

European media launches propaganda lies blaming China for COVID-19

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The European media is reacting to Donald Trump's big lie campaign charging that the COVID-19 virus came from a Chinese lab by launching its own reactionary provocations against China.

After repeatedly alleging that the virus escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), Trump claimed the Chinese "said, 'hey, look, this is going to have a huge impact on China, and we might as well let the rest of the world'" get infected. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed "enormous evidence" implicates the WIV and that "China has a history of infecting the world." Neither gave any evidence to support these incendiary accusations, which contradict statements by scientists, and even the US director of national intelligence, that the virus is not man-made.

Leading European officials are echoing the torrent of propaganda lies emerging from America's fascist president, while trying to give them a more polished and hence less crude and more believable presentation.

These statements point to the ongoing criminalization of the European ruling class amid the pandemic. The propaganda campaign against China is not based on medicine or science, but on plans for trade war and global military conflict. Secondly, as the European and US imperialist bourgeoisies order a back-to-work amid a raging pandemic, they are contemptuous of health and life itself, willing to sacrifice millions at home to their war aims against China and other former colonial countries across Eurasia.

Germany's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* carried a comment by former NATO general secretary and Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, bitterly attacking Chinese deliveries of masks and protective medical equipment and Chinese medical staff arriving in Europe to treat the sick. While masses of workers welcome such help in the face of the virus, Rasmussen denounced them as a danger to Europe.

"Positive PR measures like the intervention of experts and aid supplies, together with disinformation campaigns, aim to cover up doubts about the origins of the virus," Rasmussen told the SZ.

Bemoaning China's purchase of installations at the strategic port of Piraeus in Greece after the 2008 financial crisis as part of its "Belt and Road Initiative" infrastructure plans, he added, "Due to short-term crisis management and depressed stock markets, we risk making a historic mistake, selling China our strategic crown jewels. A look at the last financial crisis shows that ... Europe must imperatively change course immediately to prevent the West falling in the economic trap of a communist dictatorship."

Attacking China's "17+1 initiative in Middle and Eastern Europe" and infrastructure investments in Ukraine and the Balkans, Rasmussen warned China could develop influence there "if it is the only player that offers a financial lifeline to countries weakened by the coronavirus."

In Britain, the right-wing *Spectator* took the Conservative government to task for not being aggressive enough as it blames China for the COVID-19 pandemic. Asked if China must answer for the COVID-19 pandemic, Defense Secretary Ben Wallace had said, "I think it does ... China needs to be open and transparent about what it has learned."

Mixing anti-Chinese hatred with opposition to shelter-at-home measures to protect European workers from the pandemic, the *Spectator* wrote that this remark "isn't nothing, but it's still small beer. The government's diplomatic response to the coronavirus outbreak has been weaker than water. Downing Street's most punitive sanctions have been reserved for the British people: lockdown, businesses shuttered, fines for unnecessary travel."

The *Spectator* claimed it had seen a "Five Eyes" (US-UK-Canada-Australia-New Zealand) intelligence report

alleging China committed an “assault on international transparency” resulting in the “endangerment of other countries.” It added, “In the UK alone, that endangerment has taken the form of 190,000 infections and more than 28,000 fatalities.”

Such incendiary lies have a dangerous and reactionary class logic. The pandemic has sickened over 1.5 million and claimed nearly 150,000 lives in Europe. False and unsubstantiated claims that Chinese officials decided to infect and murder such massive numbers of people amount to barely veiled propaganda for war with China.

These are lies from top to bottom. Firstly, China did not hide the pandemic. Once Chinese officials realized in December that an unidentified pneumonia was spreading in Wuhan, they reported it. They regularly notified the World Health Organization starting January 3 and, on January 11, published the full genetic sequencing of the COVID-19 virus. Wuhan went into lockdown on January 23, before Europe’s cases were first identified and nearly two months before mass strikes and protests in Italy and across Europe forced governments to adopt lockdown measures.

Secondly, responsibility for the pandemic’s larger toll in Europe compared to China, where COVID-19 sickened 83,000 and killed 4,633, lies not with the Chinese but with European governments. For decades, their antiworker austerity policies starved medical systems of key personnel and supplies. Refusing to order lockdowns for weeks as the pandemic began, they instead advocated the “herd immunity” policy that meant assuming the virus would broadly infect the public, in the hopes enough survivors would become immune to halt COVID-19’s spread.

As US officials bluntly declare that American workers have to get used to the idea of 3,000 Americans dying each day of COVID-19, European officials are similarly determined to fight through their strategic interests internationally at the expense of workers’ lives at home. This was laid out bluntly in a column by *Le Monde* titled, “China could become the world’s leading power by the end of the pandemic.”

With stunning indifference to human life amid a raging pandemic, the paper wrote: “The issue at hand is what conditions the various parties involved in the trade war launched before the pandemic will be in once it is over.” That is to say, what interests the European ruling class is its life-and-death struggle with US imperialism and China for control of markets and profits worldwide. The question of saving the sick in this pandemic is not of great

interest, compared to this.

“While China’s real weaknesses are often underestimated,” *Le Monde* continued, “and its strengths overrated, one must still consider the possibility that the Middle Kingdom could become the leading economic power by the end of the pandemic.” It warned China could become “the world’s added-value factory, not just the world’s assembly area. ... China’s economic system is getting back to work. Factories and service industries, in late March, were reportedly operating at 50 to 80 percent of capacity.”

The paper claimed the alternatives are “de-globalization and a new, China-centric globalization,” calling for de-globalization to strangle China and cut it out of the world economy. It explained, “New strategies for onshoring plants, diversifying supply chains, and controlling key technologies, which Europe and the United States were already studying, are now an absolute priority.”

Le Monde stressed Washington and its European allies are ready to do anything to forestall the risk of the Chinese regime upsetting the present, imperialist-dominated capitalist world order.

“This is why the Trump administration is making the terrible choice of the ‘business first’ option, sacrificing part of its population to not leave Chinese power with an open field,” it wrote.

Such remarks reveal that capitalism, torn apart by insoluble economic and geopolitical conflict, is politically bankrupt. Workers should not be sacrificed to the aspirations to world domination of irresponsible cliques of bankers and generals in Washington or the European capitals. The campaign to divide workers in Europe from their class brothers and sisters in China must be rejected, and the wealth of the financial aristocracy impounded in order to treat the sick and prevent further wars.



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