

German newsweekly *Der Spiegel* calls for “resistance” to Trump

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Some two weeks after the inauguration of Donald Trump, the demands of German politicians, business leaders and the media for Berlin to oppose the US and assert their own interests against the country’s main ally in the post-World War II period are becoming more aggressive.

The current high point is the latest edition of *Der Spiegel*. The cover depicts Donald Trump with a bloody butcher’s knife, in the pose of an IS fighter, holding the severed head of the Statue of Liberty in the air. The caption reads, “America First.” The editorial in the same issue, entitled “Nero Trump,” compares the American president with the “emperor and destroyer of Rome” and calls him a “brute and choleric”, a “pathological liar,” “racist” and “tyrant.”

The message of *Der Spiegel* is clear: Trump represents war, destruction, xenophobia and dictatorship. Germany, “together with Asian and African partners” and “with our partners in Europe, with the EU,” must “prepare the resistance” and “stand up in opposition to the 45th president of the United States and his government”.

The plans of *Der Spiegel* recall the old megalomania of German imperialism. To date, “German leadership” was viewed “as one that is by all means in opposition to the interests of other European countries”. Now, “the economically and politically dominant democracy in Europe” must “fill in many of the gaps created by America’s withdrawal from the old world order” and “build an alliance against Donald Trump”

“This is not a threat that will somehow resolve itself”, the editorial warns, and notes, “the German economy has become the target of American trade policy and German democracy is ideologically antithetical to Trump’s vision. ... It is high time that we stand up for what is important: democracy, freedom,

the West and its alliances.”

The author of the article and current editor of *Der Spiegel*, Klaus Brinkbäumer, is clearly aware that his polemic speaks in favour of confrontation between Germany and the United States, something which led to two world wars in the twentieth century and claimed millions of lives.

“This does not mean escalation or that we must abandon our contacts with America and all the working groups between our governments,” Brinkbäumer says reassuringly. Only to add: “What it does mean, though, is that Europe must grow stronger and start planning its political and economic defences against America’s dangerous president.”

Also in the current edition of *Der Spiegel*, the designated Social Democratic Party chancellor candidate Martin Schulz demands Chancellor Angela Merkel take a harder line against Washington. The chancellor must “not keep silent about actions that we cannot accept. If Trump is running through our set of values with a wrecking ball, one must clearly say: That is not our policy”. Schulz describes the new US president as “highly dangerous to democracy.” He is playing “with the security of the Western world” and is starting “a culture war.”

On Friday, during his two-day US trip, the new German foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, read a historical translation of the American Declaration of Independence in the Library of Congress, and stressed the importance of “remembering the universality of the US Constitution in these days”.

In an interview with broadcaster ARD shortly after his return, he advised Europeans, despite “encouraging” talks with the new US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Vice President Mike Pence, to not “sit like a rabbit in front of a snake” and stare at the

US, but to show “self-confidence.” Internal conflicts must not tear Europe apart. Because “if we stay together, we are a figure who can act”. Europe must learn to act as a continent, then it will also play a role in world politics and should have no worries about others, Gabriel counseled.

Gabriel and other representatives of the ruling class are attempting to exploit the widespread anger and opposition to the most right-wing president in the history of the United States for the interests of German imperialism.

Their attempts to justify their great power offensive with phrases about democracy and human rights are cynical and mendacious. The German bourgeoisie has no bourgeois-democratic traditions and, with its war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and the Holocaust, has committed the most terrible crimes in human history.

Ever since German reunification in 1990, it has literally drawn blood time and again. Alongside the US, it has played a leading role in the imperialist wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and the Middle East, and supports the NATO offensive against Russia. It has imposed brutal austerity measures throughout Europe, plunging millions into poverty and despair, especially in the south of the continent. Berlin has brutally sealed off “Fortress Europe” from refugees, which leads almost every day to new deaths in the Mediterranean, now the largest mass grave on earth.

It is not concerns for the democratic rights of American or European workers that lie behind the hypocritical “human rights criticism” of Trump—which is propagated mainly by the SPD, the Greens, and the Left Party, but also by sections of the Christian Democrats—but the strivings of the German elites to again act independently of the US in world politics and assert their own geostrategic and economic interests.

On the one hand, the German elites see in Trump’s “America First” policy an opportunity to advance the return of German militarism first announced in 2014 at the Munich Security Conference.

For example, in its weekend edition, business daily *Handelsblatt* demanded the final “end of disarmament”. With its “White Paper on the Future of the Armed Forces”, the defence minister was already “paving the way for more troops”. If Trump “is being serious”, the Europeans and “especially the largest EU

country Germany...[must] step in—and where possible deploy more soldiers to support the East Europeans on the border with Russia.” And also, “defence spending must rise faster than planned”.

On the other hand, those in business fear the consequences of Trump’s nationalist course. Following accusations of “currency manipulation” by Trump’s chief trade adviser Peter Navarro, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote under the headline, “German industry fears the Trump-shock”: “The United States, previously the dream trading partner of the Germans, has overnight become a potential enemy in a trade war. There is a lot at stake. In 2015, the US imported \$114 billion of German goods—more than any other country.”

And in another comment, entitled “No one has so much to lose as Germany,” the leading German daily writes, “The German economy is successful, but highly vulnerable. The political risks have never been so great for decades. Should the world become protectionist, it would be a disaster for Germany.”

The looming “catastrophe”, like Trump’s rise and the German reaction to it, lies in the insoluble contradictions of capitalism, which is incapable of overcoming the contradiction between the international character of production and the division of the world into nation states. As on the eve of the First and Second World War, the competition of the imperialist powers for raw materials, markets, spheres of influence and cheap labour is unleashing violent conflicts that lead to trade war and war.



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