

Social Democratic Student Association Flyer on the Death of Benno Ohnesorg (June 3, 1967)

Abstract

The killing of a bystander named Benno Ohnesorg during a demonstration against the visiting Shah of Iran shocked and infuriated Berlin students. Police brutality, false reporting by the media, and the insensitivity of Berlin's Social Democratic mayor seemingly proved the repressiveness of "the system."

Source

Flyer of the Social Democratic Student Association (SHB), Berlin: "Student Slain"

Last night Berlin police officers killed Benno Ohnesorg, 26, a student at the Free University. He was part of a group of German and Persian demonstrators who were protesting the Shah of Persia's visit. Governing Mayor Heinrich Albertz, representing our city, justified the brutal actions of the Berlin police in a press statement on Saturday morning. He tried to blame the demonstrators for the killing of Benno Ohnesorg.

The fact is:

The events in front of the German Opera House have shown that, contrary to the governing mayor's account, the police provoked serious clashes. Police commandos toppled demonstrators from a construction fence. Then they dragged individuals over the barriers and beat them within sight of the others. The police refused to hand out cards with their badge numbers on them.

It was only after these clashes that demonstrators were told to clear Bismarckstrasse and the adjoining Krumme Strasse. Water cannons were deployed at the same time. Scattered students and youths were forced into building entranceways and courtyards by shock troops in plainclothes and uniforms and were then brutally bludgeoned. Benno Ohnesorg was fatally injured during one of these actions.

Demonstrators gathered one more time on Kurfürstendamm. There, police tried to mobilize the public against them. The police spread a false report over the loudspeakers that an officer had been stabbed by demonstrators.

So these are some facts about the police action on the evening of June 2.

We have ascertained that:

The police action was aimed at beating up individual demonstrators to serve as a deterrent. When the beating started, the intention was not to protect the Shah, as he was already inside the opera house.

It is not true that demonstrators attacked police by throwing stones. Instead, they literally had to defend themselves against indiscriminate beating by police cordons. Such paramilitary actions by police are by no means a commensurate response to the tomatoes and eggs thrown by demonstrators, which could never have hit the Shah anyway, because he was too far away.

It is not true that Benno Ohnesorg was a "ringleader." It was the first time he had participated in a protest demonstration.

It has come to this!

The representative of this city, a Social Democrat, has at great expense received a dictator who has been shown to have tortured and murdered hundreds of politicians, journalists, students, and workers. Their crime was: speaking out for freedom, democracy, and social justice. Berlin police officers killed the student Benno Ohnesorg. His crime was: demonstrating against this dictator. The governing mayor, a Social Democrat, has celebrated the oppression in Persia, condemned the demonstration, and justified a person being killed.

Heinrich Albertz has not only disqualified himself and proven to be incompetent as a politician; he has also totally failed as a human being when he made an incredibly cynical statement in ignorance of the facts.

The Social Democratic Student Association demands the resignation of those who are to be held politically responsible for the police brutality.

Source: Flyer of the Social Democratic Student Association (SHB), Berlin: "Student Slain"; reprinted in Jürgen Miermeister and Jochen Staadt, eds., *Provokationen. Die Studenten- und Jugendrevolte in ihren Flugblättern 1865–1971*. Darmstadt, 1980, pp. 97–98.

Translation: Allison Brown

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