

German media, politicians praise Obama for military-police lockdown of Boston

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Commentary in the German media and by leading political figures on the events in Boston throw a spotlight on the undemocratic character of the ruling elite in Germany.

There has been virtually no critical coverage in the German media of the massive deployment of military, police and intelligence forces, which placed an entire city under a state of emergency and its people in a state of terror and fear. Barely a single bourgeois journalist has questioned the appropriateness of the police methods used or criticized the crass violations of basic democratic principles which took place. On the contrary, most of the comments in the liberal mainstream media gushed praise for US President Barack Obama.

There is no precedent in American history for what took place in Boston in the wake of the horrific April 15 bombings that claimed the lives of three people and injured more than 170. The Obama administration mobilized thousands of security forces to establish a state of siege in the Boston area with its more than one million inhabitants.

Pictures from the scene resembled a city under occupation or in civil war. Thousands of heavily armed police and National Guard units patrolled the streets. They were accompanied by armoured vehicles equipped with machine guns while military helicopters circled over the city. Virtual martial law reigned throughout the city. Residents were ordered to stay in their homes, while heavily armed special forces scoured houses to find the 19-year-old youth suspected of being responsible for the bombing.

On behalf of the liberal establishment, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commented in its Monday edition: “What began on Monday with a terror attack ended on Friday night with a triumph for the police: One bomber

was dead and the other seriously injured and arrested. Boston, its proud citizens, celebrating their victory over fear. And America has once again won out against terror.”

The comment ended with the statement: “Barack Obama has now again said that America is the greatest nation in the world. But he did not mean this as a hollow phrase. The President meant it as a patriotic mission to constantly improve the country—and as a call to track down everywhere the causes of the hundred hours of terror. Abroad and at home. And on time.”

The glorification of Obama and the events in Boston by the SZ make clear that the German media is just as prepared to function as an extended arm of the political establishment as the US media. The latter played a decisive role in the past few days in the efforts by the US ruling class to exploit the Boston bomb attacks to promote the establishment of a military dictatorship in the United States. The American media fomented fear and hysteria, spread ungrounded rumors and justified the police state measures of the Obama administration.

The fact that the German media has remained almost unanimously silent on the significance of the massive police operation in Boston while praising the president responsible, indicates that the ruling elite in Germany is preparing to employ similar methods.

Karsten Voigt, a leading member of the Social Democratic Party and its coordinator for German-American relations, spoke to the German radio station *Deutschlandfunk* on the Boston events. When asked how the city’s population was coping with such a “gigantic-scale police action,” he replied: “I think in this case very well, because it was successful. There was one dead, the other caught alive and now the background can be checked out and recreated. And I think, overall, although this reaction seems so out of

proportion, its success enables the American president to show he was a successful president in this situation, which he brought to a successful conclusion in a quiet and determined manner.”

It is no coincidence that this repulsive glorification of Obama’s military action comes from the camp of the SPD. On the pretext of the struggle against alleged terrorism the former SPD-Green coalition government led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder undertook massive attacks on democratic rights. Under the auspices of Federal Interior Minister Otto Schily (SPD), several packages of so-called anti-terrorism legislation were enacted, and the powers of the police, security forces and intelligence agencies enhanced to an extent unknown since the days of the Nazi dictatorship.

The current conservative coalition government led by Angela Merkel has used the events in Boston to further advance the beefing up of the German state. Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (Christian Democratic Union), is seeking to expand police surveillance of the population. “The events in Boston once again show how important the surveillance of public spaces via video cameras is for the reconnaissance of serious crimes,” he said.

Last year the Federal Constitutional Court gave a judgement permitting the German army to intervene inside the country’s borders. This ruling not only allows the Bundeswehr to reinforce police operations, but also provides for the use of military ordnance such as combat aircraft and tanks. It has created the conditions to “legally” carry out actions in a German city similar to those carried out in Boston.

The Karlsruhe ruling allows the Bundeswehr to intervene when “damage of catastrophic dimensions” is imminent. The criterion is formulated in a deliberately vague manner to justify military interventions such as the one in Boston, which are completely disproportionate to the actual threat.

The preparation and conduct of military operations inside Germany itself is a direct response by the ruling class to growing social antagonisms and the risk of broad social and political protests. In recent years, the German bourgeoisie has organized a massive social redistribution from the bottom to the top inside Germany and throughout Europe, thereby establishing conditions that are incompatible with democratic rights.

The reaction of the German media to the events in

Boston demonstrate that, in common with the US media, they too would justify military action as “necessary” and “legitimate”.

One of the most cynical justifications for the military occupation of Boston was published by the co-editor of the weekly *Die Zeit*, Joseph Joffe. His commentary began with the heading “Never give way: America does not bow to terrorism. The nation defends the values of solidarity and free society.”

Joffe goes on to declare that every president “at some time experienced his moment of destiny which he could not evade”. He then ranks Obama’s response to the events in Boston alongside a series of historical turning points in recent American history. He writes: “For Roosevelt it was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, for Truman, the North Korean invasion of the south in 1950, for Kennedy the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, for Carter, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, for Reagan the Soviet challenge of setting up medium-range missiles, for Bush senior and son, the wars against Iraq.”

Joffe goes on to argue that certain historical situations require drastic measures. He continues: “It is not pre-ordained that Obama must be a gentler, peace-mongering president. If it were Islamic terrorists [behind the Boston attacks] he will resort to violence, and shake off peace-mongering in favor of a war president. This pattern runs throughout American history. And the Republicans, irrespective of their power struggles, will gather around him—in the short term anyway.”

Joffe’s argument should be taken as a warning. In a situation in which social divisions are reaching the breaking point, journalists like Joffe are willing to junk all democratic principles in order to defend the capitalist system.



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