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G7/G8 Artifacts and the Politics of Self-Presentation

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G8 artifacts collected by the G8 Research Group (<http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/>) and the G8 Research Collection at John W. Graham Library, Trinity College, University of Toronto

Photos and introduction by Jennifer Gronau¹

I Introductory Thoughts on G7/G8 Artifacts and the Politics of Self-Representation

The G8 Research Group together with the John W. Graham Library have been collecting objects from G7 and G8 summits. Many of the annually-rotating G8 host countries have pieced together a kit of materials to give as a present to national and media delegations. These press or delegation kits vary in extent, value or usefulness for the summit days, and were mostly distributed in the official media centers at the summit venues. Their contents range from more or less ordinary things such as ball-point pens, city maps, stickers, international telephone cards, or pins to clothing like rain jackets, a Coca-Cola bottle (Sea Island, USA 2004), or a fan (Okinawa, Japan 2000) with the G8 logo. The collection also includes an ashtray and pencil holder given to the heads of government attending the G7 summit in Ottawa 1981. All press kits and presents to the leaders are decorated with special engravings showing a G7 or G8 logo chosen by the officials of the host countries to mark their presidency. In some cases, the logo reflects single agenda issues proposed by the host government or the sherpas. For example, the motto “Changing the Style” in Birmingham 1998 symbolizes the suggestion by Prime Minister Tony Blair and his represen-

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tatives to reform the summits and to return to “heads only” negotiations. The artifacts for Gleneagles in 2005 were handed over in jute bags containing some fair trade products that can be interpreted as symbols for the G8’s focus on questions of sustainability and climate protection.

The artifacts collected by the G8 Research Group and shown in this photographic overview give an insight into the politics of self-representation surrounding the summits, which are the most visible part of the G8 architecture. Artifacts linked with political processes can be discussed as part of the political communication strategies of political decision-makers, their public relations experts, or ceremonial masters. The G8 is dependent on symbolic resources and strategies for gaining legitimacy, as its visibility and the transparency of its decision-making processes and their outcomes are obviously limited. The intergovernmental arrangement has the capacity to delegate its task forces to international organizations and to push international issues. Hence, it can be described as an intergovernmental institution binding together several dimensions of international politics. For many years, its lack of a secretariat and its mode of club governance have evoked mass protests and civil society campaigns. In the case of the G8, the poles of democratic criteria for legitimacy, such as transparency or representativeness, and output-related demands, such as effectiveness or its capability to solve transnational problems, are conflicting intensely. The G8 is a challenge not only for political analysts and theorists, and its acceptance depends on the (normative) foundations used to evaluate this intergovernmental forum. Besides protest campaigns, the Heiligendamm-L’Aquila Process and reform discussions on the G8 after the financial crash in 2008 – which led to the emergence of the G20 leaders’ summits – are visible signs of this conflict.

One strategy to counter this challenge can be seen in the G8’s politics of self-representation that points in at least two directions: first, outwards, towards an increase of *the G8’s legitimacy*, e.g. with regard to (international) civil society or other institutions such as the United Nations, and second, inwards, towards an increase of *the legitimacy of the rotating presidency*. For example, the authorized pictures of the Hokkaido summit in 2008 show the heads of state and the European Commissioner planting trees energetically. This highly symbolic act emphasizes the political will to act on important climate and sustain-

ability issues. "G8 family photos", prepared by masters of ceremony, are addressing the media and its publics and are directed outwards and inwards. The relocation of the summit venue in Italy 2009 from La Maddalena to L'Aquila, and hence to an earthquake area, can be interpreted as an example for a mainly inwards but also outwards-looking strategy of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, as he used the international and national attention to his presidency while dealing with a weakened region of his country.

The distribution of G8 press kits is much more restricted than for instance the distribution of "G8 family photos" produced for the international media. Therefore a different impact on G8-related legitimization discourses should be expected. But together with official photographs and other products such as official G8 summit magazines for the business world, artifacts can be seen as symbolic and political resources complementing the more obvious dimensions of the G8 process.

Additional evidence on the politics of self-presentation on the national level may be gleaned from the entertainment programme that has been part of the summit choreography for many years. The host country generally wants to highlight its culture (e.g. arts, music, light entertainment) for the other summit delegations and for the media. For example, in Lyon 1996 the First Ladies of the G8 heads of state and government followed an invitation of Madame Bernadette Chirac to visit a special event in the Lyon Opera (see photo below).

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Okinawa 2000 & Heiligendamm 2007
Prof. Peter Hajnal (with G8 Summit Heiligendamm 2007 Frisbee) and Xu Ting (with fan from Okinawa 2000)

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau

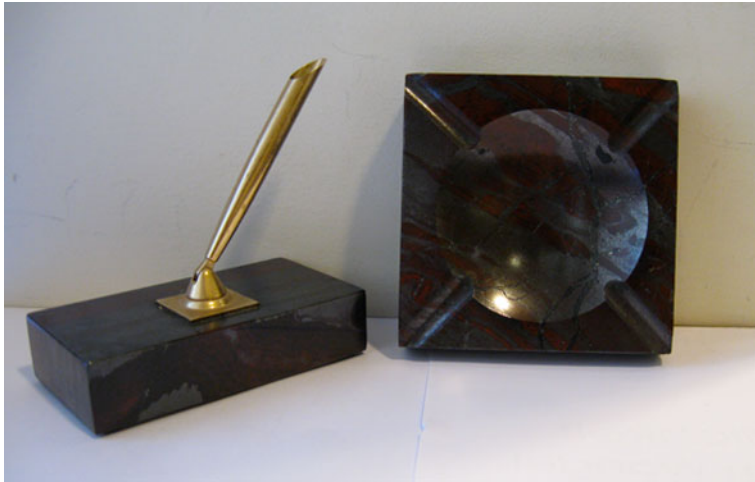


Lyon 1996
First Ladies and dancers in the rehearsal studio of the Lyon Opera on June 27th 1996

The entertainment for the First Ladies started with a reception by Madame Bernadette Chirac in the foyer, continued with a dance performance, and ended with a dinner hosted by the French First Lady.

source: G8 Research Group
photo: G8 Research Group

II Collection of G8 Artifacts



Ottawa 1981

pencil holder and ashtray with engraving (gift from host country Canada to the heads of G7 delegations)

Engraving on bottom of pencil holder: "The Ottawa Summit 1982 IRON ORE, Sherman Mine, Temagami, Ontario (...)"

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



London 1984

medal

source: Peter Hajnal's collection
photo: Graham Library



Toronto 1988

sling bag with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Houston 1990

ticket for 1990 Economic Summit Rodeo, pin, map, and envelope with G7 logo. The stamp bears a postmark with the summit logo.

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Munich 1992

sling bag with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Tokyo 1993

sling bag with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Naples 1994
pin, stamps and postmark
with G7 summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Halifax 1995
kitbag with Halifax 1995
summit logo patch

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Halifax 1995 & Sea Island 2004
cup with Halifax 1995 summit logo; sweets with Sea Island 2004 sticker

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Lyon 1996
stamp and postmark with G7 summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Denver 1997
environmentally friendly
water bottle

Houston 1990
drinking cup with Texas flag

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Birmingham 1998
pin with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Paris 1989 & Houston 1990 & London 1991
T-shirts with summit logos

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Cologne 1999
brief information about the Cologne Cathedral including souvenir (golden pin)

“Cologne Cathedral wherever you go.

It is the Gothic pinnacle, part of UNESCO’s World Cultural Heritage and Cologne’s world-famous landmark. Show that you were here – and good luck on all your travels.”

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Okinawa 2000
sling bag and international telephone card with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Genoa 2001
sling bag with G8 summit
logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Sea Island 2004
Coca-Cola bottle with 2004
G8 sea Island Summit print

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Gleneagles 2005

Jute bag with G8 Gleneagles 2005 summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Gleneagles 2005

contents of jute bag including fair-trade chocolate, energy bar, Scottish products like Walkers biscuits, Black Label Whiskey, brochure "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle at the G8 Summit Gleneagles 2005", and information CD "Commission for Africa. Resources CD"

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



St. Petersburg 2006

sling bag with G8 Summit logo, containing rain jacket and T-Shirt, USB stick, memo book, writing pad and ballpoint pen with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



St. Petersburg 2006
bag, black and silver ball-
point pen with G8 Summit
logo, medal with engraving

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



St. Petersburg 2006
box of three different
refreshments with G8 print

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Heiligendamm 2007
kitbag with G8 Summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Heiligendamm 2007
frisbee with G8 Summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Hokkaido 2008

press kit including pen, chopsticks, flashlight, adhesive tape, small and large writing pad, eraser, reversible wrapping cloth with introductory DVD, and rechargeable batteries, some with summit logo

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau



Several Summits

Munich 1993 pin, Naples 1994 access card, Lyon 1996 CD, Birmingham CD, Okinawa 2000 international telephone card

source: G8 Research Group
photo: Jennifer Gronau