

The Berlin terror attack: Is a section of the state trying to destabilize the German government?

Johannes Stern
29 December 2016

A possible contact of Anis Amri, the presumed perpetrator of last week's Christmas market attack, was arrested in Berlin on Wednesday. The suspect is a 40-year-old Tunisian who lives in Berlin. The information was released by *Der Spiegel* based on sources within the security services.

The circumstances of the arrest are as unclear as the circumstances of the attack that took place on 19 December. All of the information provided by the authorities and reported in the media is highly contradictory and strengthens the suspicion that sections of the state apparatus were informed about the attack and either allowed it to happen or even provided indirect support.

According to *Der Spiegel*, investigators tracked down the Tunisian now in custody via the evaluation of electronic communication data attributed to Amri. Among other things, investigators found a mobile telephone in the cab of the vehicle that crashed into the Christmas market. According to the Federal Prosecutor's office, the number of the arrested man was included on the phone.

The phone was allegedly first found on Tuesday, together with Amri's wallet, following a renewed investigation of the truck, which had been moved to the Julius Leber Barracks in Berlin. According to the Berlin police, the late date for the discovery was due to the "meticulous work at the crime scene". Officers had worked according to the principle of "thoroughness before speed".

Who are the Berlin police seeking to fool? From the standpoint of the investigation it is incomprehensible that "speed" should not be a top priority in the hunt for someone alleged to be armed and responsible for a terror attack. Moreover, it is well known that the security services had Amri under observation from the outset. A week ago *Zeit Online* stated: "While the public was still asking up until Tuesday afternoon if a young Pakistani was the culprit, investigators long since possessed another trace leading to A."

Now it is reported that prior to being allegedly shot in Milan by an Italian policeman last Friday night, Amri had fled through several European countries. "It is supposed that Amri took a train to Italy from Lyon in France. Before that he was

also in the Netherlands," investigators from the Federal Criminal Police Office told *Der Spiegel*.

How probable is it that Amri could travel through a series of European countries without the knowledge of the security forces?

From the details that have emerged it is clear that Amri carried out the attack literally under the noses of the authorities. In the spring of 2016, the 24-year-old Tunisian was even driven to Berlin by an informant of the domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV). In Berlin he was subject to intense supervision and had close ties with undercover agents of the BfV, with whom he discussed the procurement of heavy weapons.

In light of German history and the manner in which the attack is being used it would be politically naive to rule out the involvement of sections of the state.

In a previous article we have pointed out that state provocations have a long tradition for political purposes, especially in Germany. Berlin is the city of the Reichstag Fire, which the Nazis organized in 1933 in order to establish their dictatorship and crush any opposition. The secret services of the Federal Republic were built up by leading Nazis and were repeatedly involved in right-wing conspiracies in the postwar period, including the resignation of Social Democratic chancellor Willy Brandt in 1974. The secret services were also involved in the 1980 attack on the Oktoberfest, the largest terror attack in postwar Germany.

In recent years, the security services established close links with far right and Islamic extremist circles to advance their deeply reactionary domestic and foreign policy goals. In the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s, the far right terrorist group NSU committed at least ten murders under the noses of the domestic secret services.

The indirect and covert support of Islamic militias by the German government during the regime-change war in Syria has strengthened links between the German secret services and these forces, who have been able to travel in the hundreds from Europe to the Middle East.

There are obvious parallels between the Berlin attack, the

NSU killings and the attack on the Oktoberfest. In all three cases the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators were operating in an environment full of state agents and died.

There is as yet no concrete proof that elements of the security apparatus allowed Amri to carry out or perhaps directly organized the attack in order to destabilize the Merkel government and shift German politics far to the right. However, it is clear that sections of the security apparatus have been agitating for the replacement of Merkel for some time.

Already in October 2015 the newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* published an article titled “Security officers yearn for Merkel’s departure”. The article reported “massive resistance” to Merkel’s refugee policy, which secret service circles and security authorities regarded as “unlawful”. “Concerns are growing every day in the ranks of the constitutional protection service, the Federal Criminal Police Office, foreign intelligence (Bundesnachrichtendienst, BND) and the Federal Police regarding the loss of control and the haphazard mass migration,” the *Welt* reported.

The aggressive witch-hunt of refugees and the massive rearmament of the state apparatus in the last few days indicate that growing sections of the ruling class are intent on installing an even more right-wing government, despite Merkel’s turnaround on refugee policy. Right-wing politicians, journalists, and professors talk and write as if the Nazi dictatorship and the Holocaust had never taken place in Germany.

A commentary in the *Berliner Morgenpost* accused the “political leadership of the country” of doing nothing but instead celebrating Christmas. Based on her guidelines Merkel “could have come down hard” and showed “strength of leadership.” What was necessary now were “maximum legal means” and new laws such as “foot shackles for dangerous persons.” The author then adds, provocatively: “Attention, a daring thesis: It doesn’t mean the Fourth Reich is back, if one has round-the-clock surveillance of 550 highly dangerous persons or at least those who have no right of residence.”

The notorious right-wing *Der Spiegel* commentator Jan Fleischhauer rages in his latest column for *Spiegel Online*: “I would not mind, for example, if people who throw away their identification papers so that they cannot be deported are detained with bread and water until they remember where they come from. I would also not be adverse to taking into custody someone who spends the time to his deportation with drug trafficking and brawling.” He wanted the state “quite emotionless...to respond with a bit more hardness.”

The Humboldt professor, Jörg Baberowski, who functions increasingly as a megaphone for the extreme right, took up a similar line just a few days after the attack. “Horst Seehofer is, of course, right when he says that we now have to rethink immigration policy [...] in the face of these terrible incidents,” he explained on German broadcaster ZDF. One had to consider to “introduce video surveillance in public places, allow

policemen to patrol busy places” and “punish more severely and kick out of the country dangerous persons and perpetrators of violent crime.”

Viewpoints such as those of Baberowski and Fleischhauer are hardly distinguishable from those of the AfD and other far right-wing groups, which have long demanded the ousting of Merkel.

The current title of the right-wing extremist *Compact* magazine bears the provocative title: “Merkel’s last fight: last days in the chancellor’s bunker”. *Compact* has close links to the AfD and Pegida, but also to parts of the security apparatus and the military. In the autumn of 2015 the magazine published three open letters from General Major Gerd Schultze-Rhonhof, who called on Merkel “to resign from office” and “hand over government business until the next election to the chairman of the third ruling party Mr. Seehofer.”

Although Merkel made a sharp turn to the right at the last Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party congress, there is a growing circle which favours a coup d’état in her party. In an article titled “CDU Guerrillas vs. Merkel,” the conservative *Die Welt* reports of the growing “aversion to party leader Angela Merkel and her prospective top candidature for the Bundestag election in 2017.” “After the controversial admission of several hundred thousand refugees nationwide” there are “Christian Democratic circles” within the CDU, which regard Merkel’s supporters as “political opponents” and seek to “establish a conservative turn in their party.”

Political responsibility for the dangerous lurch to the right in Germany rests with the SPD, Left Party and Greens. Their answer to the extreme right is to adopt their policies and agitate for more police and faster deportations. A genuine fight against the right wing in Germany—against militarism, dictatorship and social counterrevolution—requires the development of the Socialist Equality Party, an independent working-class movement based on the principles of international socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact