

Trump hits Davos with nationalist capitalism, chastened elite forced to accept

By Conrad Black

Speaking from the White House, President Trump last week sounded a stirring tocsin of nationalist capitalism to the usual audience in the grim Swiss mountain town of Davos at the World Economic Forum, whose ethos is the European Union's highly regulated, heavily taxed, statist model of government by comparatively authoritarian unelected officials. After his usual cheerful greetings and customary assertions of the virtual liberation that he has effected in his country from the senescence, venality, and misguided socialistic authoritarianism of the former administration, Mr. Trump expressed his affection for Europe, his pleasure to be addressing such a distinguished audience, and attacked practically the entire political orthodoxy of Western Europe with an almost amiable nonchalance.



Nonchalant Trump: Davos listens and learns as Trump attacks entire political orthodoxy of Western Europe. EPA-EFE/LAURENT GILLIERON

He attacked excessive regulation, taxation, militant environmentalism and what he regarded as the dictatorial hypocrisy governing diversity, equity, inclusiveness, the environment, state social meddling, and corporate governance. He referred to oil as “liquid gold” and the Green New Deal as the “ridiculous and incredibly wasteful, Green New Scam.” He proudly announced his withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord and the fact that he had “ended the insane and costly electric vehicle mandate.” These would have been traumatising and outrageous comments at Davos in previous years but were received very politely.

Despite the obligatory assertion by the founder of the World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, that as in the recent past so in the future the world will be “largely governed by those in this room,” there was a detectable recognition that the European Union simply has not been very successful. Not only did the United Kingdom depart, the second largest national economy and by a considerable margin the most politically prestigious of the EU member countries, but over the last 20 years the economies of the United States and the European

Union have gone from almost exact parity to the point where the American economy is twice as large as that of the EU.

Many will remember the scepticism and the frostiness with which essentially the same audience heard President Trump in person four years ago. Practically the only applause he received then was when he said that the United States would participate in the tree planting programme. It is not only a chastened roomful of European worthies being addressed from the White House, but it was clearly a greatly more successful American president to whom they listened. Trump's victory over unprecedented and largely illegal adversity and the unambiguous nature of his victory despite being largely outspent and viciously opposed by 95 per cent of the national political media as well as his personal perseverance and unflappability in the face of extraordinary opposition, including being lightly wounded in an assassination attempt, command the respect of the world, and especially of the representatives of a continent that is essentially floundering.

Of the major European powers, the only one with a government that appears to command the confidence of its electors is Giorgia Meloni in Italy who is a friend of Trump. The German government is obviously headed for the last round up in the election next month, and French president Emmanuel Macron's party will never be heard from again after the next French election in two years. Britain has a new government that still has a mandate of over three years, but it is off to the clumsiest and stupidest start of any British regime since before the Napoleonic Wars. Almost up until the American election day, it was still fashionable in Europe, especially by those afflicted with the Davos spirit of officious pomposity, to dismiss Trump as a ludicrous figure. There was no trace of that last week.

No recourse to affected snobbery could respond to the proportions of Trump's political success or the power of his

arguments in favour of lower interest rates and taxes and regulations, fiscal sobriety, smaller government, reduced state intervention, secure borders, and an end to illegal immigration, particularly as Trump formulated his views in terms of America and Europe again working closely together as friends and in mutual respect.

I attended the Davos meetings in the media group for 20 years ending about 20 years ago and in those days there was a sense that could be elicited in the hours of "social networking," (if they were adequately liquified), that Europe was the cradle of civilisation, was responsible for most progress in the world, had dominated the world until, tragically, it blundered into the World Wars and gave the world communism, fascism, and Nazism. But now there was a new day in which the historic powers and cultures of Europe would stand happily on each other's shoulders and rule the world again.

Of course, this was nonsense and has been exposed as nonsense and the Eurocrats must now realize that if they do not settle on some sort of course correction, they are going to be overwhelmed by the redoubled competition of the United States and perhaps even of China and other Far Eastern countries. The Europeans can still take great comfort in the fact that they have practically buried the animosity that so bitterly divided that continent throughout the history of the nation-state until recently. But the absence of hostilities alone will not protect Europe from the onslaught of competition from better organised and more highly motivated societies. That, and not the grace of conversion to the long unsuspected charms of Donald Trump's formidable personality, explain the respectful reception he received in Davos last week.

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