

Massive police operation in Munich—an attack on democracy

Socialist Equality Party (Germany)
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The German authorities have used the pretext of the shooting spree in Munich, by an 18-year-old young man, to conduct a massive emergency and civil war exercise, locking down a city with a population of 1.5 million for hours, and unleashing fear and panic. July 22 marks a turning point in the decline of democracy in Germany.

To date, there has not been a terrorist attack in Germany that compares with that of 9/11, or the attacks in Paris and Nice. The American and French governments used those attacks to build up a powerful surveillance and police apparatus, to declare a permanent state of emergency and to create a climate of fear, in which the security forces would be able to act at will.

These measures did not make the situation any safer. On the contrary. Above all, the wars conducted by the US, under the pretext of the “war on terror,” and in which Germany has increasingly become involved, have transformed countries like Iraq, Libya and Syria into breeding grounds for terrorist networks where there had previously been none. Moreover, there are numerous links between Western secret service agencies and Islamic terrorists, which are supported and financed by the allies of Western powers like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey.

The real target of the increase in state powers in the name of the “fight against terrorism” is the working class and all social and political opposition. Under conditions where social contradictions are intensifying, the European Union is breaking apart and the next financial crisis looms, the ruling class is preparing for fierce class battles. Growing militarism abroad is accompanied by the militarisation of domestic politics.

From the perspective of the ruling elite, in this regard, Germany has a lot of ground to make up. Only in this context can one understand the events in Munich and the reactions to them. The more details that come to light, the less they coincide with the official narrative that this involved a defensive action against an acute risk situation.

The isolated act of a mass killer is being used for the same ends as the terrorist attacks in France and the US. The social causes driving a clearly psychologically disturbed young man to undertake such violent acts are being suppressed, and instead, the powers of the state are being strengthened, which will inevitably provoke further outbreaks of violence.

The deployment of police and special forces, with which the authorities reacted to the killing spree of 18-year-old student David Sonobly at the Olympia shopping center in the north of Munich, is

unprecedented in recent German history.

Every available police officer in Munich was mobilised, along with assistance from other federal states, anti-terrorist units of the Federal Police and Austria—in total, some 2,300 officers. Helicopters flew over the entire city; armed police and armoured cars dominated the streets.

Using the mobile phone emergency broadcast system, “Katwarn” (Catastrophe Warning), the city government urged citizens to remain in their homes, and stopped all traffic on the metro, trams and buses. The police called upon motorists to leave the motorway towards Munich, to allow emergency vehicles free passage. An emergency alert was declared in several hospitals. Eighteen rescue helicopters from Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Austria were standing ready. A psychological support centre for 350 people was established in Olympic Park.

The security forces referred to a “terrorist situation” and justified the massive operation by claiming that several other perpetrators may have been involved in the attack and were now at large in the city—something that proved to be false. They justified this position on the basis of vague eyewitness statements claiming to have seen a vehicle speeding away.

It is now clear that the security forces knew far more about the background to the violent attack than they were publicly admitting. For example, the perpetrator’s father had recognised his son in a video circulating on the Internet shortly after the attack and contacted the police. A friend also recognised him because of his halting gait and also informed the police.

Two and a half hours after the rampage, David Sonobly shot himself near the crime scene in front of the police. The police only released this information, which could have calmed the situation down, the following day.

“Towards 8.30 p.m.,” according to a police statement on Saturday, “a Munich police patrol north of the Olympia shopping centre made contact with the alleged perpetrator. In response to being addressed by the police officers, he suddenly drew his gun, held it to his head and shot himself.”

Instead of scaling back the massive operation, the police expanded it following the suicide of the perpetrator. Fifteen minutes later, they spoke, for the first time, of a “terrorist situation.” This was followed by false reports of further attacks and outbreaks of panic in several locations. These were mainly a result of the police operation itself. For example, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported, “The fact that many police officers were wearing

civilian clothes but were visibly carrying weapons—leading to many passersby taking them for terrorists—contributed to the feelings of insecurity in Munich.”

Vague rumours that other perpetrators were possibly on the loose could not justify such a massive deployment of the police and security forces. There have been terrorist attacks in Munich in the past, with a high number of casualties—in 1970 against an old peoples’ home of the Israelite religious community, in 1972 against the Israeli Olympic team, and in 1980 against the Oktoberfest—but the response of the security forces had never been so extensive.

The only conclusion to be drawn is that the Munich attack served as a pretext to implement emergency plans that had long been planned, and to test out the state of emergency.

To this end, not only the security forces were mobilised but also the media. The two state-run broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, which, even in the case of dramatic events usually limit themselves to a 15-minute “breaking news spot,” switched over to nonstop coverage. So-called terrorism experts commented on the events, and the presenters turned every rumour into fact. Although the police reported that “possibly” up to three perpetrators were on the loose, news anchor Thomas Roth spoke until late into the night about confirmed reports of “at least three perpetrators” in the city.

International politicians, too, led by President Obama, spoke out early, in order to express their solidarity against the supposed terrorist attack.

The response to the shooting spree in Munich is strongly reminiscent of the actions of US authorities following the attack on the Boston Marathon three years ago. At that time, the authorities placed the entire city under siege. The *World Socialist Web Site* commented:

“The events in Boston have laid bare the modus operandi for the establishment of dictatorial forms of rule in the US. One or another violent act carried out by disoriented or disaffected individuals, perhaps with the help of elements within the state, is declared a terrorist event. A state of siege is imposed suspending democratic rights and establishing military-police control.

“So deeply implicated are all of the organs of the state in these plans that little in the outer trappings of political life would have to be changed. It would not be necessary to overthrow the president or shut down Congress. These institutions would readily play their assigned role, and the imposition of a military dictatorship would be sanctioned by the US Supreme Court.

“The media would simply continue to do what it normally does—functioning as a de facto arm of the state and providing the necessary pretexts, while whipping up the requisite fear and panic within the public.”

Since the Munich events, leading politicians have sought to outdo each other with demands for a further strengthening of the state apparatus. At the forefront has been the call for the internal use of the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces), which the constitution currently prohibits because of the crimes of the Nazis. The 1968 emergency laws then permitted it only “in the case of a domestic state of emergency,” that is, in a civil war situation.

Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen said on Sunday, “As long as the extent of the attack on Friday was not clear,” she had

“a military police unit of the Bundeswehr in Munich placed on standby.” The Baden-Württemberg state interior minister, Thomas Strobl (Christian Democratic Union, CDU), demanded the domestic deployment of the Bundeswehr in the case of “a large-scale, serious terrorist situation,” and his Bavarian counterpart, Joachim Herrmann (Christian Social Union, CSU) added that “historical concerns” were out of date.

The Left Party is also supporting the call for the stepping up of state powers. After a further attack took place on Sunday in Ansbach—where a suicide bomber detonated a bomb, injuring several people—parliamentary faction leader Sahra Wagenknecht raised that the responsibility lay with Chancellor Merkel’s refugee policy.

“The events of the last days show that the admission and integration of large numbers of refugees and immigrants are associated with considerable problems and are more difficult than Merkel’s frivolous, ‘we’ll manage it,’ as she would have had us believe last autumn,” Wagenknecht declared. The federal government was “now especially responsible for preserving the trust of the people in the ability of the state and its security agencies to act.”

The vehemence and pace with which the powers of the state apparatus are being expanded, with the support of every party, does not bode well. Seven decades after the end of the Nazi dictatorship, those in ruling circles are abandoning the democratic principles that they once reluctantly professed—not least, in order to save their own skins.

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG, Socialist Equality Party) energetically opposes the construction of a police state. It is inextricably linked with the return of militarism, which the German government is vigorously promoting ever since it proclaimed “the end of military restraint” two years ago. The revival of militarism is its response to explosive social tensions, the deepening economic crisis and growing international conflicts.

The PSG is standing in the elections for the Berlin state parliament in September to provide a political perspective to the opposition to war, dictatorship and social breakdown. Only an international, socialist movement against capitalism can prevent the impending relapse into war, dictatorship and barbarism. We call on all those who want to fight for this perspective to support the PSG election campaign.



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