Berlin terror attack suspect was well known to German intelligence agencies

Johannes Stern
30 December 2016

One and a half weeks after the devastating attack on a Christmas market in Berlin, more information has emerged regarding the close links between German security authorities and the alleged perpetrator. Press reports allege that Anis Amri, who was shot while on the run in Italy, carried out the attack literally under the noses of the secret services. He was intensively monitored and officially classified as unusually dangerous just a few days before he drove a truck into a market on December 19.

According to the latest report by Hans Leyendecker and Georg Mascolo in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, on 14 December, five days before the attack, security authorities issued "the latest version of a personal profile containing everything they knew about Amri." The document describes "a man whose résumé is very similar to that of former assassins in the service of the terrorist group Islamic State," according to the two investigatory journalists, who have close links to sources in secret service circles.

According to Leyendecker and Mascolo, the secret services knew virtually all there was to know. The profile describes "the career of a petty criminal who was already in prison in Italy as a youth, and committed a theft in a German asylum shelter. It contains language skills: German, Arabic, Italian, Spanish and French…. It contains the eight identities that Amri used. There are constantly changing domiciles and places of residence. There are several pictures of him."

The journalists note that Amri may have shared many of these factors with other potential offenders under the surveillance of the intelligence services, but in his case, "the evidence is even more concrete." For instance, the state police agency in Duisburg described Amri as "a Salafist and radical fundamentalist." The police department in Dortmund assessed him to be a sympathizer of the Islamic State.

The authorities were also aware that "Amri has searched the Internet for instructions on the construction of pipe bombs [and] had shown interest in the chemical processes that can be used to produce explosives." There was allegedly at least one Chat in February this year in which Amri "presumably offered himself as a suicide bomber…most likely in conversation with an Islamic State member."

Amri was not only on the radar of the local security authorities in Berlin and North Rhine-Westphalia. He was also repeatedly "on the watch list of the Joint federal and state Counter-Terrorism Center (GTAZ) in Berlin." Leyendecker and Mascolo report that the "profile of 14 December" was drawn up by the GTAZ. The report notes that Amri showed "experience with police" and a level of "conspiratorial behavior, which is unusual even among Islamists."

Now the security authorities have begun a debate about "what went wrong" in the run-up to the attack. In essence, there are two interpretations. According to one reading, the attack in Berlin "simply could not have been prevented," since there are "too many radical Islamists in Germany." According to the second reading, as Leyendecker and Mascolo put it, "there was a clear mishap in the Amri case. A perpetrator, who had been talking about attacks for ten months, should not have gone dark."

Both "readings," repeated endlessly by political circles and the media, are aimed at obscuring the obvious and decisive question: how could someone "go dark" under the noses of the authorities, which were monitoring him so closely, and who was active in a milieu teeming with undercover agents with whom Amri maintained direct contact?

All of the facts known about Amri and the manner in

© World Socialist Web Site

which the attack is being politically exploited indicate that there are forces in sections of the security apparatus that were more closely informed of the attack plans, allowed the attack to go ahead or even provided indirect support for it in order to destabilize the Merkel government and effect a political lurch to the right in Germany.

Since the attack, right-wingers in the media and political establishment have been drumming ceaselessly for an expansion of police-state measures and have been denouncing the refugee policy of Angela Merkel. Despite the fact that the chancellor adopted right-wing anti-refugee measures at the last CDU party congress, she is under relentless attack, especially from one of her coalition partners, the Christian Social Union.

A few days before the traditional CSU meeting at the beginning of January, the Bavarian Minister of Finance, Markus Söder, declared the "uncontrolled opening of the borders" to be a serious mistake. Now "Germans [...] anticipate that their state is defenseless. Terrorists and criminals must know that they cannot expect the good life with us, they must be made aware that it does not pay to attack Germany."

Söder demanded mass deportations next year. "We will have several hundred thousand people with a rejected asylum application in 2017 - so we need a deportation plan for the coming year to ensure that a large percentage of them can be returned," he said. "This must be done quickly and consistently."

A large share of political responsibility for the aggressive stance of the right wing rests with the SPD, the Left Party and the Greens. Their response to the rise of the far-right AfD and the right-wing elements in the CDU and CSU is to adopt the right-wing parties' policies and wage their own campaign for police-state measures and tougher action against refugees.

On Tuesday, the chairman of the SPD in Schleswig-Holstein, Ralf Stegner, who is also deputy chairman of the German Bundestag, called for so-called "potential offenders" to be permanently detained in deportation prisons. "If their applications for asylum have already been rejected, they must be imprisoned." In an interview with *Die Welt*, he attacked CDU Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière from the right, declaring that "the SPD provides many more police in federal and state governments and better equipment. Precisely in these areas the Interior Minister has put on the brakes."

The same tone is to be heard from the Left Party and Greens. Green Party deputy faction leader Konstantin von Notz declared, "The CSU is trying once again to pull the wool over our eyes: for more than ten years it has been part of the federal government, but acts as if it has been in the opposition for years and therefore not responsible for internal security." What is necessary is "more video surveillance for sensitive points."

The chairman of the Left Party, Dietmar Bartsch, is campaigning for a strengthening of the security forces and police. He told the newspaper *Deutschlandfunk*, "We need police, of course," adding, "this is not a new demand by the left for more policemen and good equipment, we have been demanding this for many years."

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site