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By Peter Schwarz
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European media outlets fear bitter class struggles in the US

“The image of the United States as the centre of Western civilisation is collapsing before our eyes. Will it be possible to rebuild the old image again?,” commented the Polish daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* on Tuesday with reference to the recent events in the US.

This sums up the fear of substantial sections of the European ruling class. The claim that capitalist private property and the market economy provided the basis for freedom and democracy, and that altogether this amounted to “Western civilisation” has served as the ideological cement for capitalist rule in Europe—and the United States played not an insignificant part in this.

In Western Europe and Germany in particular, it was the US through its economic power and democratic traditions that helped revive the bourgeoisie following its discrediting due to its crimes during the war. In 1990, the American model, although somewhat tarnished even then, played an important role in Eastern Europe in selling the restoration of capitalism and its horrific social consequences as a step in the direction of freedom and democracy.

Reading through the European comments on Monday’s events, one senses that they are not particularly troubled by Donald Trump’s efforts to establish a presidential dictatorship. Rather, they fear the president’s provocative actions could provoke resistance and class struggles that will endanger the capitalist system and spread to Europe. After all, the social and political situation is no less explosive there.

With a few exceptions, the comments acknowledged that the nationwide protests are not just directed against racism, but are motivated by social oppression and exploitation and are being joined by people of all races and ethnicities. They accuse Trump of dividing instead of reconciling. By contrast, they hardly say a word about the mobilisation of the military and the preparations for dictatorship connected with this.

The Norwegian tabloid newspaper *Verdens Gang* wrote, “Once again it becomes clear how unequal US society is. These problems run deeper than Trump, but the US has never needed a unifying president more than now.”

Germany’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commented, “When the country goes up in flames, the president ought to mediate and unify.” But Trump doesn’t want to and cannot do so. He is “incapable of protecting and calming his compatriots.”

The Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)* pointed to three key factors it believes are at work, “Racist police violence against blacks, a greater susceptibility of blacks to COVID-19, and an economic crisis that has hit minorities the hardest.” All of this is connected, it continued, adding, “Economic disadvantage leads to a lack of access to health care, which allows health problems to become chronic thus increasing the vulnerability to the lung disease. No wonder that frustration is widespread.”

“In such a situation,” says another comment in the *NZZ*, “the US needs a unifying figure who can calm the country down, unify it, and lead it forward in cooperation with other political forces.” But Trump is doing what he does best, “polarising the country and inciting people against each other.”

The *Tagesschau* (a news and public affairs programme) on Germany’s public broadcaster ARD commented, “An uprising is the language of those not being listened to. With words of reconciliation, Donald Trump could calm things down quickly. Instead, he is escalating the situation with ruthless Rambo rhetoric.”

The suggestion that the situation could be brought under control if only Trump would give up his Rambo rhetoric is of course absurd. As the WSWS has explained in numerous analyses and comments, the preconditions for the current social explosion have been brewing for a long time. The Democrats have contributed no less to this process than the Republicans and Trump. The gulf between rich and poor increased more rapidly under Obama than any of his predecessors, and police violence continued apace.

The Democrats, much like the European media, fear that Trump could provoke a revolutionary uprising that could no longer be controlled. This is why they are doing

everything to evade the issue and suppress the protests against Trump, with whom they agree on virtually every question of domestic, social and foreign policy. Like the German bourgeoisie in 1933, they fear a mass movement of the working class more than a fascist dictatorship.

In Europe, preparations for authoritarian forms of rule and dictatorship are already far advanced. In Hungary and Poland, the parties in power have suspended basic democratic rights. The leader of Italy's far-right Lega, which was in government for a year-and-a-half, responded to Trump's Twitter announcement that he would classify the Antifa organisation as a "terrorist group," by marking the post with a "Like."

In France, President Emmanuel Macron brutally suppressed Yellow Vest protests with the police and now attacks demonstrations in solidarity with George Floyd. In Germany, the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats made the far-right Alternative for Germany the official opposition in parliament and have implemented its policies in the grand coalition. Anyone who dares to criticise capitalism or resist the growth of militarism is branded a "left-wing extremist" and criminalised. At the same time, neo-Nazi structures within the state apparatus are built and covered up.

The crisis of American democracy, which is the underlying cause of Trump's attempt to establish a personal dictatorship based on the military, is the product of unprecedented levels of social inequality and endless wars. It cannot be reversed on a capitalist basis. The same process is taking place in Europe. The struggle against the fascist danger requires the independent mobilisation of the working class, which must assume the leadership of the defence of democratic rights.

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