

German ruling elite's answer to Trump: Adaptation, emulation and retaliation

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Donald Trump's inauguration speech and his subsequent signing of nearly 100 executive orders have shattered any illusions that he will moderate his presidency compared to his campaign.

Trump's inauguration was, as the WSWS wrote, "an obscene fascist spectacle" in which the new "führer" declared war on the world and the working class: "The speech was explicitly modeled, in both tone and content, on the first radio speech given by Hitler on February 1, 1933, two days after being elevated into the post of German chancellor."

Even some bourgeois media outlets have recognised that Trump's second presidency represents a historic turning point. An editorial in *Der Spiegel*, for example, states: "After this speech, there can be no doubt: We are living in a new world. The international order, international law, old alliances and partnerships—none of that matters any more."

Trump will "use America's strength to impose his will on other countries. Anyone still hoping after this speech that Trump could be contained by the moderate forces within the Republican Party is believing in Father Christmas."

But what conclusions are the German and European elites drawing from the bankruptcy of American democracy? One searches in vain for a proposal to revitalise democracy. To do so, they would have to appeal to the social opposition of the working class and, like the US Democratic Party, they fear that more than anything else.

Instead, ruling class reactions range between adaptation, emulation and retaliation. Europe should unite, stand on its own two feet militarily and become more profitable and competitive at the expense of the working class—these are the responses to Trump.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock from the Green Party explained: "Our answer to 'America first

again' is 'Europe united.'" Her party colleague, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck, wants to triple German defence spending.

Christian Democratic Party Chairman and possibly Germany's next Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, suggested that Europeans "sit down together quickly now" and discuss two topics: Joint military rearmament and strengthening Europe's trade with the US. To this end, Germany must be prepared to "assume leadership responsibility for Europe."

Merz even views Trump as an "opportunity" to strengthen Europe militarily. Trump's assumption of office will "accelerate our efforts to join forces and act together," he said. There is no reason to look to Washington with fear. The European Union has 450 million inhabitants, more than the US and Canada combined. "If we are unified, if we are united, then we have something to say here," he added.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz made a similar argument at the World Economic Forum in Davos: "We Europeans must be strong in our own right. We must stick together, among ourselves and with partners worldwide. We must become more competitive and more resilient." At the same time, Scholz tried to appease Trump: "The United States is our closest ally outside of Europe and I will do everything I can to keep it that way."

The goal of uniting Europe on a capitalist basis—and under German leadership—and building it into a world power on a par with the US is both reactionary and utopian. The growing tensions with the US are also causing the national conflicts within Europe, which made the continent the scene of devastating wars between 1870 and 1945, to flare up again.

Far-right heads of government, such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán and Italy's Giorgia Meloni, have already made the pilgrimage to the US to pay their respects to Trump, while Germany and France were only represented

at the inauguration by ambassadors. Poland, the Baltic states and other Eastern European countries regularly side with the US when tensions arise between Berlin and Washington. And France is in favour of a strong, independent Europe, but not under German leadership.

Trump's supporters are also gaining influence in Germany. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was present at his inauguration with two leading members—Tino Chrupalla and Beatrix von Storch. And the editor of *Die Welt*, Ulf Poschardt, claimed in a celebratory article about Trump on Tuesday that his “impressive election victory” would “bring the sovereign, the citizen and his will as a voter back to the White House.”

The European Commission is trying to resolve the differences—in the words of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*—with an “appeasement policy.” Trump should be “appeased and lured with the prospect of favourable deals.” “Europe must offer the dealmaker a deal that he cannot refuse in the interests of the US,” said European People's Party chairman Manfred Weber, summarising this strategy.

However, deals with Trump will neither solve the conflicts with the US nor the differences within Europe. These are a result of the bitter struggle for the redivision of the world between the capitalist monopolies that dominate the global economy.

Trump did not return to the White House because his “theses and policies enjoy broad support,” as the *Der Spiegel* editorial cited above claims and Poschardt insinuates in *Die Welt*. He is in power because he pursues the interests of the oligarchs using fascist methods. No fewer than five of the 10 richest men in the world—Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Bernard Arnault from France and Sergey Brin—sat behind him during the inauguration.

The resistance against Trump, the fight against war and the unification of Europe are revolutionary tasks that require the unity of the international working class and the expropriation of the oligarchs.



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