

Under the pretext of the “struggle against terror”

## German police conduct massive operation against G8 protesters

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German police carried out a series of highly coordinated raids against anti-globalisation and left-wing organizations across Germany on Wednesday. Nine hundred police searched a total of 40 locations in the cities of Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen and other towns in northern Germany. The raids were authorised by the General Attorney's Office on the basis of Paragraph 129a of German law, i.e., that the organisations raided were involved in the “creation of a terrorist organisation.” According to the Attorney's Office, terrorist attacks were being prepared primarily in connection with the G8 summit to be held in Germany this summer.

In Berlin, hundreds of police were involved in raids throughout the suburb of Kreuzberg. Police conducted an extensive search of the Mehringhof complex of apartments and shops, including a bookstore and bakery. Raids were also carried out in other offices and apartments in Kreuzberg, in which computers, hard discs, printers and files were confiscated. Police also shut down a Berlin-based computer server used to coordinate the activities of left-wing and anarchist groups.

In the northern city of Hamburg police raided an alternative cultural centre, Die Rote Flora. Large numbers of police stormed the building early Wednesday morning confiscating 10 computers and other documentation.

Dozens of other sites were also subject to police raids in Lower Saxony, Bremen, Brandenburg und Schleswig-Holstein. The main targets were farms, which federal prosecutors declared were suspected of being planning and supply centres for protesters. Despite the massive size of the operation police made no arrests in the course of their raids. Around 20 persons were taken into custody when angry crowds gathered to protest the police action. Three thousand gathered in Berlin Wednesday evening for a spontaneous protest against the police action, and large numbers of youth also took to the streets in Hamburg.

Wednesday's raids against a number of organisations preparing protests against the G8 summit represents the most extensive use of anti-terror laws against German-based political organisations since the introduction of the anti-terror legislation in 2001.

The size and intensity of the police operation, which a spokesman claimed was the culmination of investigations lasting over a year, bore absolutely no relation to the activities of the groups concerned. Die Rote Flora is an old theatre building, which has been occupied by squatters for a number of years and forms a centre for cultural activities and meetings by anarchists and other organisations. Such groups have regularly clashed with police in the course of actions to

defend themselves against the municipal authorities, or in the course of protests against fascist organisations active in the city.

The offences attributed to such anarchist groups in Hamburg and elsewhere are largely restricted to damage to property, i.e., throwing paint at buildings and setting cars on fire. Such senseless acts of vandalism are an expression of the political disorientation and frustration of these groups and only provide the state with the grounds for increased repression. They are not, however, acts of terrorism, as the authorities claim.

At the same time there is a history of state infiltration of such groups using undercover agents and provocateurs encouraging violence. This was the case in Genoa in 2001. In the course of investigations into the death of one protester following violent clashes with the police in the course of the G8 conference it was revealed that Italian secret service agents had massively infiltrated protest groups. Together with the extensive powers available to police and the intelligence services for the surveillance of telephones and correspondence of such groups on the Internet, there can be no doubt that the German state is fully informed about the activities and plans of such groups in Germany.

In fact, far from being anything to do with opposing the threat of terrorism, the raids on Wednesday are part of a systematic campaign by the German Interior Ministry and the grand coalition government (Social Democratic Party-Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union-SPD-CDU-CSU) to intimidate opponents of the upcoming G8 summit and create the conditions for a further massive buildup of police powers. To this end the government, with the aid of sections of the German media, are seeking to create a climate of hysteria based on the fears of a terrorist attack.

Following the September 11 attacks the German coalition government at that time, consisting of a coalition between the SPD and the Green Party, moved quickly to introduce an initial catalogue of measures aimed at building up the powers of the German state.

Interior Minister Otto Schily (SPD) introduced a broad expansion of the powers of the German police and intelligence service, including extensive bugging operations, police dragnets, the expansion of telephone tapping, a law governing air security, biometric passports, anti-terrorism data bases and an anti-terrorism centre with secret service access to private bank accounts.

Since coming to power in 2005 these measures have been considerably tightened up and extended by the grand coalition government and its interior minister, Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU). Up until now the threat of terror in Germany was largely ascribed by government and intelligence service sources to vaguely defined

foreign-sponsored terrorist groups.

Only last month the German Interior Ministry declared it had learnt from American sources of a plot by an unknown radical Islamic group to attack American installations in Germany. Security was stepped up at the US embassy in Berlin and other diplomatic buildings. Since then nothing more has been heard or said about this mysterious “Islamic group.”

Now the threat to Germany is no longer unnamed “radical Islamic groups” but political organisations active inside Germany itself. On the heels of the latest police raids against “terror suspects,” the German government is rushing to expand its anti-terror laws. According to the newspaper *Die Welt*, the government proposes to add additional punitive clauses to the same paragraph (129a), which was used to justify the raids on Wednesday.

The police raids were immediately criticised by a number of civil rights lawyers, while some newspapers have also pointed to the discrepancy between the relatively harmless activities of the German groups, which were raided, and the enormous police operation.

In its Thursday edition the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* refers to recent incidents of damage to property in Berlin and Hamburg and writes: “Suddenly the long-known attacks in Hamburg and Berlin are being sold as part of an almost demonical master plan to destroy the state and society. The people responsible for the attacks are being characterized overnight as founders and members of a terrorist organization—and the recent debate about the Red Army Faction shows just how serious such an accusation is. The swiftly cobbled together terrorism accusation feeds another suspicion: Police and law enforcement authorities are using it as an excuse for wide-ranging investigations. The evidence presented so far is much too flimsy to justify a terrorism conviction in a future court case. In addition, the timing suggests that the aim is to make terror suspects out of G-8 opponents...”

An integral part of the government campaign to instil a mood of panic in the population is the evocation of the crimes committed by the Red Army Faction, which carried out a number of violent and deadly terror attacks in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. In their reports on the police raids on Wednesday a number of German and international media outlets sought to establish a link between the activities of the organisations raided in Berlin and Hamburg and the RAF.

This attempt to equate political protest with terrorism has been fuelled in Germany over the past few weeks by an ongoing debate in the German media and political circles over the role of the RAF. Only days ago the German president Horst Köhler refused to grant an amnesty to the former RAF member Christian Klar who has been imprisoned since 1982 in connection with terrorist offences.

While giving no grounds for his decision it is assumed that Köhler justified his decision to turn down an amnesty by claiming that Klar had shown no regret for his actions. The evidence to back this claim was a public statement made by Klar at the start of this year in which he expressed his opposition to capitalism.

Since the issue of an amnesty for Klar came up earlier this year influential sections of the German media and right-wing politicians have taken up this same argument to campaign against his release. For such politicians as Markus Soder (CSU) and many others, Klar’s criticism of capitalism is tantamount to support for terrorism.

In an hysterically written article with the headline “Leftist terror groups ‘to strike at G8’” *Times-Online* writes that one of the organisations raided Wednesday—the so-called mg (Militant

Group)—had expressed support for Klar’s comments. According to the reasoning of *Times-Online*, such support is a reason to indicate the organisation’s support for terrorism. In other words, criticism of the capitalist system is equated as support for terrorism, and is now being put forward as a justification for police raids on legal organisations.

Meanwhile politicians from both of the major coalition parties have rushed to defend the police action. Wolfgang Bosbach (CDU) adamantly defended the massive show of force on German television. He was backed up by the SPD expert for internal affairs, Dieter Wiefelspütz, who told German radio that violence had to be dealt with and “he had absolutely no criticism of the General Attorney’s office.” Wiefelspütz continued, “Everything must be done to guarantee security.”

The latest raids by German police are also symptomatic of the type of police-state preparations that accompany any large-scale gathering of world leaders in the twenty-first century. The most recent G8 gatherings of world leaders have been increasingly dominated by huge military and security operations to protect the increasingly despised leaders of the world’s largest economies. At this year’s G8 summit, which begins on June 6, the German chancellor will meet with the leaders of Britain, Canada, Italy, France, Japan, Russia and the United States for three days of talks.

A huge security operation was set into operation for US president Bush’s visit to the same part of Germany in July of last year. This time the German authorities have gone much further and are turning the Baltic Sea resort of Heiligendamm into a luxurious military fortress, which has more in common with the Green Zone in Baghdad than a traditional conference centre.

The German authorities have authorised the building of a huge wall around the resort of Heiligendamm. The fence is 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) long, 2.4 meters high and protected by four rows of barbed wire, including the latest type of sharp razor-wire. As one newspaper noted the affect of the wall would be to turn “Heiligendamm into the equivalent of a maximum-security prison. But this time designed to keep people out.” Local residents have complained about the security fence, which is estimated to cost \$17 million, comparing it to the Berlin Wall.

The region of the Baltic Sea surrounding the resort will be patrolled by nine naval ships with a total of 16,000 local police officers and 1,100 soldiers assigned to guard the perimeter fence, keeping protesters several miles from the meeting. A German ministry spokesman has confirmed that the security precautions were the most extensive for any single event in Germany since World War II.

As social tensions build in Germany the massive police raids Wednesday and the enormous level of police and military activity taking place in preparation for next month’s summit are an indication of the police-state type measures which are rapidly being developed by the German authorities to deal with political opposition.



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