

Blackout in Berlin: Pretext for erection of a police state

Carola Kleinert, Andy Niklaus, Peter Schwarz
16 January 2026

On January 3, at around 6 a.m., an arson attack on a cable bridge over the Teltow Canal in Berlin-Lichterfelde triggered the longest power outage in Germany's post-war history.

Due to the destruction of five 110 kV high-voltage and 10 10 kV medium-voltage cables, not only did the main supply fail, but also the grid redundancy capacity, which ensures that if one line fails, another takes over. A rapid restoration was therefore impossible. Grid operator Stromnetz Berlin could only restore supply gradually; all users were only back on the grid by noon January 7, while mobile phone networks recovered in stages.

Around 50,000 households, with approximately 100,000 people, as well as over 2,200 businesses in Nikolassee, Zehlendorf, Wannsee and Lichterfelde were affected. Lifts remained stuck, street lighting failed, cold chains, critical for maintaining perishable goods and some medicines were affected, mobile communications collapsed and S-Bahn trains, schools, daycare centres and grocery stores remained closed.

High-rise housing was hit particularly hard: in 22-storey buildings, people with impaired mobility were trapped in their rapidly cooling apartments due to the failure of the lifts, and from the seventh floor upwards the (cold) water supply failed because electric pumps came to a standstill.

The healthcare system faced an acute situation: hospitals had to switch to emergency power generators, which only allow for minimal operations. Surgeries, dialyses and complex treatments were cancelled, medical practices and pharmacies remained closed and vital medications spoiled without refrigeration. In care homes, ventilation and oxygen devices failed, staff worked under catastrophic conditions, and evacuations were improvised—a consequence of the attack on a central lifeline of modern major cities.

The authorities cared little about the emergency and reacted at a snail's pace. Only after 33 hours did the Berlin Senate (state executive), led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), declare a major incident and request support from the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) and the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW). Mayor Kai Wegener (CDU), who in response to media inquiries revealed that he had spent the entire day in his home office organising help, went to play tennis after the disaster broke out, as it was later revealed.

Immediate help came almost exclusively from the general population and volunteer organisations: neighbourhoods, cafés, restaurants and individuals, the fire brigade, the THW and various associations provided emergency shelters, showers, warm meals, chargers and camping stoves. Schools set up gymnasiums as emergency shelters, where very elderly people and those in need of

care were temporarily housed, under often unacceptable conditions.

Hotel stays remained unaffordable for the vast majority. Although over 150 hotels offered special rates, for large sections of the working population, who are on the brink of existence due to high rents, energy costs and falling real wages, such additional costs were simply unaffordable. Only after three days did the Senate announce it would cover costs in some hotels.

A pretext for political reaction

While those politically responsible largely ignored the plight of the population, within hours they began to politically exploit the attack on the power grid. The act of sabotage is being ruthlessly used to advance the expansion of a police state and the militarisation of society as a whole.

Although, to this day, virtually nothing is known about the perpetrators of the professionally executed act, it was immediately denounced by establishment politicians and the media as being carried out by “left-wing extremists” and all opposition from the left was defamed as “terrorist.”

Berlin's Mayor Kai Wegener (CDU) and his deputy Franziska Giffey (SPD) described the arson as an “attack on our free society.” Interior Senator (state minister) Iris Spranger (SPD), responsible for the suppression of numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations, ranted, “The inhumane attack on our power grid was not left-wing extremism. It was left-wing terrorism.”

Justice Senator Felor Badenberg (CDU) declared, “Regardless of which label the act is ultimately classified under: there are sufficient indications that politically motivated perpetrators from the left-wing extremist scene are involved.” The Greens also condemned the act of sabotage as “left-wing extremist.”

Both the Berlin Senate and the federal government announced tightened security laws. In Berlin, the tightened police law (ASOG), which came into force at the beginning of the year, is to be further expanded and cooperation between the police and intelligence services intensified.

Federal Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (Christian Social Union, CSU) announced a toughening of action against so-called left-wing extremists and climate activists. “We are striking back—and are not leaving the field to left-wing extremists and climate extremists,” he told the *Bild am Sonntag*. Security had top priority, which is why more personnel for the intelligence services, expanded digital

surveillance powers and stricter protection laws for critical infrastructure were required, he said.

What Dobrindt has in mind was demonstrated last weekend in Jerusalem. There, he agreed on “close and trusting collaboration in the security sector” with Israel’s head of government Benjamin Netanyahu. Dobrindt evidently wants to use the experience that the Israeli regime has acquired in the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Among other things, Germany and Israel will cooperate more closely on cybersecurity and “counter-terrorism.”

Who is behind the “Volcano Group”

The claim that the attack on the power supply of a major city has anything to do with left-wing politics is obviously absurd. The term “left,” insofar as it has any meaning at all, signifies a policy in the interest of workers and youth, of pensioners, the sick and others in need, and requires their democratic participation.

An anonymous attack on urban infrastructure, upon which the existence, health and even the lives of tens of thousands of uninvolved people depend, achieves the opposite. It provides the ruling class with a welcome pretext to strengthen the repressive state apparatus, restrict democratic rights and suppress political opposition.

The only evidence that this involved a “left-wing extremist” attack consists of two letters claiming responsibility from a “Volcano Group” (*Vulkangruppe*). According to these, the attack was directed against “fossil fuels,” “the rich,” the “imperial way of life” and the “over-exploitation of the earth.”

It is unclear who is behind the “Volcano Group” and whether an organisation of this name even exists. Since 2011, “Volcano Groups” have claimed responsibility for arson attacks in Berlin several times. Most attacks were directed against cable ducts on railway lines as well as power and data cables. The most spectacular was the blowing up of an electricity pylon, which shut down the Tesla factory in Grünheide in March 2024.

Although supposedly under surveillance for 15 years, the Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as the state Secret Service is called) claims not to know the authors of these attacks. It is not even sure whether it is the same group in each case. The latest edition of the Berlin State Secret Service report, published in February 2025, merely states:

In at least eight cases, the texts are so similar in structure, style and content that a (partially) identical circle of authors can be assumed. A strategy paper from 2015 also points to a fixed structure. References to a pamphlet known in the milieu suggest locating them ideologically in the anarchist spectrum.

That the attacks were carried out by different actors is also suggested by the letter from another “Volcano Group” published on Indymedia. The network explicitly distances itself from the Lichterfelde attack and accuses the authors of the letter and the media of “asserting a continuity that does not exist.”

It is therefore entirely possible that the Lichterfelde attack took

place under a false flag, that it is a right-wing provocation, and that the letter claiming responsibility was intended to lay down a false trail. If one asks the question “Cui bono?”—who benefits from the arson attack?—the answer is clear: the right wing and the most authoritarian representatives of the state apparatus.

It would be naive to rule out the possibility of a provocation. There are numerous precedents in Europe and Germany in which intelligence services and right-wing extremists have collaborated to stoke tensions and create a right-wing political climate.

Most well-known are the “Years of Lead” in Italy, which lasted from about 1968 to 1982. At that time, fierce labour disputes shook the country and large sections of the youth, working class and middle class oriented themselves to the left. Right-wing extremist groups, in cooperation with state intelligence services, carried out bomb attacks, kidnappings and murders that claimed dozens of lives. At the centre of the conspiracy stood the secret Freemason lodge “Propaganda Due” (P2) led by Licio Gelli, whose connections reached into the highest intelligence circles. The deeds were blamed on the left, and the goal of this “strategy of tension” was to create conditions for the establishment of an authoritarian dictatorship.

In Germany, the National Socialist Underground (NSU) was able to murder nine immigrants and a policewoman between 2000 and 2007, although at least 25 undercover agents of the intelligence services and police were active in their milieu, and the existence of the group was well known in right-wing extremist circles. Nevertheless, the security authorities refused for years to follow the right-wing trail and instead placed suspicion on relatives of the victims. There are also numerous documented cases in which agents or undercover informants of the security authorities, acting as *agents provocateurs*, incited crimes or committed them themselves.

Even if the perpetrators of the Lichterfelde attack turned out to be climate activists from the anarchist milieu, the act was an expression of political disorientation and abysmal despair, which has extremely reactionary political consequences.

One does not protect the environment by destroying the infrastructure upon which working people rely. The protection of the environment, like all major social questions, is inseparably linked to the fight against the capitalist social system, which produces only war, social destruction and authoritarian regimes. This requires the mobilisation of the broadest sections of the working class, the youth and sections of the middle class for a socialist programme.



To contact the WWSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsw.org/contact