

German Spa Town to Reclaim Its Positive Importance



On Germany's Baltic coast there is the famous spa town of Heiligendamm, steeped in history and boasting a 32.000ft² spa. Having been founded in 1793, the seaside resort enjoyed its heyday over a century later under East-German communist rule. The long sandy beaches and white winter forests have always made it one of the Baltic coast's most popular destinations. It has seen the best and worst of German history, tending to be at the forefront of social and political disputes. Heiligendamm has moved from being a town exclusively for Europe's elite classes to being a sanatorium for socialist workers during World War II. It was a scene of post-reunification violence against foreigners as neo-nazi gangs attacked Vietnamese settlers in nearby towns. However, this June saw Heiligendamm return to its days of positive importance as 8 global leaders met at the G8 summit to discuss globalisation.

Such positive publicity should help to put the town back on the map as an elite place to visit. Many tourists from Hamburg and Berlin see it this way as it is, some attracted by the elite and historic horse race track at Ostsee-Renbahn nearby. The 3-day meeting was not only attended by the global leaders, yet also by thousands of delegates and journalists. Although some of the publicity surrounding the event was negative, it has generally viewed as a success. Some were worried about the huge security operation necessary to monitor such a high profile event. A 2.5 metre steel fence topped with razor wire was erected on a 14km. ring around the area. It was also the German police's biggest post-war operation.

Despite such a daunting operation, the event is expected to have more of a positive effect on the reputation of Heiligendamm. It has opened another chapter in the history of a town already linked with a glorious and simultaneously miserable past.

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