Attack on German football club allegedly motivated by greed

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At the end of last week, German police arrested a man accused of the recent bombing attack on the coach of the Borussia Dortmund (BVB) football team.

Three bombs hidden behind a hedge exploded as the bus set off from the team hotel on April 11 on the way to a Champions League game. One player, the defender Marc Batra, suffered severe injuries to his wrist. Other BVB players on the bus avoided death or serious injury only because the placement of one of the bombs lessened its impact. Against the plans of the perpetrator, the metal parts contained in the bomb flew over the top of the bus.

The federal prosecutor has accused 28-year-old Sergei W. of attempted murder, responsibility for explosions and serious bodily harm. He intended to injure as many players as possible.

Investigators have said that his motive was greed. W. had bet on the stock market on a drastic fall in the value of Borussia-Dortmund shares following the attack. The sudden drop in share value would have guaranteed him a massive profit win.

The young man is alleged to have taken out a consumer credit of more than 40,000 to buy options on BVB shares on the day of the attack—a total of three different derivatives. The options permit investors to bet on a rise or fall in the prices of shares or other securities and earn high profits as a result.

Spiegel Online reported that W. stood to gain up to 200,000 if the BVB share were to sink from its value of 6 to under 1.

The alleged perpetrator built the three bombs professionally but was utterly amateurish in the execution of his crime. He placed his stock market bets at the same Dortmund hotel, L'Arrivée, where the team was due to stay. W. had moved into a room in the hotel two days earlier.

When booking a room in March, W. is alleged to have asked for a view to the site of the attack. He may also have detonated the three explosions by remote control from inside the hotel.

The letters found at the scene of the crime purporting to stem from an Islamist source were so unusual that doubts about their authenticity arose very quickly.

According to *Der Spiegel*, information from a source in the financial sector had informed the police two days after the attack about the suspicious BVB share trades. The police then spied on their suspect for a week before arresting him on his way to work.

According to the Federal Prosecutor's Office, the suspect has both German and Russian citizenship. W., a qualified electrician from Freudenstadt in the Black Forest, worked most recently in a Tübingen heating plant; it remains unclear where he learned to assemble explosive devices.

W. came with his family to Germany from Chelyabinsk in 2003. Neighbours reported that the young man and his parents were "quiet people". His grandparents lived in the house next door. One acquaintance described W. as withdrawn. He occasionally attended service in a local church about two years ago.

In the meantime, W. had moved to a room in nearby Rottenburg to be closer to his workplace, a heating plant that supplies the university clinic of Tübingen. One neighbour reported that W. never had visitors.

The personal motives that may have led a quiet and discreet young man to carry out such an act will be dealt with in subsequent court proceedings. Contrary to some reports, W. has apparently not yet made a confession.

The cold-blooded attack and his motive of greed met with widespread condemnation—with politicians immediately seeking to take advantage of the situation. "If the accused had tried to kill people merely for money, that would be simply horrible," was the comment of German Justice Minister Heiko Maas (SPD).

But like every major crime there is a social dimension alongside the personal one. The perverse idea of making money via a terror attack on soccer players could only come about given certain social conditions. The commercialisation of football in particular, and the worshiping of the stock market in general, laid the foundations.

For some time, football has not just been about sport, but

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also about money. The top teams are global companies with revenues and stock holdings in the billions. Football has become a big business in its own right, especially in recent years.

The first club to register on the stock market was Tottenham Hotspurs in England in 1982. There are now 31 registered clubs. For the past two decades, the super-rich, including European oligarchs and members of the ruling families of Arabian states, have regarded football clubs as profitable investment opportunities and have invested billions.

For example, Russian oil billionaire Roman Abramovich took over FC Chelsea in 2003. Paris St. Germain belonged to the US financial investor Colony Capital (today Colony Northstar) from 2006 until being taken over by the investment group Qatar Sports Investment (QSI) in 2012. Another example is AC Milan, which was owned by the billionaire and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi until 2016.

Football is currently attracting new investors and raking in billions in the form of TV contracts for individual national football associations. The international capitalist competition around the game has become quite bloated. The National League, which attracts the greatest interest, wins the most affluent sponsors and investors, and highest TV contract fees.

Top-flight players lead a life reminiscent of the gladiators in ancient Rome. They are at the same time top earners, celebrities, modern slaves and objects of speculation. Success and utter failure are often only a hair's breadth apart. They must suffer the consequences of a heavy playing schedule aimed at increasing TV ratings, including games at noon for the benefit of Chinese TV stations, and much more. Some players crack under the pressure.

Manchester United, a listed stock company, is said to have 660 million fans worldwide. It has just opened a new sales outlet in Asia, and the club's sale of jerseys and memorabilia is a major business. The club made a profit of £38.6 million last year via its contract with sports goods manufacturer Nike, which markets Manchester United worldwide.

As is the case with every capitalist competition, inequality grows. While the top two to four clubs in each league attract billions, clubs lower down the league—and especially those in the second or third divisions—face regular financial problems.

In the match between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona last Sunday in Spain, two teams with players worth 764.8 million (Real) and 756.5 million (Barcelona) faced off against one other. The market value of the Barcelona player Lionel Messi is currently listed at 120 million, with the Real Madrid player Christiano Ronaldo valued at 100 million.

The four current Champions League semi-finalists have total debts of €521 million. Real Madrid is the only of these four teams to be debt-free—after the club reported €602 million in debts following the 2013/2014 season.

According to the "Bundesliga Report 2016", the 18 clubs of the Bundesliga had a turnover of around 2.6 billion in the 2014/2015 season. The largest revenue streams were television and media marketing (28 percent), advertising (26 percent) and gambling (20 percent).

Like all sectors of society, football is mercilessly subordinated to profit in the international markets, and playing with human lives is not new. Workers die on a daily basis in order that a few can make money on the international exchanges. This is described as investment, not greed, and the result is not murder, but rather healthy profit.

Currency speculators have forced entire countries to their knees, and the population is made to bleed for "rescue packages" and privatisations imposed by the IMF. The consequences of food speculation have been catastrophic.

In 2007 and 2008, financial speculators pushed up grain prices in Africa, and maize and wheat prices rose by as much as 300 percent. The rapidly rising food prices led to hunger protests in 61 countries. In 2009, the number of starving people rose to the record mark of 1 billion people for the first time. Every year, more than 10 million children under the age of five die from hunger. In the course of reading this article (two minutes), about 40 children have died from malnutrition.

The 2008 financial crisis, triggered by the bursting of a huge real estate speculative bubble, plunged entire countries into deep social crisis. In Greece, the social cuts imposed by the European Union and implemented by the pseudo-left Syriza government have brought unspeakable suffering to the population. Between 2007 and 2011, the suicide rate rose by 43 percent. The 477 suicides recorded in 2011 mark the highest level in 50 years.

The attack in Dortmund was brutal and inhumane, but in the final analysis it is the product of this brutal and inhumane social system.

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