

Germany: Nationwide raids on G20 protesters

By Johannes Stern
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Amid attempts in Berlin to maneuver a right-wing government into office, German police are reviving the myth of "extreme left" violence at last July's Hamburg's G20 summit.

On Tuesday, the police carried out large-scale raids in several German states. Police officers headed by the Hamburg Special "Black Block" Commission (Soko) searched more than 20 premises in Hamburg, Berlin, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Saxony-Anhalt, Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony.

The Hamburg public prosecutor is investigating 22 men and women who were allegedly involved in violent activities in Hamburg during the G20 summit last July. Twenty of the 22 suspects are alleged to be members of the "extreme left-wing spectrum", and charges include "serious breaches of peace".

According to police, 583 police officers were involved in the latest raids. A total of 35 mobile phones, 26 laptops, other data carriers and documents were confiscated during the action. Nobody was arrested.

These raids are largely for propaganda purposes. It has since emerged that the violence in Hamburg stemmed mainly from the security forces and right-wing provocateurs. Most of the original reports about "violent, left-wing extremist" demonstrators were fictitious, e.g. the claim of an "armed ambush" by leftists in the city's Schanzenviertel, which justified the use of sophisticated special operations commandos armed with assault rifles. Travelling in armoured cars, the commandos terrorised an entire urban area.

It was also the police who provoked violent clashes in Hamburg-Rondenburg. Videos show that a demonstration by some 200 G20 protesters was attacked and fired on by heavily armed police on 7

July. The police video shows how one policeman abruptly hit a demonstrator passing by. On the run from the rampaging hordes of police, 14 protesters fell from a scaffold, sustaining injuries.

In recent weeks, more and more details about the extent of brutal police violence against innocent citizens have been revealed. In a video published by *Spiegel Online*, a young worker, Sarah Nothdurft, reported on her own experience. She and her boyfriend were on their way home when they found themselves trapped in a police cordon. They were dragged off their bikes by police, dragged across the ground and kicked. "The worst thing" in her recollection, however, were "those incredibly hateful eyes under the masks," Sarah declared. Her lawyer Christian Woldmann describes the actions of the police as "dangerous bodily harm while on duty".

The operation in Hamburg involving more than 20,000 heavily armed police officers was a civil war exercise in which weapons of war were illegally used. The Hamburg city authorities admitted that police fired rounds of rubber bullets at least 15 times, and tear gas from a multipurpose gun (MZP1) on 67 occasions. According to the federal Ministry of Economics, this weapon falls under the War Weapons Control Act and is listed in the German war weapons list under the category "grenade machine guns, grenade guns, grenade pistols".

In an interview immediately after the G20 summit, Sven Mewes, commanding officer of the Saxon Special Operations Command (SEK), praised the action of his unit in the Schanzenviertel, stating: "Our approach [was] extremely robust on securing our own safety, but also designed for highly dynamic situations. That is, we were freely allowed to use firearms, we used distraction pyrotechnics in buildings and opened closed doors with

firearms using special ammunition. All those we found were immediately placed on the ground, tied up and then led away. [...] There was no resistance at all on their part."

The fact that the campaign against "left-wing extremism" is now being resumed is a warning. The German ruling class aims to establish a police state that criminalises and brutally represses protests and resistance to social inequality, militarism and war. At the same time the recent congress by the far right Alternative for Germany was protected by police from demonstrators, and right-wing terrorists like Franco A. have been set free.

According to a report in *Die Welt*, the Soko "Black Block" commission is the "largest investigation unit of the Hamburg police in decades", involving around 100 Hamburg officers and "almost as many additional investigators from almost all federal states and federal police, who rotate every three weeks". "The unit is also supported by reconnaissance units such as the units for securing evidence and arrest".

The city-state administration of Hamburg consists of a coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Greens, who are leading the campaign against "left-wing extremism" with all of Germany's other parliamentary parties, ranging from the AfD to the Left Party. The victims of the campaign are thousands of people who have merely sought to exercise their right to demonstrate.

There are currently more than 3,000 investigations pending, most of them directed against still unknown persons. "We will get many of you. That's for sure," threatened the head of SOKO, Jan Hieber, following a raid in late September. "We have visual material on a scale never seen before in German criminal history."

Those who go to court must expect draconian punishments. Already in August, a Hamburg court imposed a prison sentence of two years and seven months on a 21-year-old Dutch citizen alleged to have tossed two empty glass bottles at a policeman and then resisted arrest (the allegations were made exclusively by police officers). On Monday, another show trial imposed the longest prison sentence handed out so far in the G20 trials. The 30-year-old online art dealer Benjamin S. was jailed for three years and three months for "serious breach of the peace".

At the government level the German Interior

Minister Thomas de Maizière plans to use a conference of Interior Ministers in Leipzig next weekend to press for further measures to beef up the state apparatus. He is reportedly planning nothing less than total surveillance measures. *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland* (RND) reported that de Maizière wants to drastically expand "so-called eavesdropping" by the "use of technical means against individuals".

According to circles close to the Interior Ministry, "Investigators and the secret services find it increasingly difficult to install and hide bugs" to spy on apartments, cars and equipment. De Maizière would therefore require internet companies to hand over their programming protocols.

Eavesdropping would then be possible wherever devices are connected to the Internet. The industry is advised to give the state "exclusive access rights, such as private tablets and computers, smart TVs or digitised kitchen appliances."

Bernhard Rohleder, managing director of the industry association Bitkom, characterised these Orwellian surveillance plans to *Spiegel Online*: "In the future, all devices, buildings and almost all people will be connected to the Internet." De Maizière's initiative is about "state access to just about anything, anyone and everyone".

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