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Right-Wing, Anti-Immigrant Offensive Escalates in Aftermath of Berlin Terror Attack

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Although the background to Monday's attack on a Berlin Christmas market remains unclear, politicians and the media are using it to mount a right-wing offensive in Germany and throughout Europe. The attack claimed 12 lives and left 48 people injured.

On Tuesday, the police released a 23-year-old refugee from Pakistan because of lack of evidence that he had driven the truck that ploughed into a crowd at the Breitscheidplatz in central Berlin. Now the search is focused on a young Tunisian, Anis Amri, who has been living in Germany since July 2015 and has been under surveillance by the security authorities because he is alleged to be in contact with a German network of the Islamic State.

According to press reports, the investigators found an identification document from Amri under the driver's seat of the vehicle. Why they discovered it only after one-and-a-half days, although they had previously examined the vehicle for DNA traces of the first suspect, remains unanswered. Just as puzzling is why a perpetrator on the run would leave his visiting card at the crime scene.

[Update: In latest developments the suspect was shot dead by police. No evidence that he was behind the attack, GR Editor M. Ch.]

Ralf Jäger, the interior minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, the state where Amri was registered, told the press that the participation of the man in the attack was "still not at all clarified."

On the basis of available information, nothing definitive can be said about those responsible for the Berlin attack. An Islamic background cannot be excluded, but neither can a provocation by home-grown right-wing forces be ruled out. It should be recalled that the attack carried out by an 18-year-old student in Munich this past summer was immediately declared an act of Islamist terrorism, until it turned out that the offender was a right-wing extremist.

The lack of clarity has not stopped politicians and the media from using the Berlin attack to launch a concerted campaign against refugees and demand a massive buildup of the state apparatus. The right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian sister party of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the federal government, are leading the pack.

Their attacks are directly or indirectly directed against the CDU chairperson and chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, who plans to run for a fourth term as chancellor in the

Bundestag (parliamentary) elections next autumn. Although Merkel has long since dropped her pose of acceptance of refugees fleeing the imperialist wars in Iraq, Syria, Libya Afghanistan and other countries in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Central Asia, and switched to a course of ruthlessly deterring and deporting refugees, her critics continue to denounce her for being "soft" in regard to the refugee "problem."

Marcus Pretzell, a leading AfD politician, tweeted immediately after Monday's attack: "The deaths are Merkel's responsibility!" On Wednesday evening, the AfD organized a vigil in front of the Chancellery at which far-right organizations such as Pegida, the Identities, and the National Democratic Party (NPD) planned to take part.

On Tuesday, Bavarian Prime Minister and CSU Chairman Horst Seehofer declared in Munich: "We owe it to the victims, their families and the entire populace to rethink and readjust our entire immigration and security policy."

The Bavarian minister of the interior, Joachim Herrmann, claimed on Deutschlandfunk that the perpetrators were "people who had come to Germany as part of the refugee stream." He added, "The risks are obvious."

Participants in the Maischberger news interview program broadcast by ARD Tuesday evening demanded a massive state buildup. Shlomo Shpiro, known as an Israeli terror "expert," described the Berlin attack as "Germany 9/11." In the US, he declared, people had woken up to the threat of terrorism from one day to the next. This was now taking place in Germany. "The solutions," he said, "are police, intelligence, security policy, but also social."

Shpiro called for doing away with the "outdated laws, regulations and structures" that had been anchored in the German constitution as a consequence of Nazi rule. He said it was necessary to centralize the state surveillance and police apparatus. He acknowledged that "services in Germany have a bad reputation—keyword, Stasi, Gestapo, etc." But, he said, the times when people could dwell on the crimes of such organizations were "over."

Klaus Bouillon, the chairman of the Interior Ministerial Conference, called for "clear solutions" to deal with the terror threat, which "will certainly continue." He continued: "We need to significantly strengthen the police, we need new forms of organization, we need more weapons. We need to think, do we need new laws to help investigation agencies, do we need to control the new media more?"

The Greens and the Left Party are supporting this campaign. The chairperson of the Green Party in the Bundestag, Katrin Göring-Eckardt, attacked Shpiro and Bouillon on the Maischberger show from the right. She criticized the fact that the intelligence services had not been centralized long before. On Deutschlandfunk, the Green politician Boris Palmer demanded: "There must be more deportations." The Left Party has been demanding more police for some time.

These reactions were not restricted to Germany. Across Europe, right-wing parties and governments seized on the Berlin attack as confirmation of their authoritarian and xenophobic policies.

Czech Finance Minister Andrej Babis, a millionaire entrepreneur, declared that Merkel's policy was "responsible for this dreadful act." He continued: "It was she who let migrants enter Germany and the whole of Europe in uncontrolled waves, without papers, therefore

without knowing who they really are." Migrants had "no place" in Europe, he insisted.

The Dutch extremist Geert Wilders published a picture of Merkel with blood on her hands and blamed Europe's "cowardly leaders" for a "tsunami" of Islamic terrorist attacks.

The former UKIP (UK Independence Party) leader Nigel Farage posted on Twitter: "Terrible news from Berlin but no surprise. Events like these will be the Merkel legacy."

The head of the Polish ruling party PiS, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, declared: "We will defend Poland." The country's interior minister, Mariusz Blaszczak, announced: "If the old government were still in power, we would have had several thousand, maybe 10,000 Islamist immigrants in the country. Then the danger would be great. It is all about a 'struggle of Civilisations.'" He added that it was "no accident the target was a Christmas market."

The editor of *Die Zeit*, Josef Joffe, a notorious right-winger, was jubilant, writing in the British *Guardian*: "Now the cocoon has burst for good. Ever protective of our privacy laws, Germans will soon come around to much intensified surveillance by our own intelligence services and those of our allies… Now Germany will invest even more in security—and perhaps show a bit more gratitude to the NSA, GCHQ and DGSE."

Militarism in Germany would also benefit, Joffe continued. "Pacifism, the nation's traditional posture since the Second World War, is losing its luster as Putinist expansionism encroaches on NATO's eastern borders, while Donald Trump dismisses the alliance as 'obsolete.'"

He concluded: "Above all, if the perpetrator does turn out to be a refugee, Merkel's 'open door' policy on refugees will get a decisive make-over." The policy of the "open door" was "a grand moral gesture stemming from Germany's ugly past—an act of historical atonement." But, he added, "The noblest of intentions go awry when terror legitimizes anti-migrant and isolationist parties on the right and on the far left."

There is no indication that this right-wing campaign has significant popular support. The atmosphere in Berlin is calm. Most of those interviewed express grief and horror combined with the hope that the attack does not poison the public climate and lead to an upturn in the fortunes of the right wing. Seehofer's attempt to politicize the terrible events after only 14 hours aroused widespread anger.

What is taking place is a deliberate campaign by ruling circles for which the attack on the Christmas market provides an ideal pretext. Here lies the real parallel to 9/11, as opposed to the claims of the Israeli terror "expert" Shpiro.

The attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, in which the US intelligence services played a still-to-be-clarified role, provided the pretext for the wars in the Middle East by means of which the United States sought to defend its position as the sole world power, while erecting a huge surveillance and security apparatus for the control and suppression of the working class. The culmination of this development is the presidency of Donald Trump, whose government is comprised of members of the financial oligarchy and the military.

The ruling elites in Europe are now taking the same course. In so doing, they are responding to growing social tensions and the breaking apart of the European Union. The differences that arise between and within the bourgeois parties are purely tactical. In the basic direction

of policy—militarism and social counterrevolution—all of the established parties are in accord.

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