

German reactions to the attempted assassination of Trump: Nervousness, fascination with fascism and calls for rearmament

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“Political reaction all along the line is a characteristic feature of imperialism,” wrote Lenin in the midst of the mass slaughter of the First World War. The reaction of politicians and the media in Germany to the assassination attempt on the former US president and current Republican candidate Donald Trump is entirely shaped by this “characteristic feature.”

On the one hand, there is fear and nervousness about the slide of the leading imperialist power into violence and civil war, and the associated consequences for the stability of German and European capitalism. “America slips into violence” was the headline of the initial commentary in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ), “In violent America” was the headline in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. “The US is like a powder keg—and the assassination attempt on the ex-president has further increased the risk of explosion,” warned the SZ in another article.

In addition to acknowledging the obvious, that Trump himself “contributed significantly” (SZ) to this development, there is a real fascination with the fascist, who, with the active support of the Democrats, presents himself as the single savior of the nation. For example, Jan Philipp Burgard, editor-in-chief of the *WELT* news channel, paid tribute to Trump in a commentary, as the “greatest instinctual politician of our time.” He wrote:

When he is under fire and it barely misses his brain, his political instinct triumphs over his survival instinct. While most politicians would have remained under cover and crawled off the stage under the protection of the bodyguards, Trump tore himself away from the agents of the Secret Service. Seemingly unimpressed by the ongoing existential threat, he searches for and finds the cameras. ‘Fight,

fight, fight!’ he calls out to his followers.

With this reaction, Trump has “proven his genius in terms of staging.” He has “instinctively added the image of the American action hero” to his “image as a successful businessman, TV entertainer and unconventional president.” The Republican National Convention (RNC) thus becomes “the coronation fair of a candidate who is more effective than ever after the assassination attempt. Many Americans who are plagued by fears of decline yearn for exactly this strength.”

In an interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, former German Health Minister and leading Christian Democratic Union (CDU) member Jens Spahn, who is attending the RNC in Milwaukee, Wisconsin this week, also gave free rein to his subliminal admiration of Trump and the fascist activities of the Republicans. “The crowd cheered him on,” Spahn said. “The crowd wants to see him fight, you can feel that too. There was a militant, campaign-minded mood. He himself was rather very quiet, as I have rarely seen him. I am very curious to see what he will say this week in his speech, whether he will now also find unifying tones and bring the country together.”

This barely concealed fascination with the American Führer, who mobilized a fascist mob on January 6, 2021 in an attempted coup to keep himself in office, and openly boasted about ruling as a dictator in the future, is above all for one reason. The ruling class in Germany is also responding to the growing opposition to enormous social inequality, militarism and war by turning to authoritarianism and fascism.

Unlike in the 1930s, the ruling class has no fascist mass movement, but it is systematically building a right-wing extremist party with the Alternative for Germany, and

putting its agenda into practice. Germany's ruling class has no fundamental differences with Trump's fascist policies, apart from the fact that he is ultimately a representative of US imperialism.

Behind the scenes, intensive preparations have long been underway for possible cooperation with Trump in the event of a new presidency. "It is already important to look for common ground on issues," Spahn explained. "There is none in style, but there certainly is on the issues, cue NATO, cue migration, cue non-proliferation of nuclear weapons." Trump will "very likely be the next president," and Germany and Europe "have to be better prepared this time."

At the heart of this "preparation" is concern about the continuation and expansion of the NATO war in Ukraine. There are growing signs that Trump will not simply end the war offensive against Russia led by US imperialism. Just a few days ago, Defense Minister Boris Pistorius (Social Democrats) declared that he "could not imagine" that "another president would pull back" from deploying the long-range US precision weapons directed against Russia in Germany, as has been agreed.

Nevertheless, the call for more German and European leadership to pursue their own geostrategic and economic interests more aggressively is pervasive—not least vis-à-vis Washington. The demands range from more foreign policy sovereignty to the development of European or German nuclear weapons.

Regardless of who the next US president will be, we must "prepare for the fact that the demands on Germany and the EU for more independent responsibility will increase," German Transatlantic Coordinator Michael Link (Free Democrats) warned in comments to the RND. Together with other representatives of the governing parties, Link is also participating in the RNC.

"For decades, we have relied on the US to ensure our security," Link continued. "This outsourcing is now over, and that's a good thing, because, without separating from the US or even from NATO, we have to learn that the European pillar of the transatlantic alliance can increasingly stand on its own two feet."

The current discussions on the reintroduction of conscription, as well as the new war budget, show what comprehensive rearmament and war plans this includes. The declared goal of the Federal Government is to make Germany "kriegstüchtig" (ready for war) again, despite the devastating role of German imperialism in two world wars, and to prepare for a major European "land war" against Russia.

The demand for Germany's own nuclear weapons is also being revived. The US had "recently announced that it wanted to station long-range weapons in Germany again

after decades," which "could also be equipped with nuclear warheads," according to a July 16 *Deutschlandfunk* article. But at the same time it was clear that the Europeans "could no longer necessarily rely on nuclear defence by the US."

The article focused on two possible variants: "EU-owned nuclear weapons" and "a Europeanisation of the French nuclear umbrella." However, since both options are considered politically, technically, and financially difficult to implement, the article also brings "a third consideration" into play: "that Germany itself acquires nuclear weapons."

This would be "a total break with German foreign policy tradition," *Deutschlandfunk* quotes security expert Markus Kaim, who has been head of the "Goeconomics and Security Policy" unit at the Ministry of Finance since May. "But we live in a new era and are at the point of having to throw certain assumptions of German foreign and security policy of the last 30 years overboard," he said.

Kaim and the ruling class know that building a German nuclear bomb would also mean a complete break with international law. The article stated: "The central problem with the German variant: Its own nuclear weapons are currently not legally possible. According to Kaim, Germany would have to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and ultimately also terminate the Treaty on German Unity, the so-called two-plus-four Treaty. Because this reaffirmed Germany's renunciation of nuclear weapons."

The fact that a high-ranking government official is still publicly considering the possibility of German nuclear weapons and that the call for the bomb is regularly raised in the media underlines the fascist mentality that is once again spreading among the ruling class 85 years after the beginning of the Second World War. In order to assert its imperialist interests, it is prepared to "throw overboard" all the restrictions of the post-war period and once again commit the worst crimes. It is in no way inferior to the fascist Trump.



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