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What lies behind the German elite's celebration of Macron?

By Johannes Stern

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Emmanuel Macron's victory in the first round of France's presidential election has unleashed a veritable wave of celebration among the German ruling class.

Shortly after the first projections on Sunday evening, which showed Macron slightly ahead of the second-placed candidate, the neo-fascist Marine Le Pen of the National Front, the German government's spokesman wrote on Twitter, "Good that Emmanuel Macron was successful with his course of a stronger EU+social market economy. All the best for the coming two weeks."

The chairman of Germany's parliamentary foreign affairs committee, Norbert Röttgen (Christian Democrats), enthused on the Phoenix television channel, "I think it cannot get better for Germany and Europe. I believe that we can now be hopeful that Macron will be president."

Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor, the Social Democrat Sigmar Gabriel, declared during his three-day visit to the Middle East, "Of course I am happy that Emmanuel Macron led in the election. He had the strongest result of all candidates and will now go into the second round and I am sure he will be the new French president." He would "do everything personally" to "continue to support" Macron. He would be "an excellent president," but was "also an incredibly friendly person and a good friend."

The so-called opposition parties also popped the champagne corks. Green Party chairman Cem Özdemir praised Macron on Twitter by commenting, “Merci, la France! Thank you #France! Best of luck to Emmanuel Macron! Onwards to the second round!” The chairman of the free market Free Democrats (FDP), Christian Lindner, wrote, “A signal for Europe, a signal of renewal. Emmanuel Macron also gives Germany courage.”

And the Left Party, which supported the “left” nationalist Jean-Luc Mélenchon in the first round, is now urging a Macron victory, even though they are aware that this would mean a further deterioration of living standards for the working class. The Left Party co-chair Bernd Riexinger wrote on Twitter, “Bitter: #Macron deserves support because he is up against #lePen, but his demands continue the previous misery unaltered.”

The media and politicians are publicly justifying their support for Macron by citing their alleged opposition to nationalism and racism. As Gabriel explained, he was happy “about the result” because Macron would certainly “overcome right-wing extremism and right-wing populism, and the anti-Europeans in the second round.”

Who does the German Foreign Minister think he is kidding? In reality, the outgoing Socialist Party government under François Hollande, to which Macron belonged until 2016, adopted the FN’s policies step by step. After the Paris terrorist attacks of November 2015, Hollande invited le Pen to the Elysée Palace and imposed a state of emergency under which basic democratic rights were suspended. The PS subsequently pursued the goal of establishing in the French constitution a provision for revoking citizenship, a legal measure which provided the basis for the persecution of the leaders of the Resistance under the Vichy regime and the transportation of Jews to death camps.

The establishment parties in Germany are playing a similar role in rehabilitating right-wing extremist politics. They are equally responsible for the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in two senses. Firstly, they have created the miserable social conditions which drive many workers to desperation and enable right-wing demagogues to exploit them. Secondly, under conditions of deepening social and political crisis in Europe, they ever more openly encourage xenophobia and nationalism so as to divide the working class and stabilise their own rule.

Why is Macron being applauded in Berlin as a progressive saviour and crowned the victor before the second round on 7 May has even taken place?

For one thing, Macron, a former Rothschild banker and economic minister under outgoing French President Hollande, is the most explicit advocate of the interests of European finance capital and demands an intensification of the austerity policies in France called for by Berlin and Brussels throughout Europe.

Significantly, the German Dax stock exchange reached a record high on Monday of 12.398. Stefan Kreuzkamp, chief investment strategist for Deutsche Asset Management, enthused, “Following this result I would say, Vive la France! Europe lives on. And European stocks.”

The second reason is the declared goal of Germany's ruling elite of dominating the EU from Berlin in order to play the role of a global power. "We will only have influence if we jointly, Germany and France in particular, make Europe a genuine actor in the world," stated German President and former Social Democrat Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier just days before the first round of the election, in an interview with French newspaper *Sud Ouest* .

As an advocate for the EU and European militarism, Macron is an ally in these megalomaniac plans. Under conditions of "the United States' new orientation, a united Europe becomes even more important," Steinmeier noted, referring to the aggressive "America first" policies of Donald Trump. If the unification of Europe fails, "as nationalist and populist parties want in France, we will not be players but the pawns of other powers," he warned.

But above all, the ruling class fears a revolutionary movement of the working class. In its last edition, the German weekly *Der Spiegel* focused on the question of whether "the country's [France] institutions have been manoeuvred into a pre-revolutionary situation due to the incapability of officeholders. Whether what is today still called a state is already reminiscent of the world of kings, of the rotten *Ancien Regime* prior to the French Revolution."

The bourgeoisie's position must indeed be desperate—it is relying on Macron, although he is one of the "incapable officeholders" who has manoeuvred France into a "pre-revolutionary situation!"

Contrary to what the Left Party would like to make people believe, there is no lesser evil for the French working class in the second round of the election. French workers confront two candidates both of whom stand for war and major social attacks. While Macron, at least for now, supports the transformation of the EU into a German-dominated military union which will prepare for trade war and war with the US and Russia, le Pen stands for the division of Europe into hostile nation-states, which would also ultimately mean war.

The only way to combat the relapse into barbarism is the unification of Europe on a socialist basis. In France, this requires the building of the Parti de l'égalité Socialiste (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).