

Attempt at critical self-reflection – the journey through hell

Dear friends and comrades,

I am Andreas Beuth, a retired but still active lawyer who was a campaigner for „Welcome to Hell“, organizer of the Welcome to Hell demonstration on 6.7.17, and one of the official spokespeople for the coalition.

First of all, I'd like to distance myself from the statements I made in which I distanced myself from the militant actions during the G20, especially those that took place in the Schanzenviertel on Friday. These statements were politically wrong and damaging to the radical left-wing movement. I would like to express my sincere apologies for making them.

I would like to try to explain how, after 30 years of more or less successful political and legal press relations, such a serious error could have been made, without relativizing the politically false and damaging statements in any way.

Before the demonstration on Saturday, I gave the ARD and NDR an interview about the „riots in the Schanzenviertel“, without any need to , when they held a microphone in my face. I shouldn't have done it. I was under a lot of emotional pressure resulting from Friday night, during which I found many things good, but others completely wrong. I had been discussing the events half the night, had only slept 4 hours, and was psychologically exhausted. Because of this, but also in general, such evaluations shouldn't have been expressed to the press, but should have been as part of the internal left-wing discussion, which has only just hesitantly begun within the coalition. Then it could have been decided whether a collective statement should be made. I should never have made these politically fatal statements and certainly not acting on my own without consulting others!

Now to the individual statements:

The starting point was the „Pöseldorf“ (a posh area of Hamburg) quotation which, to my surprise, appeared as the main focus in the news. I actually said considerably more than was quoted, but the complete interview wasn't broadcast and I am still unaware of it. The published quotation is as follows:

„We, as autonomous left-wing activists, and I, as spokesperson for this group, indeed have certain sympathies for such actions, but please not in our own neighbourhood where we live. Why not do it in somewhere like Pöseldorf or Blankenese (posh areas of Hamburg). Thus there is much incomprehension for damaging our own businesses in the Schanzenviertel, places where we and local inhabitants also shop.“

As to that, of course I'm not a spokesperson for the autonomous left, as „the autonomous left“ doesn't have any spokespeople, which corresponds to my understanding of autonomist politics. I'm not even sure how I could have made such a statement. I really wanted to say that I was a spokesperson for the autonomous coalition „G20 – Welcome to Hell“. But even so, I shouldn't have made any such statements without first consulting other members of the coalition. I find it even more difficult to assess the content of the statement. Without completely revealing my own position here (see below), various views and political evaluations exist. For some the Schanzenviertel is still neighbourhood of resistance, where many left-wingers live together with many sympathizers, and where there are many left-wing community centres. For others it is a gentrified, yuppie neighbourhood like any other. There are different views regarding the „destruction of our own businesses“. Some emphasize that Rewe and Budney (chain stores) in the Schanzenviertel are doing good by donating groceries to kindergartens and the homeless, and by showing tolerance towards

the Rote Flora. For others they are just chain stores regardless of which part of the city they are in. It is largely agreed upon that smaller shops, which also sympathize with the Flora, were also affected. It is also generally agreed that endangering people by setting fire to buildings can't be seen as a legitimate militant means, including office buildings where people could still be working or cleaning.

On the whole, I find the „Pöseldorf“ quotation – except for the part regarding „spokesperson for the autonomous left“ - politically less serious than the following distancing from it in interviews in the Abendblatt, MoPo, and TAZ (German newspapers).

In the mean time, a dynamic drive against me developed which contributed to the distancing, without me being able or wanting to justify it in any way.

An increasingly aggressive hateful tirade against me began straight away on the same evening after the TV-interview. I was so insulted and threatened in the street that I soon needed bodyguards (many thanks to all those who participated in my protection). At the same time an unbelievable smear campaign was conducted by the press, which was constantly fueled by diverse politicians. On Monday, 10.07.17, I received numerous e-mail requests and phone calls, mainly from the Hamburg press, making it clear to me that if I didn't make an immediate statement positioning myself, I would be in big trouble.

It was under such circumstances that I made my biggest mistake. I couldn't endure the pressure and therefore panicked. I felt that I had to react immediately. Instead of taking a few hours time to speak with comrades who were available at short notice, I acted alone again without thinking.

The threatening situation got even worse in the following days and weeks. Several pamphlets containing direct threats appeared. Some suspected them to be left-wing satire, others, and especially me as the target, viewed them as direct threats. At the same time, the smear campaign in the press didn't cease, with Pöseldorf being referred to again and again. Additionally, there was a public condemnation by the Chamber of Lawyers, including the initiation of disciplinary proceedings. Even more serious was the the initiation of preliminary legal proceedings for the condoning of criminal offenses as a result of the receipt of 25 criminal complaints. Because of these pending legal proceedings I want to be careful with the public statements I make beyond this text.

Threatening situations, press smear campaigns, and repression were also the reason I was only gradually able to get back on track and clear my head, and only then could I eventually conduct a critical self-examination with those in my closest personal and political environment. This led to discussion and the creation of this text. I am aware that the text should have appeared earlier, but it wasn't subjectively possible then.

Back to the press interview that were given on 10.7.17 and published simultaneously on 11.7.17 in the Abendblatt, MoPo, and TAZ.

Abendblatt:

„Such actions were just mindless violence and crossed a line. I completely distance myself from what happened on Friday evening. We are also stunned by the events.“

It gives me the chills every time I read it. How could I have made such an undifferentiated and over-simplified comment. I don't stand by this comment and don't understand myself how I could have made it. It is also strange that I constantly spoke of „we“ without saying who „we“ could be and without any mandate, neither from the coalition nor even from any „autonomists“.

„We represent the moderate autonomist left-wing activists in Europe and didn't invite these other people. The groups we contacted came in no way with the intention to burn and plunder and commit serious acts of violence. We generally reject this.“

This differentiation between „moderate autonomists“ and „those other autonomists“ is of course complete nonsense and I walked right into the media trap. „Welcome to Hell“ had mobilized and sent out invitations internationally – I took part in this. „Welcome to all of you!“ At most we tried our best to convey the character of the „Welcome to Hell“ demo, but otherwise didn't give any guidelines. We can't and don't want to do that. For this reason I clearly and harshly condemn my own statement that we shouldn't have invited certain people for whatever reason.

„We saw, especially on Friday, new and repugnant dimensions of violence committed by these people. I bear a part of the responsibility for this.“

„Repugnant dimensions of violence“ wasn't my choice of words. I can't imagine that I said that. But because I apparently authorized it (in an available time frame of only one hour), I carry the political responsibility for it. I find this comment particularly bad. It was the orchestration of the summit and the „police baton repression“ that reckoned with fatalities, which was „Repugnant.“

MoPo (Insofar as differing from Abendblatt):

„Arson and plundering have nothing to do with legitimate protest and I would, of course, also find such actions in Blankenese and Pöseldorf wrong.“

I've already previously expressed myself with regards to this, and don't want to make any further comments on that here.

I was quoted as saying the orgy of rioting during the following night was caused by militants who didn't arrive until Friday (this isn't a direct quotation and I didn't say it like that). „I even heard Italian, Spanish, and French. We didn't invite those people. They hadn't spoken to us before, either.“

I did say that. I feel it was a terrible blunder, if it is even possible to get any lower. That was not at all acceptable. We/I had also explicitly invited many foreign comrades and I even had contact with many of them during the summit.

I will see to it that this text is translated into other languages, such as English, and sent out correspondingly, although with some delay. All those political prisoners who have been incarcerated because of the G20 summit have my utmost solidarity, in particular those from abroad who have been subjected to further harassment and have had to do more time in prison than the German prisoners.

TAZ (Insofar as differing from Abendblatt and MoPo):

“I can very clearly say that I completely condemn such things as plundering and burning cars, an even more so burning businesses where the flames could spring over to apartment blocks.”

I have already expressed myself concerning the setting fire to buildings. I have made different evaluations regarding plundering. It's the same with the cars. There is definitely a difference between a Porsche show room in Eidelstedt and the small car belonging to a single mother with a child, who drives to the kindergarten in it every day. For some this differentiation is clear. Others see cars as cars, and as the status symbol of a capitalist society. I don't want to say anything more on

this subject here.

„I bear part of the political responsibility, but am not responsible for the people from Spain, Italy, and France, who I don't even know. (...) I wasn't able to speak to these people.“

It was contemptible to lay the responsibility for militant actions on foreign comrades. And, of course, very arrogant of me to say that I should have wanted to speak to them beforehand. What right have I to do that? I am truly sorry.

There are a few more statements that need to be criticized, but they would be just repetitions.

To summarize again: I made a serious, even unforgivable, mistake. I deeply regret it and apologize for it. I hope that at least some can accept my sincerely meant apologies. Otherwise I will just have to live with it.

Some closing comments:

This text was created after conferring with some comrades who were although critical of me still showed me solidarity, but this text is and continues to be my own. I am both prepared to and interested in continuing the discussion, whereupon I would prefer personal contact to written correspondence. Whoever seeks me will find me in his/her chosen way.

23.8.17

Andreas Beuth