

# Three demonstrators shot, hundreds arrested at Göteborg EU summit

## European leaders demand harsher police action

Stefan Steinberg  
18 June 2001

Following violent clashes on Friday, three of the protesters outside the European Union summit in Göteborg, Sweden were shot by police. One of the injured demonstrators remains hospitalised in critical condition.

Dozens of others were hurt and hundreds arrested as mounted police, accompanied by dogs, lashed out with truncheons and charged a 4,000-strong demonstration, part of a mobilisation of some 20,000 protesters in the city. The demonstrations targeted last week's conference of European heads of state, focusing on a visit last Thursday by US President George W. Bush. They remained largely peaceful as the summit began and during Bush's visit.

According to police and media reports, a group of anarchists from Denmark and Germany began attacking shops and a McDonald's restaurant in Göteborg city centre on Friday. But the preamble to that day's clashes was a police provocation.

Months before the summit the Swedish police had come to an agreement with the organisers of the protests—a diffuse coalition of radical groups and anti-globalisation organisations gathered under the names “Göteborg 2001” and “For an Alternative Europe”. As part of the agreed “line of dialogue”, the city authorities and police allowed demonstrators to stay overnight in a school not far from the conference centre.

But at a meeting Friday morning demonstrators said they had been expelled from the school the night before when police suddenly stormed the building. The police set up barriers around the school and arrested a number of protesters in the course of clearing the building.

On Friday afternoon, as 20,000 demonstrators tried to

march on the conference centre, they were repelled by large numbers of police. As violent clashes continued Friday night, a planned evening meal of the gathered heads of state was cancelled and the official delegations from Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg were forced to switch hotels. The prime minister of the Netherlands, Wim Kok, and his Luxembourg counterpart Jean Claude Juncker were forced to leave their hotel via the fire escape in order to avoid demonstrators.

Two of the protesters fired on by police were hit in the leg. The third received a critical wound in the stomach. The final tally for the summit was 77 injured and more than 567 arrested.

Further mass demonstrations by protesters calling for “An Alternative Europe” passed off peacefully on Saturday, after representatives of the demonstrators agreed to march some distance from the conference centre.

A number of European heads of state expressed alarm at the violent clashes and called for intensified police measures to protect future European summits. British Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned the demonstrators and said violent protests by an “anarchist travelling circus” could not be allowed to prevent EU leaders from holding future summits. “It is very important that we don't concede an inch to these people”, he declared.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder suggested imposing a travel ban to bar potentially rowdy demonstrators from future summits. He commented: “The only thing that helps is toughness. Any attempt to develop a de-escalation strategy with these desperados is senseless. They have no political aims.” German

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, himself the target of a media and political campaign in connection with his own past as a militant demonstrator, declared his “horror” at the violence.

Italian President Berlusconi, attending his first meeting of European heads of state since taking office, expressed his alarm at the demonstrations, and Italian officials declared their intention of closing down the city of Genoa, including air links, railways and roads, in advance of next month’s G-8 economic summit. A representative of the radical World Development Movement said the Italian government’s plans amounted to a “pre-emptive state of emergency”.



To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**