

Heidi Meinzolt, Stockdorf, Germany

It was good to meet all the women there even if there were so many problems expressing ourselves correctly. The congress location was really difficult - with no public transportation to get there, but especially the loud and distracting atmosphere made discussion difficult. Nevertheless the organisers did a very good job, thanks! The preparation of the women's workshop was good, the grouping of the topics into 4 cases on the basis of all the papers was fine and the group discussion was good but always too short. We women need more time to know each other and to start debating before they exchange our basic views).

The day of the demonstration:

When we felt the smoke and the teargas coming into this nearly closed demonstration area (it was very shortly after the vigil was finished also because of the loud music), we very quickly left this place and went under the bridge and in the part of the city behind. I must say that this place for the demonstration should never have been accepted by the organisers, because it was like a gap with only 2 small openings and it was chosen to isolate and separate pacifists. The scandal of the non-functioning public transport made it even more absurd. Everything was planned! I'm convinced that this was the French official strategy and that the organisers fell for it. It raised, especially in the black block, the level of aggression, and the feeling of being marginalised and excluded from our basic rights, to meet and show our pacifist position against the heads of NATO states who met before and during these events.

Before we left, I spoke with a German deputy from the Green party who tried in vain to negotiate with the (German) police forces on the bridge, to allow the German peace movement members to come over with the idea that this could de-escalate the situation on the bridge. At least he told me that the German authorities understood his arguments and were ready TO OPEN the access from Germany but the French prefect would not allow it! So especially the French strategy totally failed or....that's what the French wanted – to discriminate against the whole event and let this part of the city be destroyed to prepare it for investors (that's what I heard).

At first nobody stopped us from going back to the city centre and we could see from very close up that neither the French police nor firemen came to the burning hotel. And this for more than the 1/2 an hour we spent there. They must have known and seen what had happened, from the beginning, at least because of all the terrible helicopters flying overhead! And nobody can say that there were no firemen and cars - the city was full of them and the access was not blocked. They just let it burn, and watched.

When we came to the pont de Vauban, we saw from the main road the demonstration arriving with music and peaceful aspect and we asked the police to let us go over the bridge because we had already the impression that they wanted to close it. The closed directly in front of us. When we saw all the others arrive we could feel the tension rise and we left through the harbour

quarter , walked some kilometres to the next bridge with a footpath. When we arrived there, policemen were already controlling people on the bridge and sent back young people who had peace flags. We were able to pass though, and after a 3 hour walk arrived safely in the city centre. That was no problem for us, but what an unacceptable discrimination for those who less used to sport, and especially handicapped people!!

In all, the police and French political strategy was scandalous; it was a provocation, a total lack of democracy and human rights as well as of sensitivity and basic logic! And it was their fault that aggression in such a dimension happened.

I think we have to discuss also more in the peace movements and especially in our women's movements how to digest these experiences and learn from them. Organisational development and political strength have to go parallel!

To all the courageous women who came and participated in this protest I send my best greetings!

Heidi

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