

Why there is an international shift to the right?

By Lia Malinovski, REVOLUTION Magazine, December 2024

The fact that more and more fellow students are spouting right-wing nonsense and teachers laugh about it is not only the case in a Germany, where the AfD has nationwide support of over 17%. In Italy Georgia Meloni, the head of the government, comes from a fascist tradition and has aligned herself with a neoliberal right-wing populism. Javier Milei is attacking the working class and youth in Argentina, Donald Trump has won the election in the USA, and in France the ultra-right Rassemblement National has won 30% of the votes. In the following, we want to examine the reasons for the success of the right and the dimensions of the current rise of right-wing politics, so that we can effectively fight it!

A shift to the right means militarism!

Last year, all imperialist states together invested more money in their armies and weapon systems than ever before. While hardly anyone cares about any UN resolutions anymore, all states that can afford it are increasing their military budgets. In Ukraine and Gaza, we already see the horrific violence to which the growing tensions between world powers can lead. Taiwan and the Pacific are also places, where these tensions could quickly lead to military conflict in the future.

But those who arm themselves externally against the apparent external enemy must also arm themselves against the alleged “internal enemies”. Parallel to special funds for the military, there are also more funding for the police and attacks on democratic rights such as freedom of demonstration or freedom of the press. We see this, for example, in the fact that in Germany all those who dared to speak out for peace in Ukraine or in Gaza and thus contradicted the German war plans in the respective region, have been branded as traitors of the nation, friends of Putin or even anti-Semites. The

ideological incitement is accompanied by demonstrations being banned or attacks on the right of asylum.

The background of the global militarization internally and externally is the economic crisis and an intensified formation of blocs between the imperialist powers. In view of unclear profit prospects, the imperialist powers are increasingly relying on military strength. We are currently in a so-called overproduction or over-accumulation crisis. This means, among other things, that investments that companies have made are no longer profitable and they remain stuck with the expenses. Furthermore, more has been produced than can be sold on the market, which also fuels the crisis. This over-accumulation crisis has now also affected China, unlike a few years ago. The precursors of the current crisis, the financial crisis of 2007-08, have caused a faltering and even a partial reversal of globalization. Instead, trade conflicts are increasing and imperialist blocs are emerging. The USA is on the decline as the world's dominant power and its supremacy in the world is no longer unchallenged. This results in an ever harder struggle between the imperialist blocs for the redivision of the world, that is, for spheres of influence and markets. In this struggle, it is becoming apparent that the main contradiction is between the USA and China, and that Russia and the EU (including British imperialism) must subordinate themselves to these two. Examples of this are the protective tariffs on Chinese electric cars, which the USA has raised to 100% and the EU to up to 35%. An economic war is breaking out that is plunging the relative stability of recent decades into chaos.

A shift to the right means austerity!

However, the costs of the crisis are not being paid by those who gambled away and lined their pockets with war and exploitation. No, they are dumped on us young people, queers, migrants and the entire working class. We see this in the fact that wages are being eaten up by inflation and rents almost everywhere in the world. That the welfare state is being cut back and our schools and youth clubs are falling into disrepair. International economic growth is forecast to be just 3%, and for Germany it is expected to be just above 0%. This puts us internationally on the brink of stagnation, which could

quickly lead to a recession. Capital reacts to this with social cuts, attacks on wages and working conditions, and mass layoffs.

Alongside the proletariat, the petty bourgeoisie is also affected by the crisis. It is being crushed between the main classes of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and is therefore becoming the main social support of the right-wing parties internationally. They are drowning in global competition and fear relegation to the proletariat. They have economic existential fears, feel betrayed by the “elites” (on whom they could always rely), and are envious that they are only saving monopoly capital in the crisis. They want to go back to the “good old days” before the crisis and secure their position in the domestic market by closing the borders.

More and more sections of society are being driven into poverty and destitution by the crisis, inflation and state austerity policies. But instead of resisting this with a progressive vision of a different society, more and more sections of society are looking to the right for answers to their problems. This is because left-wing parties and trade unions have failed to counter the attacks of capital in recent years. After the financial crisis of 2007/08 initially triggered strong social movements, as in Greece or in the Arab countries, but these have suffered severe defeats. And even the trade unions and social democrats, who only want to make the crisis more socially acceptable instead of fighting against capital, have less and less leeway to distribute. This is followed by a loss of members, a decline in fighting strength and thus less room for maneuver to counter the attacks of capital. For us young people, the defeat of the climate movement was certainly also formative, leaving many previously active people disillusioned and frustrated.

A shift to the right means racism and sexism!

In this context, populism manages to obscure the class antagonisms with its talk of the “people” fighting against “the elites” and thus strengthen the bourgeoisie. It is also associated with nationalism and social chauvinism. They say we have to take action against the “foreign elements” in an

otherwise good capitalism. In reality, these are often leftists, migrants, queers, refugees, and unemployed people. They want to turn back the wheel of time to a time before the great crisis, when there were supposedly no refugees, no emancipated women, and no queer gender identities.

Racism, sexism and homophobia are important tools for those in power to deflect the frustration of the masses from themselves. At the same time, the economic crisis requires the poorer countries to be exploited more fiercely. To justify this, their populations must be declared inferior with the help of racism. Even if people have to flee to richer countries due to war, arms exports, natural disasters and economic crises, this ideology works. The AfD, CDU and the former coalition government are currently overtaking each other with increasingly inhuman attacks on refugees and their rights, be it “deportation offensives” or the recently introduced payment card. This poison divides our class and prevents us from defending ourselves internationally against the attacks on all of us.

Who is targeted by the media smear campaigns also depends on the foreign policy interests of the respective states. Thus, anti-Muslim racism is currently gaining in importance. To legitimize the delivery of weapons for the genocide in Gaza, an enormous racist propaganda machine has to be set in motion. What gained momentum on 9/11 is being taken to the extreme today. In German schools, all people in Gaza are allowed to be called terrorists, but criticism of Israel is immediately branded as anti-Semitic and suppressed. Solidarity with Israel is made a prerequisite for citizenship acquisition, and in many media outlets, the lie of imported anti-Semitism is spread.

Where is the shift to the right leading?

Whether Trump or Harris has won in the US, politics will become more right-wing and the conflict with China will continue to escalate. The US will also continue to support Israeli aggression, fight social movements at home and seal off its borders from migrants in a racist manner. In Germany, a government under the CDU and its right-wing figurehead Friedrich Merz is to be expected. Attacks on the right to strike, on the right to demonstrate and

on sexual self-determination will be just a few of the expected consequences.

The shift to the right will continue to form and spread in its various dimensions if we do not manage to prove that the solution to the crisis must come from the left. The fight for this begins exactly where you are reading this article. First of all, we have to organize where we spend our days, namely at our schools, universities and workplaces. There we have to build committees to counter the effects of the shift to the right. Only in this way can we manage to draw other sections of society to our side and organize independently of the state. In doing so, we have to fight the attacks of capital with social demands! We need class struggle instead of social partnership like the union bureaucracy and social democratic parties want it. We have to link this with anti-racist demands, because racism weakens our common fighting strength. We will not be divided! Let's fight together against all asylum law restrictions and border regimes and build organized self-defense against the attacks of the right! However, we cannot do all this alone. We must also address our demands to the organizations that organize a large part of the working class – that is, the trade unions and the reformist parties. In joint struggles, we must put pressure on their leaderships to actually stand against the right-wing shift and mobilize their entire membership. Our resistance must be coordinated internationally, because just as the right-wing shift is happening globally, so must our resistance.