

“The Biggest Protest This Country Has Seen in Years”: Quarter Million Germans Protest Obama “Free Trade” Deal

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Global Research, October 11, 2015
[ZeroHedge](#) 10 October 2015

Region: [Europe](#), [USA](#)
Theme: [Global Economy](#)

When it comes to official and media opinion on Obama’s crowning trade “achievements”, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade And Investment Partnership (TTIP), the party line is united. As [previously noted](#), Barack Obama has assured the population that this treaty [is going to be wonderful for everyone](#):

In hailing the agreement, Obama said, “Congress and the American people will have months to read every word” before he signs the deal that he described as a win for all sides.

“If we can get this agreement to my desk, then we can help our businesses sell more Made in America goods and services around the world, and we can help more American workers compete and win,” Obama said.

The mainstream media’s chorus of support for these trade deal is likewise deafening: here are some indicative headlines from this past Monday:

- Time Magazine: [“Pacific Trade Deal Is Good for the U.S. and Obama’s Legacy”](#)
- The Washington Post: [“The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a trade deal worth celebrating”](#)

The far less popular opposing view, one [repeatedly presented here](#), is that like with every other “free trade” agreement that the U.S. has entered into since World War II, the exact opposite is what will actually happen: the outcome will be that the US trade deficit (which excluding [petroleum is already back to record levels](#)) will get even larger, and we will see even more jobs and even more businesses go overseas, thus explaining the secrecy and the fast-track nature of the TPP and TTIP’s passage through Congress.

And while the US population, which is far more perturbed by what Caitlyn Jenner will wear tomorrow than D.C.’s plans on the future of world trade, has been mute in its response to the passage of the first part of the trade treaty, the TPP – after all the MSM isn’t there to tell it how to feel about it, aside to assure it that everything will be great even as millions of highly-paid jobs mysteriously become line cooks – other countries are standing up against globalist trade interests meant to serve a handful of corporations.

Case in point Germany, where today hundreds of thousands of people marched in Berlin in protest against the planned “free trade” deal between Europe and the United States *which they say is anti-democratic and will lower food safety, labor and environmental standards*.

TTIP critics fear that it would lead to worse safeguards in Europe, bringing down standards for consumer safety, food and health or labor rights down to those in America. European nations have stricter regulations for things like genetically modified foods or workers benefits than the US does. There is also discontent with the secretive nature of the negotiations, which prompts skeptics to assume the worst about the document they would eventually produce.

The organizers – an alliance of environmental groups, charities and opposition parties – claimed that 250,000 people were taking part in the rally against free trade deals with both the United States and Canada, far more than they had anticipated.



As many as 250,000 protesters gathered in Berlin, according to organizers

“This is the biggest protest that this country has seen for many, many years,” Christoph Bautz, director of citizens’ movement Campact told protesters in a speech.

According to [Reuters](#), “opposition to the so-called Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) has risen over the past year in Germany, with critics fearing the pact will hand too much power to big multinationals at the expense of consumers and workers.”

Popular anger appears to be focused on the encroachment by corporations into every corner around the globe:

“What bothers me the most is that I don’t want all our consumer laws to be softened,” Oliver Zloty told Reuters TV. “And I don’t want to have a dictatorship by any companies.”

Other are mostly concerned about the secrecy covering the treaty and its negotiations: “Dieter Bartsch, deputy leader of the parliamentary group for the Left party, who was taking part in the rally said he was concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding the talks. “We definitely need to know what is supposed to be being decided,” he said.”

As [Deutsche Welle adds](#), the EU and US aim to conclude the negotiations, which began in 2013, by sometime next year. The next round of negotiations is set to begin later this year. Once completed, TTIP would create the world’s largest free-trade zone, home to some 800 million consumers.

Campaigners are particularly concerned about a provision in the deal that would allow companies to sue governments in special tribunals. Such an arrangement, they fear, would lead to an erosion of labor and environmental protections . TTIP’s supporters dismiss such thinking and argue that the deal would boost the EU’s economy by removing tariffs and creating common standards.

Gerhard Handke, who heads the Federation of German Wholesale, Foreign Trade and Services, told DW that TTIP would even help uphold such standards. Europe, he explained, would soon be overshadowed by other economic players, such as India and China. “Now is the time to set standards, rather than have other countries dictate them later on,” he said. “Otherwise, one day, we’ll have Asia setting those standards, without anyone asking us what we think.”

Those gathered in Berlin, though, take a very different view. “We have heard these promises before, these promises of jobs and prosperity and growth,” Larry Brown, a trade unionist from Canada – which is negotiating a similar trade deal with the EU – shouted into a microphone on Saturday as demonstrators clapped and cheered and several police looked on. “They are lies. They have to be stopped.”

* * *

Oddly, few in the US aside from the fringe media, share any of these concerns.

In Germany however, the marchers banged drums, blew whistles and held up posters reading “Yes we can – Stop TTIP.”

As Reuters adds, the level of resistance “has taken Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government by surprise and underscores the challenge it faces to turn the tide in favor of the deal which proponents say will create a market of 800 million and serve as a counterweight to China’s economic clout.”

And just like in the US, the government is scrambling to soften the popular opposition before the deal is scuttled:

In a full-page letter published in several German newspapers on Saturday, Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned against “scaremongering”.

“We have the chance to set new and goods standards for growing global trade. With ambitious, standards for the environment and consumers and with fair conditions for investment and workers. This must be our aim,” Gabriel wrote.

“A fair and comprehensive free trade deal promotes growth and prosperity in Europe. We should actively participate in the rules for world trade of tomorrow,” Ulrich Grillo, head of the BDI Federation of German industries, said in a statement.

Businesses hope the trade deal will deliver over \$100 billion of economic gains on both sides of the Atlantic.

Which, naturally, is jargon for millions in cost-cuts and layoffs, meant to boost profitability and shareholder equity.

For now the U.S. public remains largely inert to the TPP and TTIP concerns sweeping the globe; we expect that to last until the next major round of layoffs hits the US, just in time for the NBER to admit the country has been in a recession for at least 6 months.

This is how the protest looked like covered by social networks and other non-US media outlets:

[#Berlin #StopTTIP](#) demo pic.twitter.com/R9otnpju02

— Thomas Occupy (@ThomasOccupy) [October 10, 2015](#)

[#nottip](#) [#ttp](#) [#ttipdemo](#) [#ceta](#) [#berlin](#) <https://t.co/wWetZQZeQI>

— Alex Poucher (@alexpoucher) [October 10, 2015](#)

[#Berlin](#) [#StopTTIP](#) demo pic.twitter.com/SZjSpR24Ex

— Thomas Occupy (@ThomasOccupy) [October 10, 2015](#)

[#Berlin](#) [#StopTTIP](#) demo pic.twitter.com/sm9ky6Xsp6

— Thomas Occupy (@ThomasOccupy) [October 10, 2015](#)

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