



G8 Research Group

**“THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF RESISTANCE”
Civil Society Action at the 2007 G8 Summit**

*A report on the various forms of civil society action directed at the 2007 G8 Summit in
Heiligendamm, Germany*

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I. BACKGROUND: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE G8, A RELATIONSHIP IN FLUX

The term “civil society” first appeared in an official G8 summit document in 1995.¹ Since then, the relationship between the G8 and civil society has undergone a marked evolution. Two decades ago, the notion of large-scale civic engagement occurring alongside G8 deliberations was unthinkable. Today, G8 summits are often synonymous with large-scale demonstrations. University of Toronto professor Peter Hajnal describes four distinct eras of civil society and G8 interaction: (1) 1975-1980, a period of the earliest form of dialogue; (2) 1981-1994, a period of gradual recognition through civil society lobbying and active protest; (3) 1995-1997, a period of formal recognition by the G8; and (4) 1998-present, a period of well-structured cooperation.² As recently as 2006, the role of civil society has evolved again. Civil society does not only occupy the role of an external commentator, but also that of an internal stakeholder through a new program of formal consultations. Perhaps the most ambitious example of this form of civil society consultation is the Civil G8, an initiative created by the Russian Federation during its presidency of the G8 in 2006.³ The increased recognition of civil society leaves open the possibility that we are entering a fifth phase of G8-civil society relations, whereby large-scale pre-summit consultations become a reified component of the G8 process. The outcome of forthcoming summits will determine whether this is so.

Although the pre-Heiligendamm Summit civil society consultations did not receive the same degree of support, participation, and publicity as the Civil G8 the year before,⁴ the civil society presence at the summit was tremendous, rivaling that which was seen at the 2001 Genoa Summit and the Gleneagles Summit in 2005. This report focuses on those events that occurred in the immediate lead-up to and during the 2007 Heiligendamm Summit (from June 2nd to 8th 2007 specifically). During this time, an impressive array of highly organized alternative forums and demonstrations met with impromptu marches, protests, and confrontations with the police. Whether civil society action effectively shaped the outcomes of the summit is questionable. What is clear, however, is that despite the immense diversity of civil society, its members can command a significant, collective presence that may just influence the priorities of the G8 and more generally, challenge the relevance, resilience, and effectiveness of the G8 at large.

¹ Civil Society and the G8, presentation prepared for the Civil G8 Forum, 9-10 March 2006, Civil G8, (Moscow), 5 March 2006. Date of Access: 7 Oct 2007. <http://en.civilg8.ru/1628.php>. Please see the Halifax Summit Communiqué, 16 June 1995, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/1995halifax/communique/index.html>.

² Civil Society and the G8, presentation prepared for the Civil G8 Forum, 9-10 March 2006, Civil G8, (Moscow), 5 March 2006. Date of Access: 7 Oct 2007. <http://en.civilg8.ru/1628.php>.

³ For more information see the Civil G8 website at: <http://en.civilg8.ru/1195.php>.

⁴ For more information on the German NGO Forum on Environment and Development, the German government’s formal consultation with NGOs, see: G8 Dialogue Forum, 25 April 2007, http://www.g-8.de/nn_94646/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/04/2007-04-25-g8-zivilgesellschaft-wieczorek-zeul_en.html.

II. DEMONSTRATIONS, PROTESTS & BLOCKADES

On 2 June 2007, an “International Day of Demonstration” against the G8 was organized in Rostock, Germany. Police estimate that there were approximately 30 000 protestors in attendance, while demonstration organizers set the count at 80 000.⁵ The demonstration, organized by the Rostock Action Alliance,⁶ brought together a civil society with diverse interests and causes. Civil society organizations (CSOs) in attendance addressed core political issues such as climate change, poverty, and global military operations. The demonstration constituted a mostly peaceful civil society that marched with colourful banners and offered artistic performances.⁷ Among the 160 participating groups, a range of demands was expressed in the opening demonstration.⁸ While some groups demonstrated for the collapse of the G8, others were intent to work within the scope of G8 summits and lobby for specific policy outcomes.⁹ Major groups involved in the International Demonstration included the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), Oxfam, Jubilee South, Greenpeace, WWF, Germanwatch, FREIEHEIDE, Friends of the Earth, ATTAC, Block G8, and the “Black Bloc”.^{10,11}



*A marching band leads the International Day of Demonstration.
Behind, Oxfam puppets address the notion of trade justice.*

⁵ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

⁶ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

⁷ Anti-G8 Alliance for a Revolutionary Perspective. Date of Access: 08 August 2007. <http://www.antig8.tk/1180292440-14.html>

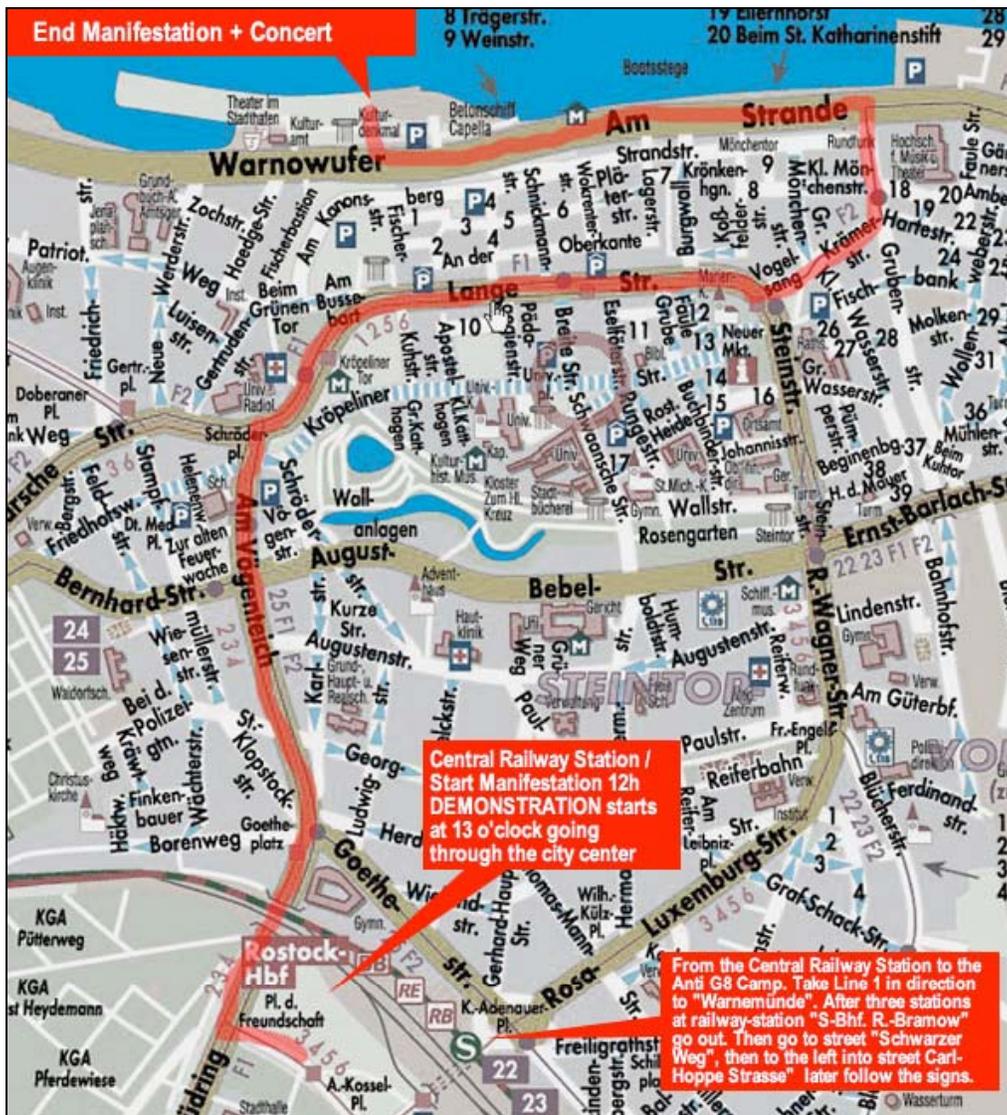
⁸ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

⁹ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

¹⁰ Who are the G8 protestors? 5 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6720291.stm>.

¹¹ Massive riot ahead of the G8 summit: The rumble in Rostock, Spiegel Online International, (Hamburg), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,486330,00.html>.

At 11:00, demonstrators congregated at three different locations across the city: Schutower Kreuz; Hamburger Straße; and at the Main Station, Platz der Freundschaft.¹² By 13:00, two large contingents of protestors from two different points of the city marched through Rostock towards the main convergence centre, Stadthafen. At the Stadthafen, protesters listened to speeches by Green Youth, Greenpeace Germany, ATTAC Germany, Left Party, Walden Bello, Interventionist Left, and Jane Nalunga.¹³ Musical performances were interspersed throughout the speeches. A larger musical event was planned for the evening.¹⁴



Map of the International Day of Action march

¹² International Demonstration, Heiligendamm2007.de, 27 May 2005. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. http://heiligendamm2007.de/Demo_en/index_demo_en.html.

¹³ International Demonstration, Heiligendamm2007.de, 27 May 2005. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. http://heiligendamm2007.de/Demo_en/index_demo_en.html.

¹⁴ International Demonstration, Heiligendamm2007.de, 27 May 2005. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. http://heiligendamm2007.de/Demo_en/index_demo_en.html.

Violence at the International Demonstration

There were no major violent disruptions to the international demonstration when it was divided in three separate groups. When the demonstrators converged at the harbourfront, however, approximately 2 000 members of a nebulous group called the Black Bloc started throwing bottles, firecrackers, Molotov cocktails, and cobblestones at police. In response, police used tear gas and water cannons to stop the erupting riot.¹⁵ Protestors also overturned and set fire to parked vehicles.¹⁷ In total, police report that 400 officers were injured, 30 of whom were hospitalized; the Rostock Action Alliance reports 520 demonstrator injuries.¹⁸

While the majority of international media portrayed violent images of the Black Bloc, alternative news sources such as Indymedia, Wombles, and the Dissent! Network, focused on images of police attacking individual protesters.¹⁹ The public reaction to the violence was far from unanimous. While some groups respected the diverse ways to demonstrate against the G8, many organizations condemned the attacks and renounced all association with the demonstration. Pedram Shahyar, a spokesman for ATTAC, issued a statement immediately after the riots stating, “There was no justification at all for these attacks.”²⁰ Other writers accused the police of initiating the violence and heightening tensions at the demonstration through an unnecessarily strong and intimidating presence.²¹

Police expressed disappointment with the demonstration outcome despite the measures taken to avoid “violent disruptions.”²² Prior to the Summit, the Schengen Agreement – which eliminates border control measures among European Union states – was temporarily suspended in order to control the flow of travelers into Germany. Other legal freedoms were also restricted, and suspicious German residences were raided and computer equipment was confiscated in hopes of decreasing the likelihood of violence.²³ Other measures were taken to subdue tensions between police and protestors through an ad-hoc group of volunteers from Berlin called the “Anti-Conflict Team.” Team members were unarmed and wore bright neon vests to identify themselves as mediators at demonstrations. They worked to reduce tensions, and seek compromises between protestors and police.²⁴

In an interview with the G8 Research Group, a member of the Evangelical Church of Germany stated that the clash between the Black Bloc and police forces did not stop the demonstration from being a success because main activities still continued as planned. Despite the violence and sense of chaos surrounding the harbourfront stage, thousands of people stayed late into the night to attend

¹⁵ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

¹⁶ Massive riot ahead of the G8 summit: The rumble in Rostock, Spiegel Online International, (Hamburg), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,486330,00.html>.

¹⁷ Riots break out at German rally, BBC News Online, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 10 July 2007.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6714429.stm>.

¹⁸ <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/world/070603/w060325A.html>

¹⁹ Archive: June 2007, Dissent! Network of Resistance, (Hanover), 26 June 2007. Date of Access: 30 June 2007.

<http://www.dissent.org.uk/?m=200706>

²⁰ Tom Armitage, German organizers condemn violence at anti-G8 demos, Reuters, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 20 August 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL03549063>

²¹ Anti-G8 Protest in Rostock, UK Indymedia, (London), 2 June 2007. Date of Access: 3 June 2007.

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2007/06/02/18423868.php>

²² Julio Godoy, G8: Despite Germany’s Tight Controls, Violence, Inter-Press Service, (Rome), 03 June 2007. Date of Access: 02 July 2007. <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38015>

²³ Global Policy Forum Site.. same same same.

²⁴ Prävention – Anti-Konflikt-Teams, City of Berlin, (Berlin), 12 April 2005. Date of Access: 20 August 2007.

<http://www.berlin.de/polizei/praevention/antikonflikt/index.html>

musical performances. Later into the night of 2 June, violent outbursts occurred throughout Rostock between small groups of demonstrators and the police.



A destroyed car after the International Day of Demonstration



Members of the Black Block marching at the International Day of Action

Reaction to Police Behaviour

Through interviews with the anti-conflict team, legal team, and individual demonstrators, the G8 Research Group observed a spectrum of opinions towards the work of German police. One police officer from Bavaria explained that the violence throughout the day and night of 2 June was horrifying not just for bystanders and protesters caught in the fracas, but also for police who could hear their partners call for help. Franziska Nedelmann from Legal Team Europa, a group committed to defending the right to express against the G8, described police behaviour as disproportionately more aggressive than the demonstrators. “They’re just [holding] controls everywhere... all the camps are afraid of getting stopped immediately, so there isn’t any relation between what is going on [at the demonstrations] and how police are acting at the moment.”²⁵ She also recounted how officers were uncooperative and sometimes denied them access to their clients. Opinions towards police behaviour were more varied among civil society. Eva Quirstorp, co-founder of ATTAC Germany, perceived police behaviour as completely reasonable and responsive to the degree of violence shown by radical groups, whereas many others characterized police behaviour as contrary to the democratic ideals of Germany.

Day of Action against the G8

Though images of violence from the international demonstration prevailed in global media, it was only one element in a broader plan of action against the G8. The “Choreography of Resistance,” as it was called, outlined three primary days of action following the International Demonstration that would address specific topics related to the G8. On the morning of 3 June, an estimated 3,000 demonstrators met outside the University of Rostock’s Faculty for Agricultural and Environmental Sciences to march for the Global Agricultural Day of Action.²⁶ The rally once again featured creative puppet figures and large banners that were paraded through the Rostock city centre, with brief stops at the Lidl supermarket and Neuer Markt square. The protest closed in the mid-afternoon with speeches from representatives of Brazil, Mali, and Nicaragua. Afterwards, some protesters returned home while others traveled to Groß-Lüsewitz for another rally against the Agro-Bio-Technical Station, the largest GMO test field in Germany. Though a strong police presence was once again felt at all demonstration sites, no major conflicts were reported as police conducted random searches of bags and belongings, but generally allowed protests to carry on unobstructed.

Throughout the day, parallel demonstrations were also taking place at other venues around Rostock, including a “human banner” event hosted by Greenpeace where approximately 2 000 people assembled at the Stadthafen harbour to spell out “G8: ACT NOW! Stop global warming. Greenpeace” with their bodies. An impromptu “solidarity protest” was also held outside the police detention centre to support protesters who remained in custody as well as those who had been recently released. While the arrival of black-clad protesters prompted some



²⁵ Nedelmann, Franziska. Interview by Miranda Lin and Joanna Dafoe. Heiligendamm, 06 June 2007.

²⁶ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007.
<http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index1.shtml>.

alarm among police, the solidarity vigil continued peacefully with demonstrators only being asked to keep the roadways clear for traffic.

Unanticipated Activity

On 4 June, during an early morning rally for the Flight and Migration Day of Action, police were forced to act defensively when a small group of 200-300 migrant right activists merged with a larger demonstration held by the Black Bloc. Together they marched to the Immigration Department office in Werftstraße, chanting “No borders! No nations! Stop deportation!” and “Freedom of movement is everybody’s right/and we are here and we are going to fight!” Although the Department offices were closed because of an apparent software breakdown, activities carried on as free breakfast was served and satirical street theatre skits were performed for the audience.

Participants were urged to go to the Sonnenblumen House in Lichtenhaben for a memorial to the victims of an August 1992 neo-Nazi attack at a refugee reception centre. Roughly 1 500 people attended the remembrance service and though the atmosphere initially seemed relaxed, three arrests and some minor injuries were later reported.²⁷ According to witnesses on Indymedia, police began charging into the crowd and making arrests when they spotted a few members of the crowd covering their faces with masks similar to the ones used at the 2 June riots.²⁸

For the remainder of the afternoon and early evening, police kept a tight watch over all transportation routes. The demonstration for global freedom of movement and equal rights for all was delayed because delegates scheduled to deliver speeches were being held-up by police at the train station. The protest was further complicated by rumours that the demonstration was illegal because of the high risk of expected violence.²⁹ After negotiations between the police, protest organizers, and the Anti-Conflict Team, the rally was allowed to resume provided that demonstrators did not cover their faces or carry concealed weapons.³⁰ Water canon tanks and riot squads lined both sides of the 5,000-strong demonstration and essentially tried to escort it along its own route to the harbour. However, organizers of the march objected to the change of course chosen by the police and called off the march altogether, saying they preferred to meet at the Stadthafen harbour later for an impromptu closing rally. At the end of the day, 53 people were arrested, 17 were released on the same day, and the demonstration was eventually permitted to meet at the city harbour for a peaceful night of concerts.

The final day of action before the start of the official G8 Summit was dedicated to the Day of Action against Militarism, War and Torture. Original plans had called for the day to begin with a memorial event at the Security Fence in Vorder Bollhagen to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Israeli military occupation of Palestine and to protest the West Bank wall.³¹ Once again, however, organizers and police officials were unable to reach a compromise on the route and the event was called off. Instead, protesters joined the anti-Caterpillar action on Carl-Hopp Straße due to the company’s role in creating bulldozers used by the Israeli army. Others went to the anti-

²⁷ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index1.shtml>.

²⁸ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index1.shtml>.

²⁹ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index2.shtml>.

³⁰ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index2.shtml>.

³¹ G8 Protests Timeline, UK Indymedia, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://de.indymedia.org/ticker/en/index2.shtml>.

militarism demonstration in Warnemünde where 1 500-2 000 participants walked past various locations connected to militarism to “highlight the warmonger politics of the G8 states.” Another anti-militarization rally scheduled at the Hanse-Kaserne military base was cancelled at the last minute, leaving approximately 75 demonstrators in the dark.

Block G8

Although the International Demonstration and Alternative Summit were anticipated to be the main civil society activities due to the broad network of groups and coalitions that helped in its creation, the Block G8 campaign became a surprisingly popular activity.

The concept behind the Block G8 campaign was simple: resist the G8 through the mass blockade of roads leading to Heiligendamm and the International Media Centre in Kühlungsborn. Early Wednesday morning, tens of thousands of protesters left camp and set out for pre-designated blockade points. Some trekked for hours and crossed many kilometers of wheat fields and woody brush just to avoid police detection. In an interview with the G8 Research Group, youth activist Luigi Wolf described the “five-finger system” employed by blockaders if they were to encounter police along the way, “You start with one demonstration and when you hit the police you don’t try to break through, but you just disperse in five little demonstrations. You go into the fields, and the police just cannot follow much, they’re not as quick as we are.”

The Block G8 movement was boosted by an early success as the first day of G8 negotiations were delayed because translators were stuck in the human logjam. At one point it was reported that that there was no way of reaching either Heiligendamm or Kühlungsborn by land and that the G8 leaders had to be airlifted out of the resort town. The unexpected accomplishment of the Block G8 goals seemed to galvanize protesters even more and encouraged some to stay overnight or return the next day.

Luigi Wolf, “I think it was even more important because Saturday was a very strong price for the movement with the violence and demonstration and a lot of fear on the part of the demonstrators as well. And so, with the blockades, we turned the situation around and it was a big success.”

III. THE ALTERNATIVE SUMMIT

Conceived as a discussion-based complement to the demonstrations occurring on the streets, the Alternative G8 Summit (AS) has become a key feature of counter summit activities. The 2007 AS saw delegates from around the world participate in four original film screenings, seven satellite symposiums, and over 120 workshops in venues throughout the city of Rostock, Germany.³² Each event was focused on one of the eight major themes of the Alternative Summit: Climate, Environment, and Energy; Labour and Social Issues; Global Justice; European Union; War and Militarization; Migration and Racism; Gender; Education; and Strategies and Alternatives.

The most popular workshops dealt with issues related to climate change, energy and the environment as well as war and militarization.³³ Climate change discussions addressed the need to find sustainable alternatives to oil-based economies, climate justice, and various international frameworks such as the Kyoto Protocol. Groups like Practical Action, People and Planet, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Tearfund, End Oil Aid, and Greenpeace, all played an active role in round table discussions. Anti-war and anti-militarization sessions, on the other hand, were far more emotionally charged and overtly political. In a workshop on “Radical Militarization,” for instance, substantive debate was supplanted by passionate monologues against the G8 “war mongers.”



Journalist Nicola Liebert moderates the closing panel of the Alternative Summit

³² Alternative Summit Programme, G8 Alternative Summit, (Berlin), Date of Access: 2 June 2007. http://www.g8-alternative-summit.org/de/media/Progr_G8Altgip_komplett.pdf

³³ Bricke, Mona. Interview by Joanna Dafoe. 25 June 2007.

The Organizers

Though the AS only drew approximately 2 200 participants to its events³⁴ (as compared to the estimated 80 000 protesters who marched in the International Demonstration³⁵ and the 70 000 who attended the “Music & Messages” concert hosted by Bono³⁶), it was roundly praised as an exceptionally well-organized and popular event.

The Rostock Alternative Summit was initially organized by a group of about 14 political and social NGOs from across Germany, including ATTAC, the Protestant Church Development Service, the German NGO Forum on Environment and Development, World Economy, Ecology and Development (WEED), Friends of the Earth Germany, Oxfam Deutschland, and Medico International, among others. Another forty NGOs and movements signed the Alternative Summit Call as initiators, while religious associations helped provide churches around the city centre for workshops.³⁷

“Words Not Stones”

The Alternative Summit got off to a good start with a rousing opening address by former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler. The Swiss sociologist repeatedly emphasized the injustice of allowing the G8 countries – which only constitute 13 per cent of the world’s population – to control nearly all of the world’s food supply. In particular, he condemned “the murderous European Union policy of dumping” which undercuts local production prices and essentially drives farmers into bankruptcy.³⁸ Ziegler concluded that “good sense” could remedy the suffering created by humans once people became aware and active in the fight against poverty.³⁹

For the remainder of the week, participants were left to choose their activities from a daily schedule of seminars and events. The fluidity of the schedule allowed participants to engage in both the AS workshops as well as the street-level activities, such as the days of action and G8 blockades. Mona Bricke, a representative of the German NGO Forum on Environment & Development and a key organizer of the AS, acknowledged the importance of “interlinking with the other activities taking place in Rostock...they [the street protests and workshop discussions] are strongly linked and need one another to work as the starting point of a strong new movement.”⁴⁰

Workshops were typically structured to include a brief presentation from a panel of expert academics and civil society representatives, followed by a carefully facilitated discussion with the entire group. Though some workshops relied heavily on provocative rhetoric, others demonstrated a more sophisticated dialogue, possibly due to the more complex nature of some issues over others. Sessions on hedge funds, intellectual property rights, or carbon trading, for instance, were less hospitable to self-described radicals and involved surprisingly nuanced discussions.

³⁴ Bricke, Mona. Interview by Joanna Dafoe. 25 June 2007

³⁵ Protests in Germany against G8 meeting turn violent. International Herald Tribune, (London), 3 June 2007. Date of Access: 6 June 2007. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/03/asia/g8.php>

³⁶ Konzert in Rostock, Deine Stimme Gegen Armut, (Berlin), 8 August 2007. Date of Access: 22 August 2007. <http://www.deine-stimme-gegen-armut.de/konzert/allgemein.html>

³⁷ Bricke, Mona. Interview by Joanna Dafoe. 25 June 2007.

³⁸ Words Not Stones – Alternative G8 Summit Opens in Rostock, Deutsche-Welle, (Bonn), 05 June 2007. Date of Access: 20 August 2007 http://www.dw-world.de/popups/popup_printcontent/0,,2577470,00.html

³⁹ G8 2007: Day 4, People & Planet, (Oxford), 5 June 2007. Date of Access: 20 August 2007. <http://peopleandplanet.org/navid4224>

⁴⁰ Bricke, Mona. Interview by Joanna Dafoe. 25 June 2007

During presentations, multilingual translation services were often offered to accommodate the audience's diverse cultural backgrounds. In smaller sessions where formal translation services were not available, partnering members of the audience together in "whisper translations" improvised assistance. The intimate, informal style of the workshops helped further promote a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among the attendees.

Moving Away from the Centre

In the past, the Alternative Summit has tended to attract the more subdued members of civil society who are open to the idea of working within the G8 framework to achieve specific policy changes. However, groups that wish to operate outside the G8 process or hope to dismantle the institution altogether – such as the Black Bloc anarchist faction – remain resistant to the Alternative Summit. They believe any form of collaboration or negotiation with the G8 tacitly legitimizes the organization's power and thus grants them even greater authority. For these extreme groups, the only solution to the current "neo-liberal capitalist tyranny" is overthrowing it through action and violence.

Such a black-and-white approach has forced even moderates within civil society to adopt a sharper stance. In an AS strategic workshop entitled "Lobbying or Delegitimizing the G8: What is the Right Approach?" all six panelists and much of the audience expressed unequivocal disdain for the "illegitimate power structure"⁴¹ of the G8 and seemed to only disagree about the most effective way of dismantling it. Daniela Setton from WEED – an NGO that not only helped organize the Alternative Summit but also participated in a pre-Summit forum that drafted policy recommendations for the G8 – was quick to point out that despite her organization's interaction with the G8, they remained firmly opposed to its existence: "It's just to use the public attention to show that the G8 is not acting in a sensible manner, that it's creating more problems than it is solving ... And so we think to demand or to talk to the G8 in that kind is an important instrument to delegitimize the G8."⁴² Mona Bricke, from the Forum on Environment & Development, further added: "I am convinced that in order to develop valid visions of alternatives to G8 policy one has to work outside the "charmed circle" of the powerful. Lobbying work has a place, but if lobbying is at the centre of all NGO calculations, then it loses touch with the realities of civil society worldwide."⁴³

Dissenting Voices

The apparent inclination towards completely delegitimizing the G8, however, stands in opposition to the original Alternative Summit Call signed by the forty initiators. In it, they had envisioned the AS being a means to create informed debate on equitable globalization and oppose the unsustainable models of economic growth:

We want fair relations and fair trade between developed and developing countries. We want an economy based on solidarity. The economy must serve the people, not the other way round! We demand a responsible and sustainable treatment of our environment. We stand for peaceful and political solutions to conflicts.

⁴¹ "Lobbying or Delegitimizing the G8: What is the Right Approach?" The G8 Alternative Summit. Heiligendamm. 06 June 2007.

⁴² Setton, Daniela. Interview by Miranda Lin. 6 June 2007.

⁴³ Bricke, Mona. Interview by Joanna Dafoe. 25 June 2007.

For some, rejecting the G8 outright is a betrayal of the AS vision and a dangerous distortion of the issues. Eva Quirstorp, a former member of the European Parliament, had harsh words for some organizers, saying: “Just to say, Capitalism is [bad], throw away the system! That is very bad...because it’s feeding young people who want to change the world, who want to make a contribution with very angry simplifications and left-radical empty words.”⁴⁴

Closing Remarks

While some disagreed over the overall message and direction of the Alternative Summit, everyone seemed to agree that one of the highlights of the AS was the closing plenary keynoted by Dr. Vandana Shiva. With a long and respected history of activism in the developing world, Dr. Shiva attracted the largest crowd of the AS. In an impassioned speech, she enlisted from the audience the view that the G8 is a corrupt institution serving the interests of the rich before the needs of the poor, and that “another world is possible” through the efforts of grassroots movements and civil society. In an interview with the G8 Research Group, Dr. Shiva expanded: “The current system of politics has become institutionalized violence. Its institutionalized violence in terms of designing societies where citizens have no freedom, but corporations have absolute freedom...We are in a situation where politics is protecting this genocidal economy and has become the ultimate expression of destructive power, and that is why we need to create alternatives for the expression of creative power and peaceful power.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Quirstorp, Eva. Interview by Joanna Dafoe and Miranda Lin. 7 June 2007.

⁴⁵ Shiva, Vandana. Interview by Miranda Lin. 7 June 2007.

IV. MUSIC & MESSAGES

On 7 June, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) hosted a concert called “Music & Messages: Your Voice against Poverty.” It brought together some of Germany’s top musical artists along with international celebrity-activists Bono and Bob Geldof in an effort to raise awareness about world poverty and inequity, especially in Africa. An estimated 70 000 people were on hand to see eight representatives from the poorest countries in the world (P8) share stories about the financial, physical and emotional challenges they face every day. Their speeches, films, and performances were meant to generate groundswell support in urging the G8 leaders to take more decisive action against poverty in the developing world.



Music & Messages organizers Bono and Bob Geldof singing to audience

Though special appearances by Nobel laureate Mohammed Yunus and African sensations Youssou N’Dour and Leo Muntu drew cheers from the crowd, the greatest excitement was reserved for German artists, like Die Toten Hosen, Die Fantastischen Vier, and Seead. The final act of the concert was a touching sing-along between Bono, Bob Geldof, Herbert Grönemeyer, and Youssou N’Dour who performed a cover of The Beatles’ classic “You Never Give Me Your Money.” The audience soon joined in and together sang, “You never give me your money/ You only give me your funny paper/ And in the middle of negotiations/ You break down.”

When the final song came to an end, all thirty-three participating NGOs marched out on stage carrying a box of petitions demanding G8 leaders take action to relieve the debt and poverty of developing nations. The boxes containing the petitions were stacked high and wide, creating a lasting image of the people’s voice against poverty.

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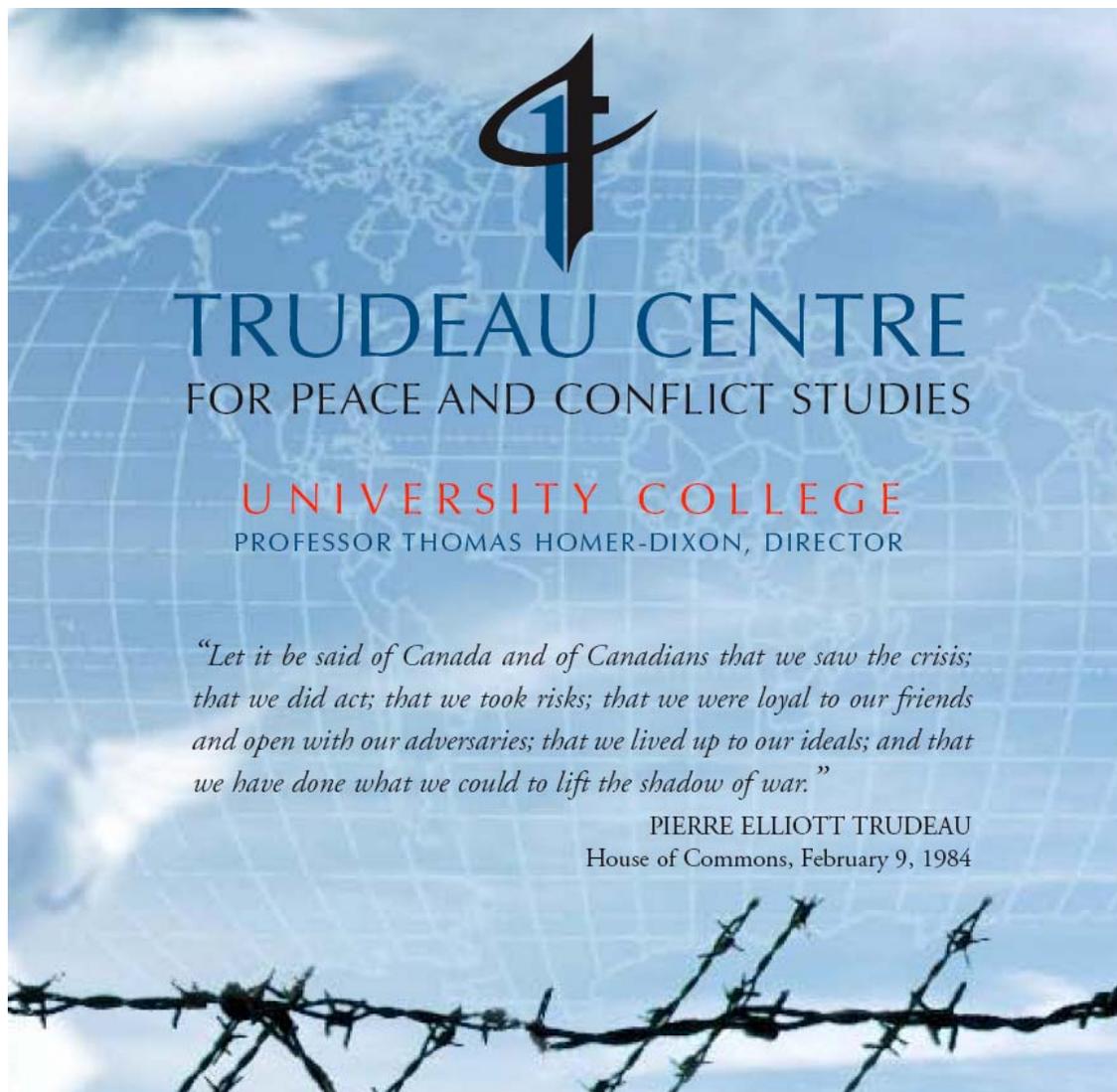
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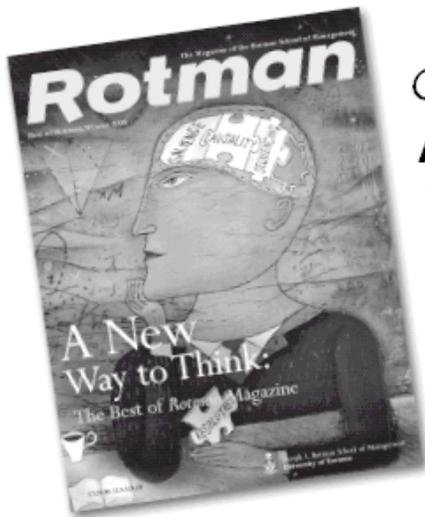
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