition, a Hamburg Urban Citizenship Card, in accordance with the name “Arrivati,” was issued. The model for this is the New York City IDNYC. This card, introduced in 2014, is issued by the city government. It is also free and available for all current residents in New York City who are older than fourteen, regardless of official resident status, a permanent place of residence, or linguistic proficiency. It is not only a legitimate identity document but it also explicitly entitles the holder to participate in public life, such as access to city hospitals, libraries, museums, or parks. In addition, cardholders receive discounts at many sporting and cultural events, at gyms, and on medicine.

The same thing is currently demanded by Hamburg residents, most notably for those who have a precarious living situation. In Arrivati, activists from everywhere became naturalized—even if only symbolically. The good news, however, is that the campaign is still running well after the G20.

### **The International Center for Alternative Media**

In the evening, the International Center for Alternative Media opened at the St. Pauli stadium with a press conference that gathered different protest organizations on the occasion of the ban on camping. The FC MC [football club media center] livestream went online; it was probably the most useful medium for us to disseminate information. In addition, the alternative media center held daily press conferences, and provided working spaces inside for journalists and bloggers to collectively check and disseminate information. In addition, FC MC provided a home to the left-wing radio station “Free Transmitter Combine,” which aired information about the protests continuously.

## **“Hard Cornern”**

This action was initially called “Reclaim the Streets,” which had finally been scheduled to occur in two days. The general idea for this action on Tuesday, July 4, dubbed “hard corner,” was to have a bunch of people hanging out and drinking together in the street before going to wild, unannounced demonstrations or direct actions. Approximately 3000 people appeared in the area.

However, it didn’t take long before the police intervened and aimed their water cannons at a quiet, calm crowd of people. Bottles began to fly. Some people shouted the slogan “Ganz Hamburg hasst die Polizei” (“All of Hamburg hates the police”). This defiant affect did not spread or generalize—the crowd mostly obeyed and scattered in the streets of Saint Pauli, ultimately entering the bars and café terraces. Their fury and frustration was palpable, but they did not explode. The general idea seemed to be to save our forces for the following days. The battle around the camps continued: one of the camps had just been evicted again. At the same time, a church opened a small park for demonstrators.

Some fireworks were set off on the roof of an Indian restaurant. The number of comrades present increased, and the number of repressive forces also increased proportionally. We began to see more and more anti-barricade tanks and water cannons.

The streets were full of complicit looks, instant solidarities, and meetings. The façades of buildings were covered with banners against the G20 and capitalism, each graffiti piece more inspired than the next. You could feel the omnipresence of a rebellious counterculture, which was hegemonic in this place. But the lack of response to police attacks confounded us. In Paris, it would be simply unthinkable that the actions of the police would not produce resistance.

From our vantage point, we felt that the police were waiting for a confrontation to obtain a “legitimate” reason to evict the Arrivatipark and thus deprive us of any meeting place for the next few days. For the first time, the police brought out their war-toys: at least six water cannons with their foreign troops massively mobilized. The latter, however, seemed a little disoriented by the opaque enemy and let the Hamburg police clear the street. Meanwhile, some musicians were bravely playing music on the Arrivatipark stage.

## **NoG20 @ Hamburg — Day 3 : Reclaim the Streets**

The police (especially the cells from Hamburg) had spent a lot of energy evicting the camps without achieving the desired result. Immediately after their eviction, people were meeting in the street at Arrivatipark again. The police once again turned the neighborhood and the media against them with this absurd operation. The crowd shouted, “We are peaceful. And you?”

In an official report released later, the police claimed they used the water cannons “by mistake” due to “communication problems.” This is almost certainly a lie, an attempt to absolve themselves of blame for escalating the violence from the very beginning.

## **Week of Resistance: Wednesday, July 5, 2017**

### **1000 figures**

“The 1000 figures are intended to represent a society that has lost the sense that another world is possible. They show us that it is not stock market news that deter-

mines our happiness, but healthy relationships, and that happiness is not defined by what we have, but what we are...”

This is the artist statement for the performance/protest.

We found the action very impressive and consider it self-explanatory.

We would like to emphasize that we appreciate these forms of protest a lot, even though this text is mainly oriented towards direct confrontation with the ruling system.

### **The summit of alternatives**

The alternative summit took place over the course of two days. It was a sort of updated version of the “world social forum.” It was, above all, a “world summit” and a “solidarity summit.” It was supported by about 77 organizations from 20 countries; more than 2000 people participated. All the major problems of this world, as well as their solutions, were discussed in countless forums and workshops. We note that representatives of YPG Rojava fighters attended.

### **The hindered journeys of activists**

It was a great action: a train chartered to go from Switzerland through all of Germany with many activists onboard. Unfortunately, at the border, eight Italian comrades were prevented from entering the country. The train was detained for a long time. The same thing happened to a bus convoy from Scandinavia, which was searched for hours at the Danish border. At the same time, throughout the country, the police stop supposedly suspicious vehicles to harass and arrest the passengers.

With all these border controls—which are currently not valid in the European Union—strangely, a comparatively small amount of activists were detained (“only” 62 in total). However, 782 arrest warrants were executed concerning people who were randomly inspected, although they had nothing to do with the demonstrations. The police targeted a bus of peaceful young trade unionists, all of whom ended up in the so-called “GeSa” prison, where the police abused some of them. The police later reported that this was an “accident.”

### **Rather Dance Plenty than G20**

“Reclaim the Streets,” part II! This time we threw a “Demorave.” This is kind of a mix of demo/party/rave, somewhere between what the French trade unions do and a techno parade. The Demorave involved lots of radical anti-capitalist and anti-police slogans. Sound systems installed on about 15 trucks played Techno, Hardtec, and House. The DJ collectives that made the party happen were apparently well-connected with the local activist scenes.

At the event, we really discovered Hamburg. It was a hit: instead of the expected 10,000, a crowd of 20,000 to 30,000 people strolled through the streets of the city. Once again, fireworks were set off from the roofs. Many locals enjoyed the spectacle—cheering, applauding, and waving flags and streamers from their roofs, balconies, and windows. We felt a strong sense of solidarity from them.

As the demonstration approached the red zone, the police intervened and attacked the demo. “Tout le monde déteste la police” (“Everybody hates the police”) became a hit in the demo, as well as “Das ist unsere Stadt” (“This is our city”).

It seemed like the crowd would have responded more to the police if this had happened a few days before. But there was a palpable frustration from the events of the week: the police have been attacking us daily—each time more and more oppressive—combined with the omnipresent noise of helicopters. Despite the high number of radical activists, the police set the tone. Note that the motto of these two days of “Reclaim The Streets” is, in German, “Alles Allen” (“Everything for All”).

Still, there were some smallish brawls with the police and, finally, a smaller demonstration started. That march was attended by Vandana Shiva, Indian scientist, social activist, and globalization critic; Haidi Giuliani, mother of Carlo Giuliani, the demonstrator shot in Genoa; and Ewald Liene, legendary trainer from FC Saint Pauli. Unfortunately, the police prevented the demo from entering the exhibition halls.

## **NoG20 @ Hamburg • Day 4 : “Rather Dance Plenty Than G20”**

### **Red points against blue bruises**

Over the preceding few days, but mostly during the Demorave, folks distributed stickers with small red points. Many people, even “normal” residents, stuck these on their doorbells. During the Demorave, people also put them on their foreheads and noses. The stickers meant “Protesters are welcome”—in particular, if they were being hunted by the police.

## **Welcome to Hell: Thursday, July 6, 2017**

### **Arson attack on Porsche**

This took place early in the morning to the north of town. Ten luxury cars were completely burnt, and two other ones were heavily damaged. In their explanation, the activists referred to the police’s camp bans, among other things.

### **The State’s guests arrive**

Most of the heads of state arrived earlier than had been announced and planned for. The police had already slated their no-demo ban to start Friday morning, reasoning that heads of state must be escorted safely from the airport to their hotels and to the venue. But now, they enacted their plan a day in advance.

This caused total chaos for traffic in the city, mainly because no drivers knew this was going to happen. From the perspective of liberal governance, the fact that the police were able to enforce their zone of prohibition 20 hours before it was legally valid puts the whole enterprise into question.

Because our blockade was planned to happen on Friday—the day the Heads of State were supposed to arrive—they managed to surprise us. Morale at the police headquarters probably improved considerably that day, especially since the “Welcome to Hell” demo—a fundamental part of the radical protest program—concentrated a lot of radicals far away from the roads taken by the politicians. In addition, the police successfully prevented the Stadtpark protest camp, which was located closer to those roads.

## **“Welcome to Hell“ Demo**

Much ink has been spilled about the police attack on the “Welcome to Hell“ demonstration, but we would like to add a few reflections. First of all, the chosen meeting and departing place was probably not ideal for a demonstration that aspired to be the “biggest black bloc ever in Europe.” The meeting place, the Fischmarkt, is located in a square that is below street level, and the exit is a long, narrow avenue surrounded with red brick walls. Nonetheless, the number of masked and black-clad comrades was impressive—it was roughly estimated to be several thousand people. In total, about 12,000 people came out for the demonstration, and most of those people dressed in black.

The place turned out to be a terrible trap—the police surrounded us in large numbers. We also heard microphone announcements asking comrades not to respond to police provocations because the organizers were trying to negotiate for the event to continue. However, in the moment, from a French perspective, this negotiation seemed entirely unrealistic, as it was obvious that the police were not going to let the demonstration advance.

Here, we would like to raise two points: first of all, the fact that the black bloc had hardly reacted to the police encirclement of the procession allowed the riot police to advance on the sidewalks. Secondly, the human chains that the protesters made broke down fairly quickly. That being said, we must acknowledge that the police acted terribly violently, rapidly, and forcefully, and this explains why the chain technique didn’t work.

It was apparently a failure for the activists: the police succeeded in causing a general panic and hindered the crowd’s movements. As a result, the fighting spirit intensified—the crowd began to look for a better answer to the situation. Demonstrators started throwing stones and bottles, and fires also broke out. Our solidarity persists, even though the police attack created disorganization on our side.

This is where opinions differ on the police’s strategy: was it a success or a failure? The attack on the demo specifically caused an explosion of rage for the next few days. The results of the demo unleashed this anger on the whole territory, whereas the “Welcome to Hell” demo would have limited it to a specific part of the city.

In the media, the footage is shown in a realistic way:

“The intention of the police was obviously to prevent the demo from starting, then to attack them before the demonstrators could carry out violent actions. The ‘ideal moment’ to attack the demonstration came when a large part of the front had already been unmasked, while some others did not obey this command. The unmasked people were in front of hundreds of cameras, while the masked ones served as a sufficient excuse for the police attack. “

The police seriously injured a lot of demonstrators with the brutality of their attack. They violently pressed masses of people against the high floodwall. Fortunately, a lot of people were able to scale the wall and escape thanks to those who gave them a boost over it. This was dangerous if anyone were to fall. At the same time, the front lines acted extremely courageously: in an impressive display of collective intelligence, those in the first line sacrificed themselves. Their bravery provided the much-needed delay for others to escape.

Despite the disaster, the panic, and the numerous injuries, most people escaped over the wall. The police later admitted that they had not expected the bloc to do that. In a split second, the

police found that they occupied a terrible strategic position, as many of the demonstrators looked down on them from the top of the promenade. From there, they rained down on the policemen everything that was lying around.

### **Running straight into the wall**

Those who defended the gathering point argued that “the international press will protect us”—this was not only naïve but also irresponsible. The second argument, concerning the proximity of the formerly squatted houses of Hafenstraße that have been defended for 30 years, was absurd and nostalgic—specifically due to the distance between the conference locations and the roads. Given the trap in which we fell, it is easy to see why the police approved the demo. The most radical demonstration against the G20, which was planned to march on the route leading directly to the conference, including the exhibition center, was the only one approved without any conditions. Clearly, the police planned from the outset to stop us, specifically when the demo formed in the high-walled passage.

### **That evening and night**

The participants didn’t surrender. Instead, they formed a spontaneous demo in Reeperbahn, the famous red-light district nearby. There were also many other people around, in contrast to the meeting at the Fischmarkt before. Here, the cops were much more cautious; we ended up demonstrating with maybe 10,000 people.

Other protesters went to small group actions. From that moment, people attacked the police wherever it seemed possible, often with support from the neighborhood. Many people had to be hospitalized, while others were too traumatized to continue through the night. The number of people wounded during the “Welcome to Hell” event could not be precisely quantified, but it seemed like more than a hundred.

That evening, several fierce militant marches roamed the district, erecting burning barricades, burning cars and police vehicles, and attacking symbols of capitalism, along with the Altona Courthouse. The clashes lasted late into the night in the districts of Stern, St. Pauli, Karolinenviertel, and Altona. Traditionally, the weekend in Hamburg includes Thursday nights, when many people from the neighborhoods go out because the tourists aren’t there yet. In part because of this, we were numerous and the situation was chaotic. The police ran around like headless chickens. They deployed their water cannons everywhere, but the effect was limited because the water had become warmer during the day.

At 9 o’clock, protesters attacked the residential building of the Senator of Internal Affairs, Andy Grote, in the middle of St. Pauli. The attack scared the guards, who had to retreat into the entrance. Late at night, there were numerous decentralized attacks on, amongst other things, a luxury shopping street and a police station. The fury discharged in various parts of town was purposeful, well-organized, and much too fast for the police, who could hardly keep up and often had flat tires from scattered crowbar attacks.

### **The illegal exclusion of journalists**

“The summit admitted 5101 journalists. The Federal German Government took away the press accreditation from 32 of them on July 6. Starting on the 7<sup>th</sup>, nine journal-

ists were not allowed to enter the press center of the Hamburg fair halls anymore, and had to give back their press passes without no reason given. As a consequence, they were banned from the important politicians' photo ops and press conferences. On October 19, 2017, the Federal Criminal Police Office (the "BKA") explained that, on July 7, it had given the Hamburg police a list of 82 names, 32 of them journalists. After some hours, someone recognized the list as illegal and retracted the order. According to the Hamburg police, officers employed at the Media Center did not receive this information; therefore, those denials were illegal." (From German Wikipedia)

### **"Global Citizen Festival"**

This festival was the contribution from several German and international stars, such as Herbert Grönemeyer, Coldplay and even Shakira, to the "global rescue." Despite the free concert, the biggest hall in Hamburg did not even completely fill up; it seems the time for this so-called "world-improvement" has passed. It was also an absurd situation: as the German police hunted and beat protesters in St. Pauli, the German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Gabriel celebrated, in a speech between shows, the "great and important protest" of artists and visitors. Incidentally, under his term, Germany has become the third-biggest weapon exporter in the world.

### **Empty streets, divided city**

From the beginning of the week, Hamburg residents stopped using their cars, to the effect that some parts of the city were now virtually car-free. In addition, the landscape contained endlessly appearing permanent gates and police columns interrupted bus traffic. Having a bike was clearly an advantage. The city center was completely paralyzed. Most shops were closed and boarded up with wooden panels, but this did not affect business because customers weren't going shopping there anyway. As well, politician's convoys were constantly escorted through the 38 km<sup>2</sup>-wide security zone. At least on the ground, this increasingly led to a de facto division of the town into two sections: East and West. Under the city, the metro still ran; above it, like a swarm of hornets, the helicopters whirred constantly, throwing their floodlight on the streets.

Since large parts of the city were aggressively restricted and staked out by the police, the city seemed ghostly. Many families with small children left the town and fled to friends' or relatives' homes. However, those in the neighborhood still gathered in the streets, had a drink together, played music from loudspeakers on the windowsills, and exchanged news. Some in the neighborhood played spontaneous football games, while others counted the helicopters.

## **Block G20: Friday, July 7, 2017**

### **Early in the morning: Rondenbarg**

At 6:30 am, a small demo of about 200 participants took place in a purely industrial area on the outskirts of Altona. They attempted to head to the city from the camp near Volkspark, probably to participate in the blockades. Federal police special units and four water cannons awaited them at Rondenbarg street, where they attacked from both sides without warning—a brutal trap that



only the locals could have predicted. In this situation, some stones flew, as well as tear gas, and some of the people were masked.

The demo had no chance against the superior force of the police, the protesters being completely alone and almost without witnesses. Worse, they had no escape routes. In a panic, people knocked over a fence that exposed a fall of two to three meters. Again, there were many injuries, including exposed bone fractures.

The police arrested as many people as possible—more than 70. The biggest part of the overall arrestees were captured in this police attack—unfortunately, they were at the wrong place at the wrong time. They had neither committed large material damage nor physical injury, but were beaten and targeted with water cannons anyway. The guaranteed right to demonstrate—granted by the Constitutional—was simply cancelled. This repression primarily targeted foreign protesters, for example, an 18-year-old Italian named Fabio, who was imprisoned for a long time—but more about him in the following chapters.

### **“Swath of destruction” across Altona**

At almost the same time, 5 km south of the neighborhood, approximately 200 other completely masked demonstrators gathered on Elbchaussee street, which is famous for its many rich villas. However, in that quarter, mostly “normal” people live at the beginning of this street: the concentration of bourgeois villas starts 300–500 meters away.

Some unpalatable images and news were transmitted about this action: From the inside of a crowded public bus, someone filmed a seemingly-menacing mob breaking the glass of the bus entrance door, amongst other things. Other videos showed a large group setting fire to nineteen parked cars—including some smaller cars—while moving at a rapid clip.

Since the G20 police were otherwise occupied in other neighborhoods and the city center, the group advanced. It attacked two police cars in front of the local train station, as well as the controversial new IKEA building with Molotov cocktails. In the central shopping street of the Altona district, just about everything that had to do with capitalism was smashed. After no more than 20 minutes, everyone was gone—there were no arrests.

Strangely, the police did not mention this action in their otherwise-detailed press release at 10:25 am. Three hours later, they only reported the attack on the police at the rail station, even though, across the whole city, one could see the black smoke columns above the Elbchaussee. Subsequently, the police maintained for months that the people were probably violent perpetrators escaped from the Rondenbarg. They eventually had to retract both comments because that narrative was chronologically impossible.

### **“Block G20” starts to move**

At the same time, the so-called “fingers”<sup>6</sup> assembled at various meeting places. At the beginning, there were maybe 2000 people, but our numbers grew quickly. The goal was to get as close as possible to the routes the politicians would take to summit’s venue. The mood was cheerful, fierce, and determined.

Some fingers were stopped far away from the protocol routes—for example, the “green finger” was stopped in the Altona district and again at the Volkspark camp.

The police seriously attacked the “purple finger” in Landungsbrücken shortly after it began to move. The group tried to bypass the police lines, then re-formed, but ultimately was stopped again.

The “red finger,” however, succeeded in reaching one of the most central routes and blocking it efficiently for over two hours. Among others, the German Minister of Finance, Schäuble, and the EU Council President, Junker, had to turn around and cancel their event.

After dealing with some police controls on the transit system, others left the port by the harbor to protest and block it. From all sides, small groups started to head that way, looking for opportunities to intervene. At some points, ten or twenty people sat down in the street, were evicted, then tried again elsewhere.

Traffic backed up so much that it completely shut down the center and other parts of the city. Police drove and walked everywhere (except at Elbchaussee). The situation was chaotic and, in the early hours of the morning, some “bad fingers,” like most of us, had not even hit the road yet.

Generally speaking, the official summit kickoff took place, but a lot of events had to be improvised. Schedules were disordered and some things were completely canceled, like the meeting of German and American foreign ministers. A conservative Hamburg newspaper with a rather large readership, *The Abendblatt*, published about the “situation of police intervention” between 5:55 and 11:00 am—using one source: Hamburg Police.

### **Police reinforcements requested**

According to a report later published by the famous weekly *Der Spiegel*, who supposedly received internal reports from the police, the police requested reinforcements. Someone woke up Dudde, the chief of operations, at police headquarters after only a few hours of sleep.

Due to the announcements, Dudde made an emergency call to the so-called “Federal Reserve Police.” These were the only operational groups of the German police not yet in Hamburg. Large helicopters brought them into town; with these reserves, there were a total of 31,000 police deployed during the G20.

### **...Morning**

We only slept for a few hours. When we woke, we could see a number of fires smoldering from our balcony. We heard that the harbor had been blocked, that Melania Trump was trapped in the guesthouse of the senate, and that many delegations had some serious hurdles to clear in order to move.

Throughout the whole city, the dense territorial cover of various actions, with different forms and levels of engagement, seemed to effectively disturb the summit. On that day, there were countless reports of a wide range of events: demonstrations, blockades, direct actions, and also a sea-battle between police boats and Greenpeace. It would go beyond the scope of this text to report on all of the actions in detail. It was the amount, the variability, the determination, the duration, and the huge expanse of the protest activities that decisively determined the disruption on Friday.

*Der Spiegel* provided a clear map, which they published immediately after the summit with the apt title “Out of Control.” Their map was not even comprehensive—many smaller actions were

not documented anywhere, but nonetheless were considered effective. Others, like the harbor blockade, happened beyond the map's borders.

### **“Block the G20—color the red zone”**

From our point of view, the concept, “Block the G20—color the red zone,” constructed a solid base and frame that defined a day that saw approximately 20,000 people participate in a wide variety of protests. We document here the action consensus, or the short version of the “action picture”:

“Our goal is to noticeably disturb the proceedings of the G20 Summit, and to disrupt the staging of power that the summit represents. We will commit a publicly announced mass breach of rule. Our actions are those of a justified means of resistant mass disobedience.

Our blockades are human blockades and creative material blockades, consisting of everyday objects. We will

- pursue our goal level-headedly and with determination,
- take care of each other as participants in solidarity and
  - protect ourselves in order to defend our right to physical integrity. We will not start any escalation.

We unite in solidarity with all those who share our emancipatory criticism of the G20.”

### **The harbor blockade**

The harbor blockade was mainly organized by the “Pour le Tout” alliance. They met up early in the morning near the harbor to form a demonstration/blockade march. Their rallying cries: “Let’s fight the logistics of capital! Hamburg city strike! Let’s close the port!” Nearly 1000 people marched toward the harbor, eventually reaching a central crossroads in the middle of the port area. Demonstrators blocked for harbor for a few hours, and the action considerably disturbed the harbor’s functioning.

The plugging of the harbor meant that there was a three-day work delay on undelivered goods and services, according to the Hamburg Port Authority. The police behaved cautiously, even though they arrived with massive reinforcements.

We consider this action noteworthy and extraordinary because of its impact: it was not just concerned with the spectacle of the summit, but directed against the madness of global capitalism. The Hamburg harbor is indeed a strategic interchange point in this worldwide system.

It was a warm but not terribly hot day. We walked a lot of kilometers—sometimes we ran, sometimes we took the subway, sometimes we used bikes. We were hunted, sometimes beaten; we got broken up, then rejoined, reoriented ourselves, and then continued. At the info points, like “The Oasis at Gängeviertel,” information was constantly circulating, and there was always enough water and food.

## **Education strike and youth demo against the G20**

Several schools and most universities cancelled class on Friday anyway. Some went on strike; in others, pupils were pressured not to take part in protest actions. The teacher's union, as well as a representative body of students, supported the "youth against the G20" protest. The protest's motto: "Our future is unwritten—let's fight together."

Students and teachers participated in the blockades, which were mostly supported by young people. But there was also a demonstration in the city center in the morning with about 3000 participants, this time approved by the police. At the beginning, a convoy of summit participants appeared by surprise at the meeting point of the demonstration and was spontaneously blocked and forced to turn back. The demonstration was noisy and colorful and escorted by Hamburg policemen who were visibly exhausted.

### **A part of our tactics**

Part of our tactics was to avoid clear front lines. That way, we could flank or assemble behind the police lines, which significantly hindered their attempts to gain ground. Thanks to a strong showing of locals, we transformed the streets and squares into a chaotic system, countering the police force's ideal of order and transparency. In the end, the police armada even blocked itself—their rows of vehicles stopped the rest of the traffic, creating disorderly traffic jams everywhere. This video shows a convoy of summit participants getting lost, stopping on Reeperbahn, and the subsequent police action.

An anecdote offering a certain tactical intelligence: the march knowing how to be silent, hiding behind buildings, crossing a park at full speed to better surprise the police and reach the bridge of the Elbphilharmonie while the park was held by the police.

We also want to share an anecdote that revealed a specific tactical intelligence: a fairly large number of people knew how to stay utterly quiet, hide behind buildings, cross a park at high speed to better surprise the police forces, and ultimately were able to reach the pedestrian bridge to the Elbphilharmonie. Unfortunately, the police eventually reconquered the park. However, the presence of numerous scouts, the fact that people listened to them as well as each other, and the level of solidarity were all considerable weapons in our struggle.

### **The police, running to nowhere**

The police, at this point, were using their water cannons wherever they could. In total, they deployed 44 such cannons in Hamburg. At full pressure, the cannon's stream can inflict serious injury. But their main tactical function was to disperse crowds of people by soaking them completely. This tactic did not work very well this time, mainly because of the summer heat, which made getting wet not so bad. As a result, the police sent more and more officers into battle. They were forced to sprint again, often over long distances. Most of them wore helmets, and many wore black masks. Their uniform: an all-black knight's armament that included high-strength plastic protection. Each officer was carrying an extra weight of 15–20 kgs in the summer sun. Weighed down like this, the police were properly "grilled" when they were sent running all over the town from Duddes' air-conditioned headquarters. Meanwhile, we moved around mostly in t-shirts and sneakers, constantly getting fresh water from the locals.

Due to the combination of their self-imposed zero tolerance stance, the fatigue from the previous days, the high temperatures, their apparently poor food supply situation, and the non-stop protest actions, the police forces clearly seemed to be frustrated and exhausted. Their condition produced a notable sluggishness and slow pace; more and more often, they violently attacked people at random. Sometimes, several people were detained for a short time, then quickly released—presumably, the police did this solely to minimize their own immediate stress.

Evidently, the foreign police units did not want (or were not able) to make distinctions between residents, tourists, activists, and journalists, and even less between peaceful, nonviolent demonstrators and those who increasingly wanted a confrontation. There was less and less of a grey area between “exhausted, hanging around” and “blindly pummel everything that walks around without a uniform” and “use the water cannons on every crowd at random.”

### **Enough with colorful and fun**

The events moved increasingly in the direction of Landungsbrücken: the harbor where another demo was slated to start. In addition, the nearby Reeperbahn was full of demonstrators. The police obstructed the route in the direction of the city center and the Elbphilharmonie concert hall, and, by doing so, blocked railway traffic. The conflicts intensified minute by minute. The hatred grew—more and more people overcame their fear. Wherever the police appeared, the crowd chanted, “All of Hamburg hates the police!” and “Cassez-vous! Cassez-vous!” [“Fuck off!”]. At Landungsbrücken, some demonstrators actively took the offensive and threw stones at the police.

We ourselves became increasingly more furious and more uninhibited in view of the fact that those damned G20 assholes were still holding their summit, as well as the fact that we had to deal with these shitty cops—and, of course, we had not forgotten what they did to us at the previous day’s demo. Anger dissolved the pain in our legs: with more speed and energy, we shifted the tempo up a gear and gathered in a larger mass. However, we could only move outside the city center, which was completely occupied and blocked by the police; the only paths that were free were the ones protected for politicians. To get to the east side of the city, one had to travel around to the north and around the Alster Lake.

Hamburg: a city under siege.

### **“Ode to Joy”**

Meanwhile, the police escorted the politicians from the summit venue to the Elbphilharmonie. After nothing substantial emerged from the meetings, they at least wanted to celebrate in a decent manner. The Elbphilharmonie suits the G20: it is one of the most scandalous constructions in Germany in recent memory. Initially estimated at €70 million, the “Elfi” cost €800 million (approximately \$1 billion). In this pompous building, they hold concerts for the elite, paid for primarily by city taxpayers who work hard for their money. Now, there is a shortage of money for kindergartens, schools, accommodations for refugees, and small cultural projects.

As the heads of state arrived, Greenpeace succeeded with their protest on the Elbe.

In the media, on the other hand, the street protests dominated the airwaves. The television news channels showed, live and in parallel, the images of the pompous Beethoven concert and the escalating situation outside.

## Critical and colorful mass

At 7 pm, the set meeting place was the Dammtor railway station; it was the last peaceful protest scene of the day. Near the already seriously escalated situation, approximately 3000 bicycle riders and skaters joined. Their motto: “We don’t car,” but also “this is our city.” Critical Mass is a traditional and somewhat successful mobilization of the bicyclists in Hamburg. That day, it was a reaction to the G20 summit and, in particular, against the “brains of the combustion engines” that dominate it.

While the state’s guests celebrated themselves by listening to Beethoven in the Elbphilharmonie, the mobile demo comprised mostly of people from Hamburg bypassed the fortress and headed in the direction of the hard-won Schanze district. The police seemed to be relaxed at first, particularly as their “real problem”—the militant demonstrators and the state’s guests—were the priority.

## In the evening

Some had called for a revolutionary demonstration on Reeperbahn at 8 pm. However, at the last minute, it was canceled because the person in charge had been arrested; instead, the demo was converted into a sort of party with music. Further to the north, however, all around the Rote Flora and the Arrivatipark, the confrontations were increasingly intense. The police helped to push people in that direction. To put it differently: it was simply impossible to expel or disperse people from there for any serious amount of time, despite several unsuccessful attempts from the police.

In the early evening, the police forces were still stuck elsewhere, guarding the routes between the “Elfi” and the hotels. In addition, in many parts of the city—not only the St.Pauli and Schanze districts—folks had established dumpster blockades in the streets. Some were on fire; in other cases, local residents simply threw them in the streets to protest the permanent “Lalülala” [police occupation]. In any case, the police were constantly running behind to clear everything away. We also saw some police units in the alleys, ostensibly giving themselves a well-earned break.

The Schanze evolved into an area to protect ourselves from police violence—perhaps the only one at that time in the entire region of Hamburg. In the Schanze, all of the restaurants and kiosks, as well as most of the smaller shops, remained open as they normally would. In the early evening, the basic atmosphere was even relaxed and festive. This video shows the beginning of the situation that night; it was shot from a scaffolding that would play a bigger role later.

## Out of Control

### The Night

These are the events that are mostly deeply ingrained in our minds. It is hard to get an entire overview: already, at the beginning of the night, the number of burning barricades was difficult to count; in any case, there were a lot more than on the previous night. What we call *autoréductions*<sup>6</sup> in France were taking place, primarily at big chain stores like Rewe, Budnikowski,<sup>7</sup> and Apple.

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<sup>6</sup> Direct price-reductions, authorized by the consumer alone.

<sup>7</sup> A conservative region in the south of Germany.

Then, folks made barricades with paving stones, the same way demonstrators in Paris had in May 1968. People also tore up the wooden panels that had been put up to protect boutiques and used them as shields against the water cannons.

The large local participation in the *autoréductions* surprised us. Sometimes, it was young unmasked women who were happy to help themselves at the store free of charge: it was evident that they enjoyed consuming without paying. We also observed workers at local stores throwing stones at police officers. The police were pushed out of the quarter for hours.

That said, another party of residents, albeit a minority, tried to attack the rebels by force. And if a certain euphoria seized us in this unusual moment of collective power, it must be put into perspective with the existing obstacles.

This in no way detracts from the strength and passion of this moment: the spread of insurrectional practices on such a scale in a part of the city, the solidarity of a part of the population, the high level of fighting spirit. But people also had to break up fights between merchants or angry inhabitants and rioters, even though other inhabitants participated with joy in the revolt that aroused a fighting spirit in the district.

We also want to highlight a striking incident: A corner bank branch was smashed and burned. We were told that the action succeeded in actually liberating banknotes. These were then distributed outside in the same manner as the winnings from other *autoréductions*. We didn't have time to linger; the battle-light glowed above the Rote Flora, where the police tried to penetrate the Schanze again. We deployed another impressive technical innovation: we used big sunshades from the restaurants to protect us from the water cannons. This idea was extremely effective—it made a group of water cannons simply impotent, even at full strength.

This must be said: only a few people wore protective equipment against tear gas, mainly because the German police had rarely used it in the last few years before the G20, preferring pepper spray.

On Friday, the police also shot a round of live ammunition. Thankfully, they did not injure anyone. The Schanze died down after about 5 am.

The map shows the situation in the Schanze at night for several hours. In fact, the situation wasn't generally static. Conspicuously, the G20 meeting place was located only 300m away, and, for hours, the shortest route was supposedly "free" from police forces. However, this route led through an industrial area that could have been easily surrounded and trapped. Almost all access routes to the "Out of control area" were free as well.

## **Failure of the police tactics**

There are surely a number of reasons and forces that led to this escalation, that explain why a kind of "situation of anarchy" ultimately emerged. Maybe the most important one, from our point of view, was that the police tactics failed. We can identify three major points here:

1) The police planned and bound themselves from the outset "to respond to any kind of disturbance or crime with immediate intervention." This tactic only works if it frightens a large part of the protesters into accepting that oppression and giving up.

However, that scenario did not happen—not only with the rowdier of the protesters, but also with other courageous pacifist-oriented protestors. And if that was the police's self-proclaimed objective, the necessary conditions must be produced over and over again for a number of days. This kind of operation requires a lot of strength and power, especially considering the relatively

warm weather, the expanse of the city, and above all, the huge number and variety of protest actions. The police brutality, which was constant, direct, and excessive, created a palpable sense of solidarity in the already critically-minded neighborhood, further complicating police operations.

2) During the weeks before the G20, the Hamburg police were ordered to the front lines for every kind of action: the “obvious” ones, like the “GeSa to Hell” demo, and also to the absolutely harmless student demo on Friday morning. In addition, the routes of the politicians required constant activity from the Hamburg police because of their territorial knowledge. We believe that the Hamburg cops were completely exhausted, and were sent on a break or were given time to rest on Friday evening. In any case, on Friday evening, we didn’t see any Hamburg cops in the Schanze riot, and, also, no Berliners.

Instead, South German and Austrian cops, who had little or no street fighting experience or local knowledge, stood at the front line. Then, these units (or their leadership) mutinied and, at a certain point, refused to advance, the last time being on Schulterblatt. In German police jargon, this movement is apparently called “*remonstrieren*” [“to remonstrate”]. In its official release about this incident, the Bavarian<sup>8</sup> Ministry of the Interior used this word—up until now, a unique occurrence in Germany. In his headquarters, Hartmut Dudde, presumably, was not amused when he got word of their actions. Especially since other police cannot have been particularly eager to take the place of these units, who were known to be particularly robust.

3) As we mentioned, the centralized operational and communication structure of the police is old-fashioned and, well, German: nothing happens without orders from the top, and the structure has a strong center. However, that meant that the variety, number, and duration of our actions overwhelmed police communication; they could not coordinate in real-time.

There is no other way to explain why, for example, the Bavarian cops, next to the Rote Flora, who were trying to attack a group of protestors in the park, attempted to cross a skateboarding bowl, falling down by the dozen in the process. Or, a recurring event: a section of the cops fought to gain a section of the main street, Schulterblatt, in Stern, only to realize that none of the other units had followed them; in fact, the others remained waiting 200 meters away. This was a tactical disaster for the police, but it was surprising and beneficial to us.

## **And what about us?**

On Friday evening, we felt pretty fresh, we were not at all centrally controlled or tied up, and we felt full of hatred from the events of the week. Moreover, we received a new influx of a least 1000 activists from all over Germany who had been working at their jobs all week.

Then, as in most such situations, there were some people who joined in that we would have preferred did not. Sometimes they threw stones from the eighth row, hitting other activists; other times, even worse, they played with fire around people’s houses.

We had not considered the possibility of such a situation, so we were poorly prepared for it. Therefore, we had no good infrastructure to deal with these events. Hypothetically, a group with more than 20 experienced comrades, who are tight-knit and know the terrain, who have the express goal of dealing with danger to people not involved in the riot—by force if necessary—could have prevented a lot. We definitely could have seen it coming. After all, there were disputes in or near the district during the early evenings, in addition to our own anger against the cops.

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<sup>8</sup> A conservative region in the south of Germany.



What we could not anticipate in advance was that the mob of the German riot police would reach the limits of their own capacity.

### **There are different perceptions**

There are different perceptions about what took place on Friday night. On the one hand, a common opinion among the local population, often suspected in the liberal media, is that politicians and police may have wanted riots in the Schanze. Possibly, they even pushed the riots in order to delegitimize our whole protest week and to relegate our real concerns and issues to the background. According to this narrative, the police also had this plan in order to overshadow the earlier negative media coverage about them, since the media had strongly criticized the excessive police violence and the de facto suspension of the fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of movement.

However, we do not believe this narrative. The attempts that police made to conquer the main street Schulterblatt in the Schanze were simply too aggressive, even if the details were poorly organized. On the other hand, it is also true that the police prioritized protecting the state's guests: their routes, their hotels, their places of celebration, and so on, and therefore did not dedicate enough attention or resources to the Schanze.

In addition, the direct and short route from the district to the summit venue was completely free of police units for hours—the police apparatus must have been going haywire.

### **However**

However, that truth is also that there were a lot of well-organized young people from all around who really gave the cops hell. This gave everyone a good amount of time to prepare for the next attack—building barricades, looting entire construction sites full of material, and gathering thousands of stones. The police also neglected to bring along enough shelter shields and seemed increasingly distressed.

The police confronted people who were full of hate from the whole week, especially after the “Welcome to Hell” demo. Hate can be a powerful driver in helping to overcome fear. Their 25<sup>th</sup> hour came when it became increasingly clear that the police would start the second half with their B-team and without shoulder pads.

In addition, there was a wide influx of rebellious youngsters from all over town who realized that “The cops in the Schanze are taking it on the chin.” Some of the residents probably also thought “Oh, there’s looting again—super, I can’t miss this.” However, there were also some residents who were simply afraid. This was understandable, especially since some drunks were acting mindlessly. At a certain point, the situation became ominous: two houses burned, but firefighters never arrived. The atmosphere radically deteriorated and an obviously apolitical mob increasingly took control.

At some point, organized comrades left the scene because of the possibility that the police were going to carry out their final attack in the foreseeable future. Comrades changed their clothes,<sup>9</sup> but remained in the area. The police even forced media representatives and their bosses to leave the area, while the previously mentioned influx of youngsters continued.

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<sup>9</sup> Changed clothes were probably the most important factor in the low number of arrests on Friday night.

## **SEK (Special Anti-Terrorist Forces) Operation**

For the first time in post-WWII German history, the police anti-terror units, equipped with war weapons, were ordered to act against a demonstration, riot, or disturbance. For the G20, they had been conscripted exclusively for the guests of the immediate protection of the state.

At that time, only a small part of the Hamburg riot police would have sufficed to recapture the district.

It was also incomprehensible that the numerous water cannons positioned in the nearby Pferdemarkt did not advance onto Schulterblatt in the Schanze. We also couldn't figure out why they did not extinguish the barricade at the entrance from a distance, because this is usually a standard maneuver for the Hamburg police.

Supposedly, according to their latest justification, the police feared for their lives—mainly because of some people on the scaffolding and roof of a corner house by the street entrance. However, the new generation of water cannons is equipped with an armor plating that can handle blows from concrete roofing and water cannons are obviously difficult to set on fire. But, locked in their own dynamics, and under the pressure of justification—perhaps also just to make an example—a scenario reminiscent of Mosul or Aleppo played out in the middle of Germany.

On the roof and scaffolding, there were no “dangerous autonomists,” paving stones, Molotov cocktails, or other weapons. On the other hand, the police arrested several bloggers—among others, a right-wing German and Russians who made more favorable comments about the police (one of their videos is included later herein). On Friday night, only thirteen people from the “influxers” were arrested, but no organized comrades.

After the police “reconquered” the Schanze, the Hamburg officers magically appeared and locked down the area. Elsewhere, the confrontations continued. Among other events, another supermarket was looted and a G20 delegation vehicle was set on fire.

## **Saturday, July 8, 2017**

### **Morning hangover in the Schanze**

The Schanze district has experienced a lot of riots and destruction in the past, but it seemed like this kind of scale had never been seen before Saturday morning. The pavement was ripped out everywhere and debris blocked the streets. Most residents were shocked and furious at the police as well as at the black bloc and everyone else who had taken part in the riot. It should be noted that the riot hit mostly big supermarket chains, banks, and global brands, like Apple or other expensive boutiques. Smaller, owner-operated stores, restaurants, or social facilities were mostly untouched.

There were some serious exceptions, like the window of the “Jesus Center,” a social facility that cares for homeless people and houses young solo refugees. Next door, there was a fire in a bank. The youngsters—already traumatized—had to be evacuated. In addition, the storage area of the REWE supermarket, which is connected to the sales floor and is located below residential apartments, burned.

There were a lot of stories circulating about the riots: drunken hooligans or even extreme right-wingers, disgusting men who were openly sexually harassing women. There were also rumors of other fires, but those were soon proved wrong. However, the fact is that firefighters

could not enter the neighborhood for hours and there was a risk that the fires could have spread uncontrollably.

The Schanze has long-standing experiences with major police operations. There have already been several occurrences of lootings and improvised barricades. Until July 2017, police forces had always prevailed in the neighborhood. This time, no one believed that such a large police force needed to wait so long to do the same thing. Now, many imagined that the Schanze was deliberately “sacrificed” by the police and, ultimately, by the politicians.

### **Media hype and statements of politicians**

As expected, the Hamburg media wiggled out and railed against the “violent mob.” In addition, the national television broadcasting stations only talked about one subject: the supposed “civil war” in Hamburg. Initially, it was mostly ignored that, after all, there had been a history of excessive police violence. The real G20 and also all the other protests against it were only a footnote on Saturday.

Mayor Scholz positioned himself wholly behind the police, demanding harsh punishments for the “violent criminals.” However, he also had to answer for the fact that he had promised the citizens of Hamburg a “colorful, international party of democracy—much like the harbor birthday” (the city’s big annual party). The Senator of Internal Affairs, Grote, underlined the “success of the police operation” in the days before. He then portrayed an image of “unprecedented organized violence that was not afraid of anything.”

### **The Rote Flora separates itself**

The Rote Flora separated itself from the events of Friday night through an interview with their longtime spokesperson, but we must take into account the fact that they were expecting the SEK (special anti-terrorist forces) with many injured demonstrators inside: “... It is a riot that refers only to itself. It is no longer a question of political content, but only of the event. Tearing up the Schanze is a political error...” Further: “A line has been crossed here... Fires in a store in a residential building is a no-go...”

A few days later, a longer explanation from Rote Flora appeared with the title “We are radical, but not idiots.” The piece reflected on more context from previous days and police strategy before talking about the campaign against Rote Flora.

### **Foreign comrades scapegoated**

On Saturday and during the next few days, the official applicant and spokesperson for the “Welcome to Hell” demo publicly distanced himself from the riot with several statements—among others: “We represent the moderate autonomists in Europe and have not invited these people. The groups that we contacted have by no means come with the intention of pillaging and of violence. We reject this in general,” and, further “I have heard Italian, Spanish, and French myself. But we did not talk to them, and they also did not talk to us before.”

These statements were not only politically deadly—they were false. First, we mobilized radical circles in all of Europe, particularly for the “Welcome to Hell” demo. Second, he suggested that the foreign comrades were mainly responsible for all the violence and destruction, which was also the media narrative of the police.

In reality, our friends from abroad neither represented the biggest acting group, nor spontaneously triggered something all alone, nor did they take the initiative decisively or without consensus. On the contrary, it would be fair to say that young, left-minded people from Hamburg and other radicals from all over Germany constituted the largest organized groups by far. These Germans were actively supported by foreign comrades, who for the most part demonstrated discipline.

It was probably the drunk, presumably “completely apolitical,” and younger people from Hamburg who were responsible for the undeniable excesses that occurred, such as setting fire to residential housing. That said, more experienced comrades from Hamburg were also responsible for not sufficiently intervening.

In publicizing such statements, the spokesperson of the “Welcome to Hell” demo virtually threw the foreign comrades under the bus. The effect was not just limited to the public imagination in the following days, but also had consequences for the prosecution and subsequent judicial proceedings. We will discuss this in detail below.

Fortunately, other parts of the protest spectrum reacted much more cautiously and focused on the whole context; thus, they avoided distancing themselves from the actions in the media.

### **International mass demonstration at midday**

The biggest common event of the week took place on Saturday, July 8: a mass demonstration that united practically all the platforms and anti-G20 groups. The slogan of the demo was “solidarity without borders instead of the G20.” It was an alliance of 180 organizations from the Social Democratic Party to youth and autonomous groups.

The call to action involved the entire protest movement. In Germany, it’s rare to have such a broad alliance around such a call that is so critical of the system. Those who felt that this call or that the sense of the protests was too radical called for a parallel demonstration, but it only drew 4000 or 5000 people.

Considering the unleashed fury from the evening before and all the propaganda about the violence, we feared that fewer people would show up. Yet an imposing mass of about 80,000 people rolled through the streets of Hamburg. This demo was enclosed on either side by a large police platoon in a sort of movable lobster trap. A good number of the police were masked. Helicopters continued to circle in the Hamburg sky.

The whole atmosphere was substantially more relaxed and far less aggressive than the evening before. This time, there was not one single black bloc, but smaller ones in the march. Other radical militants probably preferred not to come and risk arrest.

### **The hunt for young foreigners, “filling up the GeSa”**

In fact, at the end of the demo, the police carried out arrests. However, they had a target in mind: dark clothing, “Southern”-sounding voices or accents, or, in general, young people with “non-German characteristics.”

Those who match one or several “criteria” got inspected, their personal data verified, and their clothes and backpacks searched. In the case of “finds,” like a firecracker, they could get several months in jail. Even for totally insignificant reasons, some people were subsequently banned from the city, while others were arbitrarily detained or arrested.

The arrestees were then transferred to the “Central prisoner point” (“GeSa”). From the police point of view, the number of prisoners so far had been poor. The “GeSa” was more than half empty on Saturday morning, which was difficult to explain to the public after the events of Friday morning and night, especially since the previous prisoners were mostly those who had been locked up there throughout Friday, like all the people arrested in Rondenbarg. Now, the police needed bodies, and especially in quantity. Preferably, they needed “big game,” like the “violent, foreign criminals” from Friday night.

### **The politicians depart**

The politicians departed as soon as possible. An after-party does not seem to have been planned, nor bilateral or smaller meetings. Such events are usually customary when everybody is already in the same place. But the politicians only wanted one thing: to leave quickly. Of course, nobody stopped them.

During the whole G20, Trump only tweeted twice. Now, having had to go “cold turkey” for days, he sat down in Air Force One and immediately tweeted “Law enforcement & military did a spectacular job in Hamburg. Everybody felt totally safe despite the anarchists.” And afterwards, a propagandistic personal video from the G20.

Beforehand, in Hamburg, there was supposedly one more tug of war about the final statement on climate protection. In the end, everybody but the USA committed to the Paris climate agreement—what an achievement by humankind!

### **In the evening**

In the evening, people assembled in Saint Pauli and in the Schanze all around the Rote Flora. The atmosphere was laid back and festive.

In the span of a few minutes, the scene quickly changed into a dystopian nightmare. The police deployed an operation to maintain “order” in the fastest manner that many comrades had ever experienced. Thousands of policemen attacked the streets with the help of water cannons, clearing tanks, and special forces. They carried out a lot of arrests. It is likely that this plan already existed throughout the day and was simply put into place after the heads of state left. In addition, a lot of cops who were stationed in the red zone before were not needed there anymore.

In front of the Rote Flora, the protest was actually rather harmless. Now everybody seemed to want to avoid conflicts and arrests. But this police action produced a strange labyrinth of roadblocks and controls, like an all-encompassing cage. It took us more than an hour and a half to navigate a total of seven police checkpoints before we could get out of the neighborhood, which was only four streets. The atmosphere was extremely stressful, and the police were not clear with their actions at all. A police operation here, a police operation there, sometimes they searched, sometimes they didn't. Once out of the maze, we saw the relics of the previous day's fight: smashed shop-windows, the remnants of barricades—but the whole district was now occupied now by riot police units.

In addition, the SEK appeared in full-gear at the Pferdemarkt for no discernable reason.

We had to make a loop around the whole red zone to finally reach our lodgings.

## **At night**

That night, we heard that a group of neo-Nazis had appeared in Saint Pauli. They injured five people before people finally expelled them near the former squats of Hafenstrasse. On a related note, some problems appeared from the commercialization of a subculture: certain comrades insulted some people wearing St. Pauli t-shirts, but did not react at all when the neo-Nazis appeared.

## **The heavy cost**

One of our friends, among more than 300 others, remained in police custody—the special prison had to be filled up. We estimated the number of injured around several hundred. The police said publicly that they were looking for French and Italian people; in their judgment, those were the ones responsible for the preceding day's riots.

## **After the Summit**

### **Sunday, July 9, 2017**

#### **The “cleaning mob” strikes**

In the morning, 1000 people (according to the press) or else 10,000 (according to police) assembled, mobilized by a private individual in Hamburg via Facebook with the phrase “Hamburg tidies up.” The day before, the “orange bloc”—Hamburg Municipal Cleaning—had cleaned the streets completely; in fact, the streets actually seemed more clean than usual on a Sunday morning. Despite the municipal cleaning, people at the district's railway station distributed cleaning equipment donated by a chain building supply store. Then the “cleaning mob” went over to the “attack” site. No bottle cap, cigarette butt, or graffiti was safe from them—it was a sort of “reclaim the streets” for middle-class Hamburg. Most inhabitants of the Schanze gathered to watch in disbelief at these activities on their streets, but some also took part.

Among them were many mothers with young children. They were just glad that now “everything is over,” and wished to go back to their normal lives (even if those were anything but beautiful and simple). However, the G20 and the events of Friday night took its toll on them, too: the schools and kindergartens were closed, and, in view of the escalated situation, they were not even able to go outside in the streets. In addition to the violence everywhere, masked police with guns drawn had stormed some houses, ostensibly to “secure” the roofs. To help the children process these experiences, a school in the Schanze encouraged children to express their impressions by making drawings.

#### **Politicians**

Federal President Steinmeier arrived at the district for a short press conference to express his “dismay.” However, Mayor Olaf Scholz preferred to address the people of Hamburg exclusively via the media. He wanted to avoid photo ops in the Schanze, as well as possible demonstrations against him. He did not want to make any moves that could affect his career.

Chancellor Angela Merkel also tried to keep herself out of the whole “affair,” even though it was actually her idea to select her hometown of Hamburg as the venue. In the media, she supported the mayor and the police. She asked her conservative party to forget any resignation demands directed toward Mayor Scholz, the social democrat.

### **A demonstration against repression near the prisoner collection point (“GeSa”)**

Shortly after waking up on Sunday, we noticed that a lot of police cars appeared around us, almost at every street corner. They stopped, checked, and frisked people, expressly looking for French and Italian nationals. Their actions affected us by preventing us from going to the anti-repression demo for fear of being arrested. However, more than a thousand people attended.

### **In the GeSa**

Nevertheless, the police finally reached their goal of getting their GeSa more or less filled up. On Sunday, approximately 300 of 400 places were taken. In the 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> big hall of a former building center, there were tiny single cells and big shared cells; rooms for interrogation, identification, and processing (fingerprints, etc.); rooms for public prosecutors and judges; and rooms for lawyers to talk with the prisoners. Cells were often constructed without windows, mattresses, or fresh air. It was a dreadful installation, planned with “German thoroughness,” and fortified like Fort Knox.

According to news agencies, the police, over all days surrounding the G20, announced a total of 186 detentions and 225 “safe-keepings.” In total, 82 were arrested and sent to custodial judges who enacted 37 arrest warrants. Never had there been such a balance after a police operation in Hamburg. According to the police, 132 of the 186 arrested were Germans. Eight were French and seven, Italians. All those arrested and, in addition, those still in “safe-keeping” sat in the GeSa.

As defined by German case law, most of the prisoners were innocent. Many did not run away from the police because they thought—wrongly—that the attacking police would just pass them, because they weren’t masked or taking part in any protest action. Some had the bad luck of falling into a trap set by the police, like Fabio. Others had been collected by the police during their “fishing-for-foreigners” mission on Saturday. Everybody was completely searched, including their genital areas. They were left for many hours with nothing to eat and had to wait nearly two days before they were summoned to a custodial judge.

About 120 lawyers had voluntarily registered themselves at the lawyers’ emergency service. They were forced to wait, sometimes for a few hours, to enter the GeSa to talk with the prisoners. In one case, police physically attacked a lawyer. The “Republican Lawyers Association” names several examples of violations of fundamental rights. We cite here two such cases:

“[...] An injured young woman, who was delivered on Friday (July 7) at noon to the GeSa with suspected broken nose, did not receive food over the course of fifteen hours. Her injury was not X-rayed. She was summoned 40 hours after her arrest to a custodial judge who discharged her from the police safekeeping at 11 pm on the same day because of the absence of evidence. The law prescribes a prompt hearing before the judge.

Several female clients reported that no hygiene products were made available to them, even though they needed them. Toward a young woman, the refusal was accompanied by the com-

ment “protestors do not get their period.” In another case, a young woman reported that she “had to insert a tampon in front of a watching officer.”

Luckily, many of the prisoners were released on Sunday. They were welcomed and supplied at a contact point installed by the legal team on the edge of the GeSa and constantly staffed. Friends pick up most of the liberated. However, others remained locked up for weeks, months, and even longer—more on this below.

### **Once again, Nazis in St. Pauli**

At 3 pm, we heard about alleged neo-Nazi groups on Reeperbahn in St. Pauli. We went into a bar and came out two minutes later with two prepared comrades who were inside. In a few minutes, we became ten. We met a young, rather sporty person with a T-shirt reading “Nazi Hunter.” He joined us for a moment, then, not finding any traces of the fascists, went to warn his friends, who were scattered all over the neighborhood. Within a short time, a beautiful anti-fascist response took place. Apparently the neo-Nazis quickly thinned out, even though they found enough time to show up in front of the Rote Flora without being chased away.

Our small troop was still quite interesting. In a short time, we were a little better-equipped, zigzagging around to avoid the ever-present police cars. The Nazis waited for the moment when we were weakest, recovering from the police attack the day before and with numerous comrades in police custody. Next time, an anti-fascist watch should be maintained, especially through the social networks.

### **Helicopters away, everybody back safe, we celebrate**

After a week of almost uninterrupted helicopterror above our neighbourhood, it was finally quiet. The police squadrons left the town in big columns. All that remained were some patrol cars, occasionally circulating on patrol.

The huge strain of the preceding days slowly dissipated, particularly as we had been fortunate enough to get off without heavy injuries. A swelling here, a blister there, but everything relatively minor; from our immediate area, no one remained imprisoned. We had been fortunate, but above all careful and cohesive, as well as benefitting from our previous experience.

Everything spoke unambiguously in favour of good cooking and eating together. Said and done, with several close comrades and friends invited. In the end, there was a small banquet, which seamlessly transitioned in a party with some alcohol. It was a lovely international evening to conclude a week of protest and resistance—from our point of view, at least broadly successful: a good way to conclude a wonderful experience with people from the other side of the river Rhine.

## **The week after**

### **Controls at airports and at the frontiers**

Leaving the country raised new problems: six Italians were detained at the Berlin airport for over six hours. One must always have a bit of cunning and luck as well to leave such places behind



without problems. Once more, vehicles were also stopped and searched on the return journey in many places, with police especially targeting buses and once again carrying out various abuses.

## **Agitation against Red Flora**

Now the Rote Flora must serve as a symbol of the opposition to the G20. The autonomous cultural center, which has been occupied for nearly 30 years now, had also mobilized for the protests alongside the rest of the left scene. But the Rote Flora was not the organizational “fulcrum and pivot” that the police chief alleged some months later. On the contrary, the Rote Flora and above all its longstanding official lawyer, the spokesperson of the “Welcome to Hell” demo, had issued that statement distancing themselves immediately after Friday night.

The younger groups that participated in the street battles and other militant actions had only few or even no relationships with Rote Flora. This may be a sad development, but it had begun a long time before the G20. Consequently, the Rote Flora was without any direct influence on militant struggles during the G20, in particular on Friday night.

However, this did not prevent the authorities and the media from pouncing on the Rote Flora to denounce it as a putative “command center of terror” and to demand that it be evicted as soon as possible. Along with general calls to “drain the left terror marsh in Hamburg,” this cry resounded especially from Berlin and Bavaria.

In Hamburg, as well, the conservatives especially joined several media outlets in demanding “immediate consequences.” Also, the co-governing Greens—which had once sometimes been a party of protest—thanked the police and proclaimed that “something must change in the Rote Flora.” The mayor, Scholz, announced “It must be discussed whether the town can tolerate the left autonomous center Rote Flora any longer.”

On the other hand, Scholz attributed a “heroic mission” to the police and even asserted that there had been “zero police violence.” At that point, there were already countless documented cases proving that police violence had taken place on a massive and systematic level throughout the entire week of protest and in particular at the “Welcome to Hell” demo. This police violence had contributed substantially to the escalation, certainly much more than the Rote Flora possibly could have.

## **When the smoke cleared**

### **Assembly of the quarter 10 days after**

This took place once more in the Millerntor stadium; once again, more than 1200 people came, mostly local residents. The only subject was a general reflection on the G20, especially the events of Friday night and the resulting question of the menace of the Rote Flora. The question of police violence was discussed alongside the destruction and violence of Friday night. Everyone was united in rejecting the assignment of blame to the Rote Flora.

But neither the supporters of “consequences against the Rote Flora” nor those who considered the street battles of Friday night justified took the microphone. They would likely have been isolated in both cases. Nevertheless, both positions could be heard in the quarter; in this respect, this assembly did not live up to its own goal of not sweeping differences under the carpet. How-

ever, for the most part, the priority was to oppose something to the accusations directed at the Rote Flora.

### **The left argue because of the dissociations**

A large part of the radical left flatly rejected the above-mentioned public statements and criticized them publicly. Some went beyond productive criticism or solidarity to imitate the “disassociaters.” It was necessary to organize personal protection for the person who registered the “Welcome to Hell” demo, who was threatened several times—an internal fiasco.

Six weeks later, the long-time comrade publicly criticized and largely retracted his earlier remarks. With reference to the foreign comrades, he emphasized that they were very well “invited.” However, the media, the general public, and most leftists were no longer interested in the subject. In his five-page statement, he made it clear that after the riots he was put under extreme pressure by the media as the supposed “spokesman for the autonomous” and simply did not stand up to it. Part of the truth, however, is that there was not a sufficient collective structure among the, shall we say, “senior autonomists” who should have dealt better with public pressure in this situation.

### **City society**

Quite apart from that, the whole of urban society was very divided in its perception, evaluation, and interpretation of the events. The only point of agreement was the assessment of the police operation: a grandiose failure.

## **Repression/Anti-Repression: During the summit**

### **“Police — SA — SS”**

This is an old demo-battle cry in Germany, which is still chanted at the police when they are particularly brutal. The “SA” in Nazi fascism were Hitler’s thugs, a terror group inside of Germany, and the “SS” was the elite force of the German army, which committed the most serious atrocities throughout Europe, especially against the Jewish population.

On the one hand, the comparison of today’s police with SA and SS is highly questionable; the slogan was seldom shouted during the G20. On the other hand, we do believe that the German police have a structure and brutality that is unique in Western Europe. Germany employs a particularly large number of police officers, and they are usually very efficiently organized. In addition, there are several secret services operating in the interior, as well as special forces equipped with military-grade weapons. Furthermore, the German police have the most comprehensive and above all the most modern arsenal of weapons and surveillance technology in Western Europe. Police technology made in Germany is considered a “high-quality export.”

As “Police Commandante” Dudde said before the summit, obviously proud of his entire arsenal and: “We have everything here and if necessary we will unpack everything.” “Everything” included 31,000 policemen, including all the units specially trained for street fighting, the so-called BFEs and USKs, as well as the militarily equipped “anti-terrorist units,” the so-called SEKs, and on top of that, 2500 BKA officers (comparable with the US FBI), plus 44 water cannons, 28

helicopters, drones, more than 3000 police vehicles—among them approximately 50 “special vehicles,” such as street-clearing tanks, 30 boats, 70 horses, and 185 police dogs. In addition, Germany borrowed special units from Austria and Poland, as well as mobile roadblocks from France.

The G20 security was the largest police operation in Germany since World War II—and also the largest ever at a political summit meeting. The police were equipped with advanced arms that despots and dictators all over the world probably dream of. And when the “if necessary” case occurred, “everything was unpacked,” right up to the anti-terrorist units.

The whole operation was led from a newly established police leadership control center built for the G20. There, Dudde and his 30-man strong executive staff sat in front of a 30-square-meter video wall and directed their forces. The atmosphere there may well have been a mixture of Hitler’s “Wolf’s Lair”<sup>10</sup> and the NASA control center during a missile launch in Florida.

### **The injured**

This police force inflicted countless injuries; luckily, there were no dead. Also, the condition of the very seriously injured protesters was not as bad as, for example, what must have been the case in Genoa. But the number of people who were beaten with the truncheon or received heavy kicks, who were hit with CS gas, or who directly experienced the jet of water cannons reaches the lower to middle four-digit range, and many of them are still struggling with violent trauma. The autonomous paramedics and the normal medical service of the city experienced a kind of 9/11; they had no time to take statistics.

Starting Thursday, the cops switched to “rustic solutions.” The police tactics were “southern style”: they beat people indiscriminately rather than arresting them—because the police “at the frontline” increasingly lacked the capacity to do so. Their reaction was to intensify the beatings. Altogether, the total police violence might generate, according to “normal punishment” under German law, surely more than 100 years of jail time for the police officers involved. The cops “cooked the books” regarding their own injury statistics: according to the police, there might have been approximately 700 police injuries, if you include the numerous sick certificates.

## **Repression/Anti-Repression: Immediately after the summit**

### **The police, but also the judiciary**

The police and the judiciary had to make do with slim pickings on one hand, but on the other hand they have to deliver. The ruling politicians were demanding this, alongside some of the media and civil society. The subsequent arrests were intended to solve that problem. Many of them were carried out unlawfully and under dubious circumstances; most of them were based on little evidence. The objective, however, was to produce as many long-term imprisonments as possible “because of the overall context.” Consequently, “individual guilt” played a subordinate role. This became particularly clear with those arrested at the Rondenbarg. On the one hand, they had done little to nothing illegal and on top of that, they had a flawless alibi for the time when mass violations of the law indubitably occurred—because they were already under arrest in the GeSa.

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<sup>10</sup> The Nazi headquarters for the Eastern Front in a bunker facility in the forest (East Prussia 1941–45).

## **“SoKo\*\*\* black bloc”**

Immediately after the G20, the Hamburg police, supported by “specialists” from Berlin and other parts of the country, formed a special commission called SoKo<sup>11</sup> “Black Bloc.” This still exists today, over a year after the summit; according to official sources, it comprises 165 police officers.

The last time a commission of such magnitude was established was in 1977 during the so-called “German Autumn.” At that time, the President of the German Employers Association and an airplane with 86 passengers on board had been kidnapped to force the government to release several political prisoners of the so-called “RAF” (Red Army Fraction). At that time, the whole country was in a state of emergency and a unique wave of repression ensued from which it took the German left several years to recover.

Now the largest special commission of the German police in 40 years was set to work, looking at terabytes of material and probably analyzing papers, structures, and the like. The mission was clear: “identify offenders” and “decrypt the structure of violence.”

They were using brand-new repressive technologies such as computer programs that could supposedly read the specific movement anatomies of people in order to identify individuals who are masked in one video and not masked in the next. They also used surveillance technology to evaluate the huge amounts of data supplied by smartphones, virtually free of charge. This includes location reports every minute as well as communications, processes, structures, and habits. In addition, they analyzed an alleged 450,000 hours of video material from the surveillance cameras of the Hamburg public transport company alone.

SoKo “Black Bloc” swung into action on December 5, 2017 with a total of 24 raids across Germany targeting people who had been arrested at Rondenbarg. Among them were completely non-violent union youths. It was leaked the day before to the scene that a big raid was imminent. The authorities also initiated preliminary proceedings against three senior autonomists and the spokeswoman of the IL on the charge of “incitement to violence.” The allegations were baseless, speaking in terms of both judicial process and evidence, and the proceedings were all discontinued later.

In December 2017, the SoKo “Black Bloc” took another step that was reminiscent of 1977, announcing a public manhunt. In many cases, it was a matter of pure conjecture or of crimes such as running around in a previously looted supermarket. From a legal point of view, the charges were not sufficient to warrant such a public denunciation with potentially seriously personal consequences. However, the tabloid press and several more serious newspapers did not consider themselves too good to publish the mugshots. Unmasked young women were displayed on the front page as “Riot Barbies” to a reactionary mob.

The result was that approximately 20 of the accused surrendered “voluntarily” to the police. Most of them believed that the warrants must have been a misunderstanding. The SoKo “Black Bloc,” however, reported this as a “complete success” for their public search. There was also talk of “up to 3000 investigations” which had either already been initiated or were to be expected—an astronomical order of magnitude that the Hamburg judiciary would probably not even be able to handle, which has not yet even vaguely begun.

Furthermore, SoKo “Black Bloc” outlined a conspiratorial picture of “internationally organized violent criminals with helpers in Hamburg.” Among other allegations, the latter were said to have set up depots with equipment on a large scale so that the “international criminals” could

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<sup>11</sup> SoKo: Short for “Sonderkommission” (Special Commission).

devastate the city. However, no concrete proof has emerged until now for these accusations that were made so publicly.

It remains unclear what exactly the 165 officers of the SoKo “Black Bloc” have been doing for the last twelve months. Certainly for security and space reasons, but presumably also to avoid public scrutiny, the SoKo established—bizarrely—its accommodation in the previous GeSa. From there, very little reaches the public. One can imagine that the cops are now stewing in their own jail without windows or fresh air.

### **“Enemy criminal law”**

While at the beginning, 132 of the 186 detainees were Germans, this proportion changed rapidly. After the first round at the custodial judge—that is, 48 hours after they were arrested, at the latest—51 remained in prison. By the end of August 2017, another 23 were released, leaving 28 in prison. Most of them were from other European countries; only a few were from Germany. Most of the Germans facing similar accusations were released before their trials started, but not most of the non-German prisoners.

### **“General prevention”**

In many previous proceedings and judgments, so-called “general prevention” had to serve as a justification for the “considerable interest of the state to prosecute.” Regardless of individual guilt, the objective was a) “to restore the trust of the citizens in the constitutional state” and b) to achieve a “high degree of general deterrence by high punishments.” This is explicitly expressed in several actual judgments, with the consequence that the people must serve their sentences in their entirety.

### **The tightening of the law**

Immediately before the G20, the law had been changed to expand the application of the so-called “violation of the public peace” considerably. Now it is punishable to stay in “group that is by tendency violent” or to carry “potentially dangerous objects” in demonstrations, such as a bottle in the backpack. Any “physical disobedience” against policemen, for example the attempt to liberate oneself from a police clutch, is evaluated as “a violation of the public peace”—minimum penalty: three months.

#### **“TaBos”**

In addition, in many of the previous G20 trials in the first level of jurisdiction, a single video sequence was sufficient as “proof.” The same happened with statements from so-called “TaBo”<sup>12</sup> policemen, who are exclusively responsible for “observing offenders” and then pursuing alleged “perpetrators” until there is an opportunity to arrest them. “TaBos” are usually dressed in civilian clothing but do not hesitate to pull a weapon if they experience distress.

### **Special attrition for “non-Germans”**

The lengthy pre-trial detention of non-Germans played a major role before the trials. Several of them were impatient to get out as soon as possible in order to return home.

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<sup>12</sup> TaBo: short for “Tatbeobachter” (offense observer).

This is easy to understand on the part of people who were isolated from friends and family in a jail where they could not even communicate normally. They were at the mercy of a judiciary that was eager to use foreigners as scapegoats. In addition, most of them (still) had a permanent job or university that they urgently needed to return to, or were concerned about their worried parents or partners back home.

### **“Deals”**

Then the prosecutors attempted to lure these arrestees with “deals” like “extensive confession and public remorse” for “probation instead of imprisonment.” In the consequence, several arrestees chose to “confess and regret.” Sometimes they confessed to “actions” that they had not committed at all—we know of at least one case specifically. The hands of their lawyers were bound by these “deals,” so that they would omit possibly exonerating but process-delaying arguments. Part of the “deals” was that the arrestees would not contest or appeal the judgments. This is an insidious system in which the defendants first must “deliver” hoping for “mercy” from the court afterwards, virtually without any guarantee.

The experiences of the G20 legal processes so far, however, confirm what we learned in previous political trials in Germany: resisting, defending oneself, and refraining from confessing is almost always successful in court. In the worst case, the result is the same at the end as it would have been if you made a “deal.”

### **The judges of Hamburg**

The Hamburg judges are notoriously overburdened, even without the G-20 trials; they constantly kick a huge mountain of cases down the road. As a result, they usually prefer plea deals, as a way to shorten the legal process. But there is also a faction of “leftist haters” among the judges of Hamburg. These become like bloodthirsty hyenas when they sense that they have political backing.

### **“Judge Merciless “**

One of these “law-and-order” hardliners, Ronald Barnabas Schill, was once Senator of the Interior and vice-mayor of Hamburg, in 2001. Schill was the one who appointed Hartmut Dudde boss of the Hamburg riot police, the man who eventually became the head of operations during the G20. Dudde directly ordered the police violence during the G20; half a year later, he received a promotion—perhaps a “deal” of a different kind. After several severe scandals and proven violations of the law, the police even searched for Schill internationally after his resignation in 2003. He had already gone underground, financed by his comfortable pension from his time as a judge. Reporters finally tracked down him in Rio. He had apparently become a cocaine addict there.

### **Pitch-black clouds**

Consequently, expectations for the G20 trials were low. Unsurprisingly, the actual judgements have all been absurdly exaggerated, especially in view of the often rather slight charges. Mostly, the convicted have been accused of throwing bottles at police officers, with scant evidence. Most of the defendants had never been previously convicted and are still very young. It would be

beyond the scope of this text to address all the cases in detail individually, as there have been over 40 trials so far. We'll present summaries of just a few examples and one particularly scandalous case in more detail.

## **Peike**

A 21-year-old Dutchman with no prior criminal record allegedly threw two bottles at Berlin policemen after the “Welcome to Hell” demo on Thursday. The only “proof” was the testimony of two “TaBos” from Berlin who had allegedly observed a person throwing two bottles at their colleagues. However, their description of the person did not fit at all to Peike: the witnesses said that Peike wore “noticeable dreadlocks,” which he did not have during G20. Even more bizarre, the fact that he was in a fetal position when he was arrested was interpreted as “resistance against executory officers.”

Verdict: 31 months imprisonment without parole. Judge Krieten, known as a right-wing hardliner par excellence, went ten months beyond the prosecutor’s request. For comparable charges in the past, people were sentenced to probation at the very most. The trial is still in the second instance, while Peike has been sitting in prison for over a year. Peike has not expressed himself in regard to the charges.

## **Ümüt**

Ümüt is 28 years old, a real “Hamburg boy” with Turkish roots. He grew up in the quarters of Schanze and St.Pauli. Like many others in his social environment, he has been previously convicted several times. The news about the riots reached him in front of the television in the working-class quarter of Barmbek. According to him, he had already taken “some drinks” and spontaneously decided to head for the Schanze as many others did. There all his hatred discharged—it is visible on several videos that Ümüt is unmasked, acting in the front line.

Ümüt is one of the few who have been charged because of the riots on Friday night. Neither his “remorse” and in any case superfluous “confessions” nor his German passport gave Ümüt any benefit. He is sentenced to three years imprisonment—without parole. On top of that, his current parole because of a burglary is cancelled. Ümüt has been excessively sentenced as a scapegoat.

## **Christian**

Christian, a 28-year-old German, originally from the conservative region of Bavaria, had previously been convicted several times. At the time of the G20, he was free on parole and without permanent residence. Like Peike, he is accused of throwing a bottle at Berlin police officers in the Schanze after the “Welcome to Hell” demo. He also faced the hardliner Judge Krieten—with the statements of so-called “TaBos” from Berlin being the only evidence for the charge. However, during the trial, an email correspondence became public between those “TaBos” and the leading police officer of the SoKo “Black Bloc” in this case. The email confirms a broad top-down coordination of the reports and statements of the “TaBos” to conform to the preferences of the SoKo “Black Bloc”—testimony should be identical and incriminating.

For good reasons, however, witnesses in Germany cannot arrange their testimonies before the hearing, let alone coordinate according to instructions. If they do so, not only do they incur a penalty, but their “statements” may not be used further by the court. That is why Christian’s

lawyer demanded an acquittal. Judge Krieten countered that that was an “arson by attorney” and condemned Christian to three and a half years of custody. Once more, this exceeded the demand of the prosecutor by 10 months. It remains the heaviest sentence from the G20 up to now. Christian remains in custody and his lawyer has gone to appeal.

### **Alix, “Tortue” (“Turtle”)**

Alix, a 28-year-old from Paris, has been in jail, like Christian and Peike, since the first riots in the Schanze on Thursday. He too is accused of having thrown a bottle at a police officer. Again, the evidence is scant and contradicts itself. The allegedly incriminating videos were made after the time he was arrested. The “TaBos” who arrived masked at the hearings could not explain this. A solidarity campaign in France for the popular activist raised the necessary bail of €10,000. Tortue is free for the time being.

### **Fabio**

Fabio, a 19-year-old factory worker from a small place in Italy, was arrested alongside many others early Friday in the Rondenbarg (see chapter 11). Fabio had not been previously convicted; it was his first demonstration abroad, in fact his first foreign tour without his parents. Now he is to serve as a kind of “test case” for the entire so-called “Rondenbarg complex.” As his trial starts in October 2017, he is the last demonstrator remaining in custody from the 70 arrested in the Rondenbarg. Fabio is not accused of any concrete “action” yet, but only of having been part of a “collectively acting group of violent criminals.”

His parents have offered €10,000 bail, the lawyer lodged a custody complaint at the constitutional court, videos show Fabio looking after the numerous injured persons instead of running away and going around with bright-colored trousers—but to no avail: Fabio, the youngest of all the G20 prisoners, remains in jail. The higher regional court has made various far-fetched imputations: Fabio had “considerable idiosyncrasy or education faults,” he showed a “deep-seated readiness for violence,” and also, in general, “injurious leanings.” Moreover, for Fabio, “human dignity is recognizably of no importance.” And finally, the Higher Regional Court, as second instance, announced that Fabio has to expect “a high prison sentence.” The trial had not started even for the first instance. What incredible prejudice and impudence!

It gets worse: Fabio’s mother, who moved immediately to Hamburg after the arrest, now must request judicial permission to visit her son—a strange process for a 18-year-old pre-trial detainee without any previous convictions. The two decided on the “escape forward” strategy and went public. The television program “Panorama” visited Fabio in the juvenile jail and interviewed his mother as well as well-known criminal lawyers. The entire situation at the Rondenbarg was analysed in the broadcast.

The media coverage began to turn to Fabio’s advantage—meanwhile, even in his Italian hometown, people were demonstrating for his release. In Hamburg, the trial dates became political rallies against this flagrant arbitrariness of justice. Fabio himself remained silent about the concrete charges, but wrote a remarkable statement to the judge, the jury, state lawyer, and the juvenile court assistant. Fabio read it publicly during a day of trial in November. It ends, “I do not like violence. But I have ideals and I have decided to fight for them.”



In the trial itself, it is all about the entire situation at the Rondenbarg, the alleged “civil war-like outbreaks of violence” with “more than ten but less than a hundred stones,” as a police officer said. No witness for the prosecution can remember Fabio himself. But it’s not about specific allegations against him. And it’s actually not about the so-called “Rondenbarg complex,” either, because in fact there was little violence there, apart from that carried out by the police force.

Rather, Fabio’s case is about enacting punishment for other situations in which the police not only lost control, but—as previously described—no one or only “unorganized perpetrators” were arrested. Actually, it is about the cars on fire in the Elbchaussee and, above all, about Friday night in the Schanze—in which Fabio could not take part because he had already been arrested. In addition, it is about publicly punishing all the G20 protests, in particular international participation. And finally, it is apparently about the careers of the young judge and the prosecutor. Both women are happy to follow the given political guidelines: the top priority is “general prevention.” Individual guilt is a secondary matter.

Finally, on Friday, November 17, 2017, it seemed to be the day that Fabio would come out after more than four months in prison. The district court ordered the end of his custody. Fabio’s mother and several supporters went to the youth jail to pick up Fabio. However, the public prosecutor’s office lodged a complaint at the higher regional court so Fabio remained locked up. In response, some people smashed the windows of the public prosecutor’s office in Hamburg on Saturday: paint-filled eggs landed on the façade and the big street in front of the office was blocked with burning tires.

Then, finally, on Monday, November 27, 2017, Fabio was released—in return for a payment of €10,000 as bail and under the condition that he would present himself three times weekly at a Hamburg police station. Nevertheless, it was a tremendous relief.

However, the process continued for several days of hearings up to February 27, 2018. The judge did not appear on this day of the trial—she was on sick leave for a longer time. Shortly after, she took maternity leave. In an instant, the entire trial was suspended until further notice. The court speaker announced in front of the press: “we cannot say yet what will happen next”—and since then, nothing else has happened. Now, in any case, all of Fabio’s juridical obligations have been lifted—he is once more at liberty, his dignity unbroken. We owe it to him and to his persistent lawyer that the whole so-called “Rondenbargkomplex” end may end in a shambles for the ones who purport to enact justice. For us, Fabio and his upstanding mother are true heroes.

## **United we stand**

Here, we want to point out the solidarity work of the “United We Stand” campaign and strongly recommend their web page. It contains several contributions in various languages: for example, numerous letters from prisoners.

For us, it is particularly pleasant that “United We Stand” maintains equal solidarity with all those targeted by repression. It does not decree “from the high pulpit,” if prisoners supposedly behave with less “political consciousness.” Moreover, it do not bore with excessive juridical details, instead rightly placing the political and human dimensions in the foreground.

They have been mobilizing rallies in front of the jail the first Sunday of every month. They raise money with solidarity events and a donation campaign, look after the prisoners directly, strictly observe all the trial dates, and make successful counter-publicity. More is not possible! From our point of view, an old rule of thumb remains valid: “The strength of a movement is

shown by how it treats its prisoners.” “United We Stand” has done a great job so far, even if until now, there is no prospect of an end to the trials or of the repression in general.

This was not necessarily to be expected after the G20: many activists were exhausted or had to give priority to their private lives. Some had quarreled fiercely because of the dissociations, others were just afraid that they would end up in the mills of repression if they stood up for prisoners—as has happened often in German history.

### **Proceedings against police officers**

In fact, there have also been 138 preliminary investigations against police officers, most of them because of bodily harm. Only one case has been opened so far—it involves a police officer from Bavaria who had been out of service visiting his girlfriend in Hamburg. Out of “curiosity,” they went to the Fischmarkt to see the “Welcome to hell” demo. When the situation escalated, the unmasked police officer dropped a full bottle from a bridge towards his colleagues. His photograph ended up in the internal search images and other Bavarian police officers recognized him. He was suspended for the time being.

Despite some of them being extensively documented, none of the orgies of police violence against demonstrators have resulted in any consequences up to now. Supposedly, the policemen carrying out beatings could not be identified—whereupon Amnesty International demanded a universal marking for German riot cops, for example, a recognizable number on the uniform. But even without such numbers, the units were often easily recognized—however, the police officers provided cover stories for each other, even in cases of serious criminal offences. If there were a real interest in pursuing the charges, procedures could easily be opened and judges could summon police officers as witnesses. Then they would be legally obligated to give testimony—presupposed they would not incriminate themselves.

### **Judge Merciless II: Prejudiced!**

In 2014, Judge Johann Krieten rejected a lawsuit against squatters—because his adopted son was involved! But now Krieten (see Peike and Christian, above) is allowed to rage on until his imminent pension with a third G20 case in front of his shotgun. Several times, this father personally pulled his son out of demonstrations and also out of parties in the Rote Flora. Now father Johann can take revenge and at the same time “preventively deter,” even in his own family—all “completely legally.” Perhaps this part of the story enters too far into the personal realm, but more than three years of jail for Peike and Christian are even more personal.

### **Militant actions against the repression**

After the G20, there were also a number of attacks against justice buildings, party offices, and police stations—in Paris, the German embassy was attacked with a Molotov cocktail on July 17, 2017. On July 19, in Bielefeld, a small student town in Germany, six police personnel carriers were burned at once.

In the communiqués or left slogans, the actors showed solidarity with the G20 prisoners and demanded their release. Moreover, these actions were also an answer to the police brutality during the summit. Nobody was injured and no one has been arrested up to today.

## **The ban of “Indymedia linksunten”**

On August 25, 2017, the Federal Ministry of the Interior banned the left Internet platform “Indymedia linksunten.” At the same time, police searched several flats and a left cultural center in Freiburg, a small town in the south of Germany. In the reasons given, the G20 protests stood first in line. Indeed, linksunten (“left from below”) was a very important forum for communication and information—and not just for the G20. Calls for action, discussion papers, videos, reports, communiqués: linksunten provided everything that was interesting for leftist activists before, during, and after the summit, as well as some more things that were released uncensored.

The repression apparatus could not catch the people who carried out the militant actions or demonstrated solidarity with them. Instead, in response to these actions, the authorities set out to ban the most important discussion platform and to put a stop to the conversation about left-wing projects and how to broaden mobilizations. This hit the radical left as a whole, but especially structures that depend on transregional interlinking and information, such as the so-called “Antifa” (antifascist groups) or struggles in rural regions. For us, linksunten offered the best access to authentic information about the movements in France.

In addition, the suppressing of “Indymedia linksunten” constituted a serious attack on freedom of the press and freedom of expression. In April 2018, two of the alleged operators filed suit at the Federal Administrative Court against the prohibition of the association that had operated the registered platform legally. They emphasized that the forum included a great deal of controversy and disagreement, often including criticism of certain actions or forms of action.

## **Repression is a test**

It is important to follow the trials of the accused, because the judgements will set a precedent for the juridical repression of the future. It is incredible that some should suffer for everyone else’s actions, that some should serve as scapegoats.

It is just as important to follow what happens with the Rote Flora, an important meeting place and thus a target for every effort the authorities make to show their strength. Their goal is to reassure the conservative electorate and also to limit how activists can organize by fomenting fear and normalizing the discourse of “security.”

Even if we had escaped, the repression would have been directed against the activists. This is a terrible trap, and the system of power often emerges victorious because it can strengthen its repressive arsenal by gaining a social acceptance for it through the denunciation of violence.

## **The militarization of the police apparatus**

With the operation of the SEK, the “Special Anti-Terrorist Forces,” on Friday night during the G20, including the explicit use of active military firearms, a new era of direct repression has arrived in Germany. Since then, the SEK has been deployed several times at demonstrations or has appeared heavily armed alongside other police forces—for example, at an anti-fascist mobilization against an annual march of Neo-Nazis in a small town in eastern Germany a few weeks after the summit in Hamburg.

The state is also responding to the challenge posed to its monopoly of violence that Friday night with an arms buildup and by expanding police competence towards military standards. The areas of responsibility of the police and the military, which were separated in Germany for obvious

historical reasons, are now becoming increasingly blurred. In France, the police—traditionally closely linked to the military—have already used tear gas explosive grenades against protesters for a long time, leaving one dead and many seriously injured. In May 2018, for example, a young demonstrator in Nantes lost his right hand.

### **The latest news from the SoKo “Black Bloc”**

Since March 2018, the police in Hamburg have arrested several individuals they claim to recognize from photos taken during the G20, in some cases seizing them directly out of demonstrations. However, it turns out that there do not appear to have been police files regarding the arrestees. Only the arrests serve to identify them. Thereafter, a preliminary investigation “against unknowns” becomes a concrete case against a specific accused person.

In addition, on May 16, 2018, the SoKo launched a second round of public raids, publishing over 100 photos once again. This time, the mug shots were not related to any specific demonstration or “action”—instead, they simply stated that the wanted persons were “involved in crimes committed during the G20.” Almost as an aside, the SoKo announced that the search was now expanded to cover the entirety of Europe, publishing a total of 91 photos Europewide.

Less than two weeks later, on May 29, 2018, the SoKo (together with local special units) searched various flats and social centers in Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and France. They “justified” the coordinated dawn raids by referencing the incidents in the Elbchaussee (see page 100), and further claimed that the “perpetrators” were identified via video footage and DNA tests. An accused Swiss citizen was arrested for a short time, despite there being no international arrest warrant. In addition, boxes of material were confiscated—especially hard drives, laptops, mobile phones, and the like. During the press conference that day in Hamburg, the chief constable made clear that the raid was less about the specific suspects than a way to emphasize that: “the arm of the judicial system reaches even as far as to Italy, France, Switzerland or Spain... this is the message.”

The next strike of SoKo “Black Bloc” took place on June 20, 2018. In a concerted action including the French police, eleven searches and eight provisional arrests took place. This time, the attack targeted activists opposing the planned nuclear waste repository in Bure, France, where an entire region is to be exposed for an indefinite period of time to the incalculable risks of nuclear radiation. The protest movement against the nuclear waste repository has been growing for several years—shortly before the raids, a demonstration had taken place with several thousand participants.

In Gorleben, just 120 km from Hamburg, such an “atomic loo” has been delayed for 40 years by mass demonstrations and sometimes acrimonious resistance. By contrast, that movement is already being forcefully repressed in the nuclear state of France: in early 2018, police violently evicted a resistance camp, a so-called “ZAD” (Zone to Defend).

The SoKo “Black Bloc” from Hamburg delivered new ammunition against these local activists—a new type of repression. The accusation against two of the provisionally arrested was “encouraging the black bloc in its fight against the police.” A large number of Hamburg residents could be accused of this charge. In addition, both are accused of “directing” one of the street battles from the edge; the absurdity of this charge will strike anyone who has experience in demonstrations.

In the other searches and short-term arrests, allegations are made in reference to various protests in the town of Bure—so there was a kind of “mixing” of accusations. That was certainly

no accident. Rather, the militant protest in Hamburg was being used to attack the activists in Bure as “internationally active perpetrators of violence” with the aim of dissociating them from the rural population. On the other hand, the SoKo “black bloc” aspired to confirm its narrative about an “international conspiracy,” as well as to deliver a concrete outcome of its own work.

In addition, for the French and German security authorities, this might be a method of linking French and German resistance and protests, which are both, in their view, quite dangerous. The action seems to fit this concept: after all, several activists from Germany have been in Bure and quite a lot of activists from France travelled to the G20 in Hamburg.

A week later, on June 27, 2018, the SoKo turned out once more—this time in Germany with a total of 13 searches. Five arrest warrants were executed. A 19-year-old woman from Cologne was accused of looting and four young men from the metropolitan area of Frankfurt of being involved in the action at the Elbchaussee. They were just 16, 17, 18 and 23 years old at the time of the G20. Like most dangerous criminals, the five are transferred immediately to Hamburg and are put in the investigation prison. It remains unclear if SoKo “Black Bloc” actually has any evidence against them. The eldest two remain in custody while the three younger ones have been released by the custodial judge.

The leader of the SoKo, Jan Hieber, threatened in a press conference that “we will still get many of you.” Senator of the Interior Grote added fuel to the fire some days later, recommending that radical demonstrators “give Hamburg a wide berth” from now on. Grote stressed that “delinquents in Hamburg can feel by no means sure that they have emerged unscathed from the situation...”

On July 9, 2018, the Chief of Police in Hamburg, Meyer, announced that the SoKo would be integrated as an independent unit into the so-called “state protection section” of the police by the end of the year, being reduced from 165 to about 40 investigators. He assumes that the SoKo will continue to investigate throughout the entire year of 2019. In the interview, he referred to the action at the Elbchaussee: “To the Argentines, who will arrange the next G20 in Buenos Aires, I have given advice to take along one thing: It is easy to tell you that they have duped us. They will try to dupe you also at some stage. Above all there is one conclusion: We must collect again more knowledge about the extreme left-wing scene. We need to be able to recognize such actions in advance and that’s only possible with covert investigators and other conspiratorial measures.”

### **The latest news from the black bloc in Hamburg**

The just-quoted interview had already been conducted but was not yet printed when some militant left groups struck—or more precisely, struck back—in coordinated ways. On the night of July 8, cars caught fire in various districts of Hamburg and the residences of politicians and high-ranking security functionaries were “marked.”

Just at the Elbchaussee, three cars were burning, this time exclusively unique luxury cars. The home of the Senator of Justice Steffen (of the Green Party) was targeted by a paint attack (including slogans), as were the houses of Lenders, the boss of the right-wing “German Police Union,” and Domres, the vice-chief of the Hamburg section of the so-called “constitutional protection” (the German domestic secret service). All three were responsible for the repression during and after the G20. They were not physically harmed, but their “peace” was interrupted at home, on their street, in their neighborhood. On top of that, a car belonging to the company “SIXT” was burnt. The context was the lending of cars to politicians and especially “Sherpas” during the G20.

The next burnt car belonged to the fleet of the French company “Spie,” which is involved in the nuclear business, among other things.

It was not so much the material damage of the attacks that caused a sensation, but the content, the versatility, and the success of these actions, just in time for the anniversary of the summit and the protests. The local press quoted and even linked to the activists’ statement. This was published on [de.indymedia.org](http://de.indymedia.org), the chapter of Indymedia that existed before “Indymedia linksunten” and now thankfully compensates, in part, for the latter’s prohibition.

The persuasive statement ended, “Make the G20 summit in Buenos Aires a disaster. Senator of the Interior Grote advises rioters to avoid Hamburg. We emphasize: Hamburg is a great place for riots and insurrections! Let’s end with the summit hangover!”

## **First Review and Second Reflection**

### **One year later...**

...We can say that our rage is unbroken and we still have a lot of work to do. The mass media have certainly leaped on the pictures of the burnt cars. The tabloid newspaper “Bild” even took on the work of the police by publishing photos of participants in the protests—sometimes masked, sometimes unmasked—and called for people to inform against them. The media is a huge problem, as is the public narrative about what happened in general. The whole protest at the counter-summit resulted in several successes but also defeats. Yet numerous activists have not recognized many of the successes, nor has the general public.

### **Our protest was successful**

It is clear that the summit could not be prevented. However, it was significantly disrupted—much more than previous summits in the preceding years. Some official meetings started one or two hours late. The German Finance Minister even had to cancel his special conference completely. Melania Trump was stuck in the Senate guesthouse and skirmishes took place in front of the hotel of Macron. Parts of the port of Hamburg were blocked for some time, inflicting a direct financial damage of several million euros that also took several days to fix completely. Some of the heads of state could only move by helicopter. There were blocked delegations, “autoreductions,” and a spread of revolutionary practice.

There are some good reasons to assume that this resistance week was strong in various forms. It was by no means foreseeable before that such a strong collective force would succeed. The press described the Hamburg summit as a failure or even as a “disaster.” The press even criticized the police attack on the “Welcome to Hell” demonstration. Of course, the press had no compunction whatsoever about denouncing the numerous burnt cars and other acts of rebellion and sabotage as “left-wing extremist violence.”

### **Much seems paradoxical...**

There were indeed many paradoxical situations at this summit, such as Neo-Nazis strutting around our neighbourhood just when our power was weak. While in this situation a sponta-

neous antifascist group formed in an instant, consumers of the “St. Pauli brand” were apparently incapable of reacting rapidly against the fascists.

On one hand, there was as a huge strength on our part and many revolutionary practises rarely seen before, on the other hand they were confined to small areas. It feels like we could have done better, but it is not possible to maintain such a level of revolt.

One criticism often heard is that “the uprising should have taken place in the rich quarters.” This is not quite fair, as many of the numerous attacks took place outside the “popular” neighbourhoods. Moreover, historically, there have been few examples of rebellious moments taking place in richer districts. The French Revolution, the Paris Commune, the Spring of 1977 in Italy or, more recently, the unrest in the Exarchia quarter of Athens, which continues today... all of these examples were centered in poorer neighborhoods. Yes, of course, burning a car that belongs to a worker is open to question. But when in history have people been able to maintain an insurrectionary practice at an intense level beyond their own quarters?

This does not mean that revolts must always be limited to sympathetic neighbourhoods in the future and should not extend to less known territories. But the revolt in Hamburg cannot be considered a failure just because it was limited to a certain area. In any case, this criticism does not generate much progress, especially if one considers the collective reaction against the atmosphere of police violence of the preceding days. It seems even more absurd when—as we saw first-hand—young people also took part in the clashes on a massive scale and even merchants from the neighbourhood. The general apathy ceased, even if the location was favorable and the whole thing was temporary.

## **The taste of victory**

That is a victory—and we should regain the taste of victory. It is a success when a district frees itself from the police, from capitalism; when the local population participates—even if some vehemently opposed it. It remains a victory even if it is temporary and limited. One would perhaps have to shout it out a little without forgetting the limits that we have already mentioned. Far too often, people express resignation, even those who struggle.

Although the city was in a state of emergency, with more than 31,000 police officers armed with an impressive and cutting-edge arsenal of weapons ... it was sometimes possible to make their mission a failure and produce serious disruptions—certainly for the summit as well as the smooth functioning of capitalism for a few days.

It seems that the events in Hamburg represent a new step in the fight against international summits and capitalism. This is a response to the events in Genoa in 2001, where police murdered a young man, inflicted more than 1000 injuries, carried out over 1000 arrests, and created scenes of torture and violence. Hamburg was the strongest protest against a summit event after Genoa, thus the second largest in history. In the present conditions, that is positive. And it can help to overcome the trauma of Genoa.

## **Success for the “Multitude”**

What is different from previous summits is the diversity of forms of protest that took place in Hamburg. Foreign observers who had taken part in summit protests since Genoa were surprised

by this variety. In the months before the summit the city government, police, and media had been trying to create a general security hysteria to divide the protest coalition and deter non-militant protesters—but to no avail.

The multitudes of protesters in Hamburg demonstrated a wide range of forms of action from artistic to militantly violent. It was essential for the success of the multitude that the campaign was not limited to the summit days themselves, but extended across a whole week of protest, during which there was time for all the various ideas and alignments to be expressed without rivaling each other.

Many people and ideas were united in this multitude: creative Hamburg, left-wing projects, pastors, parts of the media, the young insurgents of the city, international rebels, nonviolent activists, outraged residents, leftist intellectuals, frustrated youth, feminists, old autonomists, hippies, football fans... The multitude was multi-lingual and cross-generational. It looked like a swarm comprised of differently colored birds all heading in one direction. This confused the attackers because they could not make out the borders of the swarm.

In general, the multitude acted, and the other side responded—a huge advantage for the multitude, especially in a struggle taking place over a long period of time, in a large field of action, with each side possessed of completely different means. And even if the reactions were often very violent, the swarm may have split up in different ways, some paused, others joined, but overall, the swarm simply flew on to the next actions. Thus, neither the square heads in the Hamburg police leadership nor the foreign police units could have handled it adequately.

## **Participation of local Residents**

There is a latent rage within the population against the prevailing general conditions, even if it is suppressed. The residents of St. Pauli, Altona, and the Schanze showed their solidarity; they were often indistinguishable from left-minded activists. This was a new phenomenon resulting not only from the police violence and all the impositions of the G20, but also from earlier experiences in the time of the danger area in 2014 (see chapter 2) as well as countless further situations, not to mention a general rejection of the system that the G20 represent.

## **Demonstration — Blockade – Barricade**

In addition to the “multitude,” i.e., the versatility of the forms of action and actors, there was also the dimension of increasing intensity and determination. This had to do with the escalating police violence, but it was also partially self-determined, even if not entirely planned. It is no coincidence that the reader included the greeting “see you at the barricades.”

We demonstrated in a variety of ways before the summit—not once but quite often. This level of action was temporarily suspended with the “Welcome to Hell” demo, but not only because it was smashed. Then came the blockades, well planned as such, even if they did not work out as some of us had hoped.

It is a big step from the demonstration to the blockade. A demonstration is ultimately about a presentation, whereas a blockade is a direct intervention. One form expresses a collective opinion or attitude; the other creates a material obstacle. The blockade, too, is intended to demonstrate an attitude—sometimes with the hope for respect from the police, since it is, after all, a “political



demonstration.“ The pacifist blockades, however, were by no means “treated lightly” by the police. As soon as enough forces were available, the police evicted them immediately and often brutally. That’s why the “classic blockade” was no longer an option for most people by Friday afternoon.

From the blockade to the barricade, the road can be short—at least, that’s the way it happened in Hamburg. Since Thursday, there had been countless quickly built barricades, which were not (yet) defended. From the outset, the barricade anticipates and prepares for the violent intervention of the police. Depending on the assumed balance of power, the attitude of the actors, and the level of trust between them, that means either escape at the appropriate time or defense. With gray areas in between, of course. The barricade can be the last option—when other forms of protest seem impossible, as became the case in Hamburg at some point. It also offers protection, enable people to defend against a better-equipped power, at least temporarily. Behind the defended barricade, other laws apply than in front of the barricade.

## **A rudimentary assessment of Friday night**

If any of the actions of the whole protest week was especially successful, just, and necessary, it was the “night of the barricades in the Schanze quarter”—notwithstanding all the shortfalls on our part and also acknowledging all that the residents of the quarter suffered.

Without that turmoil, without that street fight won against the police and others... our take-away would be quite different. The G20 protests would be remembered as dominated by repression, which would reinforce an attitude of resignation. Instead, we successfully undermined their entire repressive “security concept.” In addition, we made quite clear before the worldwide media that there is no peace with “capitalism á la G20,” but rather, determined resistance against it.

This would probably not have been possible in the Schanze on Friday without the participation of many young people from the Turkish and Kurdish communities. The minimum consensus is: “All Hamburg hates the police”—and sometimes much more.

Without Friday night, there would not have been any discussion about a “concrete uprising against the general conditions.” The space of the imaginable and the expressible has expanded after the G20 in Hamburg. Furthermore, after the whole protest week, including the night of the barricades, it’s quite sure that no similar “monster meeting” will be held in any other metropolis in Western Europe over the next few years, in any case not in Hamburg—this is a great success for us. Hamburg has shown for the future that summits in Western European metropolises can no longer be planned and controlled, even with the maximum number of police forces.

However, a fairly successful street battle against the police is not yet a “successful uprising” and still less a sign that capitalism is breaking down. We have defended ourselves successfully once, have struck back quite hard once—no more, no less. Maybe we have encouraged future summit protests—not to give up even if the repression is incredibly violent and overwhelming.

## **What we cannot really understand**

We cannot understand why after that disastrous police operation, those responsible—the police leadership including the senator of the interior—got away without resigning. Unfortunately, this is also evidence that the media are incapable of investigating these relatively obvious processes, or unwilling to make a scandal about them. Moreover, it shows that the police apparatus itself

apparently has no structure that would enable it to reflect rationally and critically, in *their own* interest, and take the appropriate steps. In Hamburg, in the past, senators of the interior or chief constables had to resign because of much smaller altercations.

Since the G20, then-mayor Olaf Scholz has risen to Federal Minister of Finance and Vice Chancellor of Germany. However, this is also a consequence of the self-destruction of German social democracy. Wearing out its leading executives at a breathtaking pace, it has become dependent on guys like Scholz.

## Special Parliamentary Committee

Already, eight weeks after the G20, a special committee of the Hamburg city parliament was formed with the objective of “investigating the riots.” As a starting point, police files were made available to committee members. However, the passages that were probably most interesting and critical had been blacked out by the SoKo\*\*\* “Black Bloc,” in a way reminiscent of the former “Stasi.”<sup>13</sup>

From the outset, this committee had no substantial powers, such as access to the complete files or the capacity to interview witnesses under oath. For that, a so-called “parliamentary committee of inquiry” would have been necessary. The opposition could have forced that through, if they had acted together. Angela Merkel probably called down her local Christian Democrat party colleagues from Berlin. In the end, the Hamburg government coalition established a toothless “special committee.” For hours, leading policemen, politicians, and intelligence officials were interviewed and given the opportunity to spread their interpretation of the events extensively once again. As might be expected, the result is that there was hardly any significant revelation.

The committee ventured out of the town hall just once, in an act of being “very participatory,” to face the questions of the residents in the affected quarters. This public hearing took place in the same church that first allowed protesters to camp on their ground. Residents did not miss the opportunity to confront politicians with their perspective, loudly demanding the resignation of Senator of the Interior Grote and the suspension of Police Chief Commander Dudde. After that, the committee resumed meeting in the quiet of the Town Hall.

## Summit results and trends

One G20 decision was to transfer millions of Euros to Libya, a state ruled by warlords, in order to effectively move Europe’s borders to the African continent and thus deter refugees. Consequently, this promotes the reactivation of direct slavery there. A CNN report about this, released in November 2017, provoked worldwide protests, especially in France.

The problems of Latin America were not even directly addressed. Instead, the continent was only marginally involved in the coordination of free trade areas, without input from the affected nor any mention of their concerns. The participation of NGOs, which had been announced in advance by the media, was either completely cancelled or had zero effect.

Most previous summits were dominated by the “classic Western democracies,” but those times seem to be over, at least for now. Rather, that faction was obviously busy trying to find somebody

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<sup>13</sup> Stasi: Short form of “state security”, the infamous domestic Secret Service in East Germany at that time.

capable of dealing with Donald Trump. In addition, their “leader in reliability and continuity,” German Chancellor Angela Merkel, was also embarrassed because of the numerous protests and riots in her native city. The only “clear political winner” of the summit was the “despotic faction” among the G20 leaders. Erdogan, Putin, the Saudis, and their colleagues were treated as a “natural part of the event” and thus accorded more legitimacy.

### **The G20, “expensive fun” for German taxpayers**

Another consequence of the summit was its enormously high costs, which are still hidden from the public. There is no accessible accounting of the bill. It is only known that the federal government, that is, the German state, spent about €125 million on the G20. According to the estimates of the opposition party, “The Left,” the (additional) costs for the city treasury of Hamburg were between €100 and €200 million. This does not include the significant loss of business, property damage, costs of the judiciary, or purchases of police equipment. Let’s start with a conservative estimate of €300 million in total costs of hosting the G20 summit. We are talking about the cost of 2000 new apartments of 75 square meters each in Hamburg or a new metro line in Buenos Aires—both of which would be much more reasonable state investments.

### **The problem with the media**

While planning for the G20, some of us have thought about how to change the way media outlets report on summit protests. It is well documented that the media have not illustrated the breadth and diversity of the protests since Genoa, but have parroted the official narrative of politicians, who immediately denounce the protests and use them as an excuse for further repression.

Unfortunately, after the G20 in Hamburg, we have to acknowledge that we have not succeeded in breaking this pattern either. Although many media outlets were critical of the clearing of the camp in Entenwerder and the attack on the Welcome to Hell demonstration, this critical perspective completely disappeared from their coverage after the events of Friday. All of them, even more left-leaning media, accepted the interpretation of the Hamburg Senate after July 7 that there had been no police violence, that the riot in the Schanze had discredited the whole protest, and that the entire left-wing scene had to be punished. The Senate and the media managed to arouse a veritable “popular anger” against any leftist protest, including plenty of dog whistles to fascism.

We could see it coming in the days before. For example, a TV team from Reuters was sitting in a restaurant right next to the 3000 protesters during the “Hardcornern” on July 4. It was not until the police opened up their water cannons that the TV team started moving. They didn’t join the crowd and ask them about their motives for protesting. They simply didn’t care. They just wanted the usual sensational pictures.

In the end, even the impressive infrastructure of the media center FC / MC and the widely-used social media platforms were not enough to establish counter-publicity against the superior power of the mainstream media. To accomplish that would probably have required more direct connections. We should have built this up three or four months earlier, especially with international correspondents who are based in Berlin, not in Hamburg—such as *El País*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, and CNN. Most of them did not even get to know Hamburg until the summit week, and then they quickly reproduced the dominant interpretations—not least

because of a lack of “trustworthy alternatives” in Hamburg’s protest scene. In Buenos Aires, on the other hand, many international correspondents reporting on southern Latin America have been accredited there for years. They know the city, not just its location on a map. This could be an advantage.

## Further analysis

Meanwhile, there are numerous publications, statements, and analysis about the G20 in Hamburg—probably more than ever before after a [German] summit. Too many to read all of them, but we chewed through some of them while writing this. Since the vast majority are in German and almost nothing is written in French, we are speaking expressly about those of “us” from Hamburg.

We found noteworthy among other things that in almost all publications any reference to previous summits is missing, along with any reference to the upcoming summit in Buenos Aires. One positive exception was the final statement in German, English, and Spanish from the alternative media center FC MC. They offer direct support for an alternative Media Center during the G20 in Buenos Aires. This appeared immediately after the peak of public hysteria following the violent riots.

Recently, just in time for the anniversary, of the G20, the Legal Team (EA) published a very interesting brochure focusing on the repression, clearly naming and describing both the strengths of the protest and our mistakes.

## The left intellectuals in Germany

Left intellectuals have also written a lot about the G20 and “Riots.” Among other publications, a 250-page book has been published with contributions from 14 experienced writers and intellectuals. The authors ambitiously analyze the “riots” in historical context, looking back to pre-industrial England of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and emphasizing the participation of various parts of the population.

The report about the protests themselves is left to summit-experienced anarchists from the United States and various parts of Europe. Nevertheless, it is basically in accord with our assessment. The report is well-illustrated and freely accessible in the English original.

Otherwise, the book is certainly not directed at “normal people,” as it is largely unreadable without a big lexicon—even less so for an audience from the “surplus population” that is supposed to be the “modern revolutionary subject.” At least the authors made clear that they wrote from a subjective perspective when they titled the book “*What was going on in Hamburg?*”

Another 100-page pamphlet was published under the title “Traffic problems in a ghost town.” This is signed by a “Committee 17”—surely in reference to the “Invisible Committee” from France, particularly as there are numerous references and comparisons to France that are rendered in a conclusive tone. This reflection evidently originated in the quarter as well as with some activist background. Their (German) language is not only understandable, but intellectual, and of a literary quality above our modest level.

Committee 17 describes and evaluates the diversity of the protests and the excessive state violence in a very similar way to how we do. However, the authors devote a large amount of

space to speculating about the strategy of so-called “preemption” by the security apparatus. In this account, the menace scenario is “self-generated” by intelligence agencies in order that they be able to set the rules of the game.

## **Speculation about secret services**

It is certainly true that various secret services were active during and around the G20 in Hamburg. It is also probable that there are undercover agents active in the German radical movement, as well as in the European Left—regardless of the G20 summit. These were certainly also involved in the summit protests in the course of surveilling “their” groups or organizations, with the task of exploring left-wing structures and finding out who is participating in which clandestine actions or accelerating anti-systemic dynamics. In addition, it has been proven that “agents provocateurs” acted at the 2007 summit protests in Heiligendamm and especially in Genoa 2001. This raises the question about the activities of intelligence services during the protests in Hamburg.

There is good cause for speculation—for example, about the trap at the “Welcome to Hell” demo. As revealed later in trial, there were at least four masked “TaBos” (see page 172) inside the black bloc. The hours-long retreat of the police forces on Friday night produced similar speculation. However, we consider it unlikely that there was a trend-setting influence of the so-called “second level of repression”—that is, the intelligence services acting independently of police leadership—in these two events, at least not in an authoritative sense. If there had been, then in retrospect, the repression presumably would have been much harder, but above all, more targeted against leftist structures.

Larger parts of the left scene suspected that the 200 masked demonstrators in Elbchaussee on Friday morning had been infiltrated on a larger scale or even “controlled” directly by secret intelligence services. The seemingly indiscriminate burning of small cars, the smashing of the glass door of a local bus full of passengers, the alleged threats to local residents—apparently without cause—these are by no means “standard” in the autonomist scene here, at least not to such an extent.

This provided considerable ammunition for the right-wing media and police leadership, leading to an erosion of solidarity for the left-wing protests among more than a few people. There was no public explanation of that action afterwards by the initiators, which could perhaps have ended or limited the speculation. In addition, the complete absence of the police is difficult to understand, when various helicopters were in the air and columns of smoke were visible for kilometers, when numerous residents called the police emergency number.

But there is also the point of view within the left-wing scene that this action should be considered a relevant contribution to the protest, and even as forward-looking. What contradicts the speculation that this was staged by secret services is that the police were left empty-handed—with only one mobile phone video that shows people changing clothes.

## **Cloak-and-dagger, without pigs...**

We noticed that the numerous decentralized militant actions before, during, and after the summit received little attention in later publications. Yet their quantity and the large area they covered

certainly had a significant importance for the protests against G20. They too reached a new quality in their multitude—at least for Hamburg, but also for summit protests in general.

In Hamburg, there were attacks on the homes of several politicians, including the mayor (twice), the Senator of the Interior, a senior police officer, and a high-ranking business manager. In addition, several important buildings were attacked, including the summit convention center itself (also twice), alongside countless other targets. These were successful in that nobody was caught directly. To our knowledge, the arrest rate for these attacks is 0.0% in Hamburg up to today, and no one was physically injured either.

If a form of action was successful on its own terms in the protests against the G20 in Hamburg and beyond, it was the “decentralized clandestine actions” of small- and medium-sized militant groups. Also, the actions were executed in a political manner, utilizing effective methods, and they were accompanied by a multitude of explanations in a pretty cool way.

## **The district 12 months after the G20**

Probably the most serious, lasting change for the “Schanze” quarter after the G20 is that tourism has noticeably increased once again. Nearly all Hamburg visitors now visit the quarter. The terraces of the restaurants are bursting at the seams and guided tourist groups are lining up to “explain” the “legendary” Rote Flora from the other side of the street.

In particular, there is an increase in visitors from France and “movement visitors” from all over Europe. In any case, there is no lasting “damage” to the quarter by the G20—on the contrary, the brand “Rebellious Schanze” has gained heavily in terms of its worldwide “reputation.” The immediate winners are the restaurateurs, the bar and pub owners, and the local hotel sector. Once again, renters are the chief losers.

Almost all of the damage to the shops was repaired a long time ago. The two looted supermarkets on the street Schulterblatt have been decorated with “trendy” graffiti since their reopening. The bank branch that burned during the G20 was recently demolished. It will be replaced by a much higher and more stylish new building.

## **The movement in Hamburg 12 months later**

Immediately after the G20, the activities of the left were scaled down a lot. Now, the scene is gradually recovering and the number of demonstrations and related activities is increasing again. Recent priorities have included solidarity with the region of Rojava in Kurdish northern Syria, weekly demonstrations against right-wing attempts to establish regular rallies in Hamburg, efforts to respond to G20 repression, and protests against racist police profiling of alleged drug dealers with African roots.

None of the left social centers has been evicted; recently, a much-publicized “Antifa Congress” took place in the Rote Flora, as well as the performance of a play about “proletarian shopping” in Milan in the 1970s. At that time, women in supermarkets had paid only what they thought was justified—which sometimes meant: nothing. That was when the term “autoriduzione” was coined, which later became the French “autoreductions” already mentioned.

On the anniversary of the summit and the protests, a weekend commemoration took place including a colorful program of discussion events, film screenings, a jail rally and, finally, a “demo-

rave” with about 2500 participants. The opening rally at the Arrivati Park also included a cool speech about the next summit and protests coming up in Buenos Aires.

In general, there has been neither a major breakdown nor a major departure of the Left in Hamburg. There are a few young, newly involved activists who entered the organizing structures of the movement after their first demos during the G20. On the other hand, the older “warhorses” of the autonomist Left have declared that their time as “organizers of big black blocs” ended after the “Welcome to Hell” demo.

While “the street” is increasingly rejuvenated, many of the older structures from the times “before G20” are stagnating. That is more likely to bring about a standstill than what we see as a necessary departure, especially after the G20 experiences. Probably more self-confident activity from the younger people and more open-minded understanding from the older people could change this. These self-critical views are slowly gaining ground—certainly also inspired by the G20 experience.

## **Powerlessness or self-empowerment**

In the end, for all who participated in the G20 protests in Hamburg, two basic experiences remain—one of powerlessness and one of self-empowerment. All of us experienced powerlessness at least once, but most of us have felt empowered, too.

The experiences of powerlessness are all similar: police violence and repression—in different forms and dimensions, but always disgusting, dishonest, unjust, and violent, and sometimes inhumane. The enforcement of powerlessness was systemic, programmed. It was targeted to nip any self-empowerment in the bud, as soon as activities exceeded a certain, arbitrary line beyond which protest became supposedly uncontrollable.

The experiences of empowerment, however, were varied, colorful, always collective, and sometimes wild and courageous. Some of these experiences were planned for a long time; others were excitingly spontaneous. Often, they combined “planned” and “spontaneous” together, sometimes in the form of a chain reaction or an unplanned simultaneous event. Sometimes, these experiences of self-empowerment were possible within the frame of action permitted by the police. In general, however, they were hard-won, yet at the same time demanded flexibility in confronting the system of powerlessness. They often included a high personal risk.

The system that seeks to impose powerlessness functioned most effectively when it was possible for it to present a static framework such as “macho against macho,” when it succeeded in depicting a “*black ghost ship of menace*” to the public. In that case, police could attack in an almost medieval manner, as if in a computer game, allegedly to “save the Ham-Burg.”<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, our own experiences of empowerment primarily occurred when we became unpredictable or gained the element of surprise. This could mean showing up in places and carrying out actions without the police having any advance warning, as happened many times. It could also mean refusing to provide a fixed target on the street and instead positioning ourselves left, right, or behind the police force, undistinguishable from the residents who often expressed solidarity with the protest.

It also involved practicing solidarity and creating community. This is what made the experiences of self-empowerment possible in the first place:

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<sup>14</sup> Burg = castle.

- The community of the left social centers in Hamburg together with the cooking groups that mastered the mammoth task of hosting people.
- The solidarity and participation of larger sections of the population and “liberal Hamburg” in the protests, from Protestant pastors to rebellious youth.
- The community and solidarity activists showed each other — especially against repression and the organized system of imposed powerlessness.

- The respectful and friendly manners of guests from outside Hamburg.

These factors have all left an impression in our way of thinking. We have learned a lot from our comrades: their self-understanding in the resistance, their determination, their discussion culture. For this reason, we do not want to withhold from you the second open letter of the international mobilization to the people of Hamburg. It was written chiefly by non-violent activists from France and published a few weeks after the summit.

We conclude this section with a quote from the text “Ghost Town”:

“The experience of having acted, resisted in one way or another, not just being an extra in the staging of power, left a sense of empowerment.”

That is exactly what it was for us, and it clearly outweighs the experiences of powerlessness that we also faced.

## **The demo on Saturday was the greatest of the barricades**

It was a mass expression of standing together, of not being deterred, in spite of all the hate campaigns. As it turned out later, the police would have liked to stop this demonstration, to set an example of their enforcement of powerlessness. One could sense the desire for revenge from the police headquarters when the Hamburg riot police appeared at the demo completely masked.

But the demonstration was just too massive and united, despite the many differences between groups—especially in how they interpreted the previous night. The demo was a symbolic barricade, an insistence on empowerment, a vow to use our own strength. This was stronger than the intended program of powerlessness. The barricade we formed together was indestructible for that reason alone. If the police had cracked down on it, an “out of control” protest would have spread throughout the city while the summit was still in session. So for us, the summit ended with another experience of empowerment.

## **From “Ratlines” up to G20**

### **The “rat line”**

In order to better understand the relationships between our respective countries and continents, it is worth looking at history—especially if it helps to explain the actual connections.

After the Second World War, Latin America—especially Argentina—became the primary site of exile for German and other Nazi war criminals. They fled via the so-called “rat line,” abetted by the Vatican, Franco’s Spain, US intelligence, South American militaries and, last but not least, Juan Domingo Perón. In your country, “old Nazis” could live undisturbed for decades with their inhumane worldviews intact. Precisely how many were there is still unclear. The numbers



vary from a few hundred to the five-digit range. They founded right-wing clubs and published newspapers; even today, some of their descendants maintain bizarre “German colonies.”

Croatian fascists even proclaimed their own government in exile in Buenos Aires in 1945, which was not recognized by any other nation. Their leader, Pavelić, acted as security adviser to Perón.

Except for Israel, apparently no one was interested in actively persecuting them. There were reasons for this: old Nazis with secret service experience actively supported all sorts of military dictatorships and often ended up on the CIA payroll. In addition, Francoist Spain actively promoted the old “German comrades,” sometimes offering them asylum. After Franco’s death, explosive documents were shredded in Madrid, while a bi-partisan consensus agreed to “let the fascist Franco era rest on its feet”—a fatal mistake with effects that last to this day.

## **The continuity of fascism**

West Germany by no means thoroughly cleaned up its Nazi scene after the war, as many, especially abroad, assumed—very few were convicted for their crimes. After a short break, many Nazi officials were back in important positions in the judiciary, the police, the new military, government offices, or as diplomatic representatives.

Even open neo-fascism still exists in Germany with structures in numerous sections of society. To name a current example, the complex around the National Socialist Underground (NSU), which is responsible for horrifying acts, shows the involvement of the state in the right-wing terrorist milieu and confirms the complete structural failure of the authorities, politicians, and judiciary to do anything to halt its growth.

Between 2000 and 2007, the NSU murdered nine men of immigrant backgrounds and one policewoman, committed 3 explosive attacks, and carried out 15 armed robberies. The number of its nationally networked supporters is estimated to be between 100 and 200, including high-level officials of right-wing extremist parties. Particularly scandalous and never explained, let alone punished, is the indisputable involvement of over 40 undercover agents of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (“Verfassungsschutz,” or VS), which also supported the NSU directly with the procurement of explosives, vehicles, and weapons. After the NSU became known to the public, officials of the VS destroyed relevant files and sealed others for 120 years—a “Vatican dimension.”

In the course of the trial, which lasted over five years, as well as in numerous committees of inquiry, the VS showed no interest in explaining its involvement in the right-wing terrorist scene. One of their agents was present during one murder in an internet café in Kassel; he declared that he had not noticed it at the time. In addition, remarkably, five witnesses died shortly before giving testimony in the NSU trial, under dubious circumstances. Police never instituted a central special commission; instead, the investigation was led regionally, focusing on “family quarrels” and “organized crime”—though the same weapon had been used in all of the murders.

The verdicts were delivered on July 11, 2018. The chief defendant, Beate Zschäpe, was sentenced to life imprisonment, demonstrating the special gravity of the guilt. On July 17, 2018, less than a week after the verdict was pronounced, the alleged NSU head and strategist, Ralf Wohlleben, who had been convicted of aiding and abetting murder in nine cases, was released

on time served in pretrial detention. This is an insult to the relatives of the victims. German and European neo-Nazis celebrated the release.

The German Wikipedia entry offers extensive information on this topic, and the English and the French versions are at least serviceable. However, information in other languages is scant.

The German state television has presented a remarkably informative 42-minute documentary, translated into English, Turkish, and Spanish.

## Consequences of continuity worldwide

Most relevant today, however, is the near-seamless transition of many convinced fascists into key areas of the German economy and finance sectors after World War II.

For example, before 1933, Deutsche Bank had helped the Nazis to take power with generous donations. Later, it promoted the armament of the Wehrmacht and benefited significantly from the subsequent war. A few years after the end of the war, the same bankers sat on the board again, continuing their work as if nothing had happened. No interruption in the fascist lineage of Deutsche Bank ever took place—there was never even any sort of evaluation. Today, the Deutsche Bank is a “global player” of the worst kind, especially in Latin America. In Colombia, for example, it finances coal mining and earns millions on the people’s misery and the destruction of nature. In Spain, it was the main trigger causing the so-called “housing / property crisis,” which directly affected over 2 million people—many of whom were forcibly evicted.

Another major German bank, the “Dresdner Bank,”<sup>15</sup> has now intervened in Argentina’s current inflation crisis. The former head of its Latin American division, Heinz Mewes, spoke to the internationally renowned state news station “Deutsche Welle”<sup>16</sup> in an interview. He “explained” the crisis to the Germans with the severe drought that has led to export defaults, the recession in Brazil, the currency erosion in Turkey, and a “still too hesitant austerity course” by the Macri government. His “solution” is “consistent implementation of the necessary reforms,” and a policy of “building confidence in international markets.” This sounds plausible to many in this country and quickly became a “guiding opinion” in the media, underpinning the already existing narrative. Mewes did not mention that, in real terms, this means the most severe cuts in all social areas and, moreover, that Argentina is largely ceding its sovereignty to the international financial system for a long time to come. Also unmentioned is the context of “corruption,” indeed a major cause of the financial misery... and Macri’s business clan is directly involved in this.

Today’s Deutschbankers do not greet each other with “Heil Hitler” in their offices in Buenos Aires. But their banks, their system, and their acts are just as inhumane and profit-oriented as ever. As before, these big corporations and banks determine the economic and foreign policy of their countries. It is not an exaggeration to say that the German banks have more influence on the international German political strategy than Chancellor Angela Merkel does. This applies to the entire G20, not just this particular case.

This brings us to one of our “key concepts”: we are talking about the same actual enemies, the same mechanisms and overlapping histories here as there. The history and current business policy of Deutsche Bank is just one example.

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<sup>15</sup> This bank was also closely involved with the Nazi regime.

<sup>16</sup> “German Wave.”

## **The G20 today and in the future**

The G20 leaders will continue to organize policies that benefit the rich and powerful. From our point of view, hoping for reform, responsible rationality, or even a positive vision would just be naïve. The representatives of the 20 most powerful nations are not able to act differently; they cannot do anything other than what it takes to function in the existing system, as they are replaceable at any time. There are differences among the representatives, probably even significant disagreements—but in the end, their tight-knit frameworks are aligned in only one direction. No argument, no smart analysis, no dialogue can change this. They will continue without braking until the system itself is stopped.

From the system, we see the destruction of the livelihoods of all, the increasing impoverishment of most, wars on almost every continent, repression targeting dissidents, increasing risk of nuclear conflict, the bloody suppression of uprisings in the Global South, the intellectual as well as social isolation of the masses... destruction instead of solidarity, slavery instead of freedom, hunger instead of prosperity... fewer and fewer rich people owning more and more, while more and more poor people have less and less.

Even seen from our privileged situation in Western Europe, there is nothing to negotiate or to communicate, let alone to expect. The representatives of the G20 are the representatives of our enemy—a perfidious system of destruction, misery, and bondage. It is exactly this system that the G20 leaders are representing, at annual meetings... in 2017 in Hamburg, soon in Buenos Aires, and in 2019 around Osaka, Japan.

However, the continuity of these summit conferences and the underlying alliances seems more questionable than ever. The last G7 in Toronto revealed a disastrous disunity in the camp of the transatlantic West. It became clear that the representatives of the powerful are primarily concerned with competing for “their slice of the pie”—there was no longer any pretention that they are “taking care of the world together.” Such embarrassing and apparently completely unproductive summits make no sense for the system either, especially not when fierce protests are added to the mix.

## **All Together Now!**

### **Intercontinental perceptions**

People rarely think about Latin America here in Europe except for during the World Cup every four years. If they treat it at all, European media portray Latin America as an unorganized, corrupt, impoverished continent of self-inflicted violence and cocaine. This is often accompanied by a bit of folklore and a romanticizing of “savagery.” In European reports, the misery of Latin America is depicted similarly to the portrait of Africa, but the causes and context are usually omitted. The selection is normally done in newspaper or TV station editorial offices themselves, as a kind of “anticipatory obedience”—often without recognizing this as such.

In France, the view of the “rest of the world” is focused on the so-called “Francophonie,” that is, the former and the present colonies or areas where French is spoken. Every second message from Latin America refers to French Guyana or the French Caribbean Islands. For the first time,

however, the very young French are going beyond the fringes of the Francophonie, learning good English, some even Spanish, and with increasing zeal they are traveling to Latin America as well.

In many parts of Berlin and Hamburg, Spanish is part of the “sound of the street.” German is a complicated language and many Latin-Americans and Spaniards here are of the opinion that “life is too short to learn German.” Unfortunately, this also means that only the relatively small group of Germans who speak Spanish well come into direct contact with authentic stories from your continent. On the other hand, quite a few young Germans have been traveling to Latin America for decades, gathering plenty of immediate impressions, often critical.

Conversely, Latin America usually receives news and reports about Europe only in a way that shows a distorted, unrealistic picture of progress and prosperity. This is intended to make you believe that this system offers a better life than the misery of Latin America, which is ultimately “your mistake,” to be corrected only by neoliberal reforms according to the “European example.”

## **Internationalism**

International solidarity with Latin America has a longer tradition in the German left, which has often supported guerrilla movements or alleged “revolutions”—mostly, nevertheless, in a spirit of inequality or sometimes even arrogance. The same holds for humanitarian aid projects. The intended “aid” from Germans in reality often resulted in new dependencies; it was sometimes even degrading. Meanwhile, the “solidarity” with guerrilla movements often included some romanticization and sometimes also served Germans as compensation for a lack of their own experience of radical activity.

However, there have also been some positive approaches and connections in recent years. For example, many leftists across Europe perceived the movement of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico as something very positive and tried to act in solidarity as well as with respect and egalitarianism. In Hamburg, for example, a number of collectives have emerged, importing coffee directly from Chiapas and distributing it here in a fair trade manner. In addition there have been many information events.

In 2013, people succeeded in organizing unified action between activists in Colombia and Hamburg. As a result, the global production chain of Colombian hard coal was exposed to scandal—from bloodstained mining in northern Colombia to the planned climate-killing incineration in Hamburg’s controversial coal-fired power plant, which was still under construction at the time. In Hamburg, the Elbe was symbolically blocked for one hour during the anniversary of the harbor, while at the same time, a protest rally against the “Megaminería” took place in Bogotá.

The population of the South American continent has a greater proportion of young people than Europe, and significant parts of the youth have begun to fundamentally question the prevailing order while the contradictions continue to intensify. For us Latin America is also a continent of hope.

We should deepen our transcontinental relations on an equal footing and make such connections more common. The protests against the G20 summit offer a special occasion and momentum, but we should be able to do much more in the long term.

We see the differences between the various protest cultures in Latin America and Europe as strength. We only have to understand this “global multitude” as something common that we want and need.

## Global dynamics of cities

Paris, Hamburg, and Buenos Aires are rightly considered to be particularly cosmopolitan and international. We live in “key cities” in which supranational influences always brought important impulses and from which many things spread to other cities. For example, Hamburg is probably the “most British” city on the European mainland, and Paris has traditionally been a European attraction for artists and intellectuals. St. Pauli in Hamburg is likely the most internationally famous district in all Germany, and it was the East of Paris where the French Revolution started, as well as the Paris Commune.

In both cities, impulses and movements have been arising—sometimes in interaction. A few years ago, for example, Hamburg saw the beginning of a “Right to the City” movement, which drew on a concept promoted by the left-wing sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre from Paris in 1968. “Right to the City” movements exist in Latin America, too, e.g., in Buenos Aires.

In Paris, in 2016, thousands took to the streets protesting against a labor reform and forming the “Nuit Debout” movement, and there was a closed “black bloc” for the first time in France. This expression of militancy and self-protection originated in Hamburg in the 1980s. The culture of “wild demos” involving spontaneous chaos and blockades, not registered with the authorities, comes clearly from France, especially from Paris. It belongs to the common repertoire of movements in Hamburg.

The exchange of new tactics and ideas of movements across borders does not work in a “copy paste mode,” even less according to an “import/export” logic. Rather, it’s about mutual inspiration and curiosity.

Buenos Aires is recognized as particularly “European”; it has largely been shaped by Italian influences. It is one of the key metropolises of Latin America. Many stimuli—movements, culture, attitudes toward life—arise and spread from Buenos Aires.

If something moves on Planet Earth, it certainly will not skip “our” three cities. Rather, it is precisely our shared responsibility to develop and push necessary changes. For this reason, we also consider it particularly important to intensify solidarity-based relations and practices in the context of the metropolises and regions, rather than, for example, referring to the framework of nation-states or countries.

For those in Europe who have little understanding of your metropolitan area, the region around the Rio de la Plata is home to a total of nearly 20 million people, of whom 14 million live in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires; 2 million more live in Montevideo, Uruguay. The so-called “Rio Platense” is spoken across this border.

## Back to B’Aires

There are organised groups in Buenos Aires, which will oppose the G20 summit with determination and resistance. We were astonished by the protests in Buenos Aires against the new pension law in December 2017. The photographs reminded us a bit of the G20 protests in Hamburg, even if the intensity and dimension of the resistance was never reached here.

The gigantic demonstration in B’Aires on International Women’s Day also impressed us. More than 1 million people—primarily women—were said to be on the streets; colorful, cross-

generational, and determined to change things. In mid-June, you did it again: one million people at the night vigil for the right to abortion.

We received the first “international call for action — NO to the G-20 summit in Argentina!” This resembles the basic orientation of the first calls to demonstrate in Hamburg. It has been translated in four more languages.

The summit is to take place in the “Salguero” congress center, directly on the Rio de la Plata, and at the inner-city airport. As we can see on the map, there are docks and parks on the other sides. The historic center of Buenos Aires is not far away either. In between, however, there is a large urban highway and railway tracks and also “Villa 31,” one of the poorest neighborhoods in Buenos Aires.

The Costa Salguero is already the Plan B, after the original plan to meet in the “Tecnópolis” was scrapped; the convention place was relocated for security reasons, which became increasingly relevant after Hamburg. Other secondary sites of the summit are nearby in the historic center, such as the five-star hotels that could host state guests and the Teatro Colón, where the “Feudal Friday monster dinner” is scheduled.

In order to get from the international airport to the site of the summit, the heads of state and government would either need to be carted 40 km across Buenos Aires or be shuttled by helicopters with all their baggage. This certainly would not be an option for the thousands of “Sherpas” accompanying them. We read that the smaller, inner-city airport would be used exclusively as a military airport during the summit. State guests could land there directly, immediately at the venue and not far from the hotels.

We found in the local press in Buenos Aires that there is a discussion about a kind of “land dispatch program” for nearby neighbourhoods. Macri would like to borrow additional fighter jets from Brazil especially for the G20. Moreover, exactly as in Hamburg, there had already been one “test conference,” the WTO summit. Even at this summit, many NGO representatives were denied entry—a fact that does not bode well.

Larger parts of the city will also presumably be declared demonstration ban zones. The meeting places, hotels, and routes from the airport will be hermetically sealed. Freedom of movement will be limited throughout the whole city. Assume that the next G20 will be even worse than you expect and much worse than the politicians are announcing. This was the case in Hamburg last year, and also at the preceding summits.

## **An opportunity for attention**

If there is an opportunity to draw worldwide attention to social concerns in Buenos Aires, it is the upcoming G20 summit. The world press will congregate in Buenos Aires to an unprecedented degree. After Hamburg, they will be focusing attention on your protests.

If this meeting of monsters, the figureheads of this destructive system, takes place in your freedom-loving city without opposition, the international public will regard this as a sign that everything is going as usual. It would cement once more the misery of Latin America. Above all, “your president” Macri would understand himself to have carte blanche for his agenda of austerity measures, which the IMF has made even more drastic. As in 2001, the Argentinian people face a massive debt burden, the economy is slipping into recession, and social imbalances are increasing.

But it is not just Macri who is driving the country into bankruptcy again. It is a worldwide offensive of capital and its lackeys. It is the G20, the IMF, the World Bank, and the transnational corporations that have plunged the countries of the world into crisis. What is going on in Argentina is just another example of their strategy of impoverishment, destruction, and self-enrichment.

## **Passing the torch**

Of course we received the “international call to mobilize against the G20 and the IMF.” Just like in Hamburg, there will be a whole week of action. Super!

We are moving forward. But the question is whether we can move fast enough to preserve even the simplest livelihoods for us and the forthcoming generations. This is why we need to deepen our transcontinental discussions about alternatives to the prevailing system, to further develop these together and create a real countervailing power. We can only do that together—not in a single campaign, but with a long-term exchange, in a process of learning from each other, based on mutual respect and curiosity.

So we come to the end of our “handover of a burning baton.” We hope we have not bored you with local details. Above all, we hope that our experiences will support you a little bit and help us advance our common process together.

We will fly directly to Buenos Aires for the summit protests if possible. But we also know that this will stretch the financial limits for many. Therefore, we will try to set up parallel protests here at the same time. That will be a continuation and hopefully an additional boost from the G20 protests that took place outside of Hamburg in 2017 in Athens, Paris, northern Italy, and in many German cities. A large part of the proceeds from the sale of this book will flow into the protest / repression fund to support B’Aires.

We should never forget that it is not only the other side that is capable of unleashing unforeseen forces. We too can expand our strength in a momentum that we did not previously consider possible.

Take care, Compas.

***Pauli – Paname – Connexion, July 2018***

*THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN*

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