

French media endorse plan for anti-worker Grand Coalition government in Germany

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French media outlets have endorsed the February 7 coalition agreement between German conservatives and social democrats to form a “Grand Coalition” government, as the first step in an alliance between French President Emmanuel Macron and what they hope will be the next German government.

This is a warning to workers internationally. The policy goals contained in last week’s agreement—for a re-militarization of Germany, doubling military spending, the adoption of far-right policies on immigrants, and a massive build-up of intelligence and police agencies—are shared by the ruling class across Europe. In particular, this is the basis for collaboration between Berlin and Macron, who is pushing for draconian austerity and major increases in military spending, particularly on nuclear weapons.

On Friday, Macron said the Grand Coalition deal was better than earlier attempts to form a CDU/CSU-Green-Free Democratic Party (FDP) coalition. “The terms of this provisional agreement are more favorable to the European project than were those raised in previous attempts last year,” he declared. He said this while welcoming Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, the leader of a right-wing coalition government with the far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), to the Elysée palace.

While French dailies and news magazines pointed to longstanding differences between German and French positions on eurozone bank bailouts, they were mostly optimistic that despite the differences, Berlin and Paris would find common ground.

Euronews hailed the coalition deal, claiming it “opens the way to major reforms in the European Union” and “foreshadows a political rapprochement with the French president.” It peddled illusions that the Social Democratic Party (SPD), a longstanding party of austerity, would oversee a “softening of austerity and more openness to public investments.” *Euronews* then contradicted this

assessment, citing Professor Mario Telo of Brussels, who said they would promote “business competitiveness.”

Other publications expressed more cautious hopes that Berlin and Paris could now come together despite their conflicts and agree on a joint European military and social policy.

Le Point, which is close to Macron’s government, rejoiced that the “nightmare” of a conservative-Green-FDP government was avoided. Paris, it added, was “very relieved to see these talks break down and a government accord ultimately concluded with the social-democratic SPD. The latter are supposedly close to Emmanuel Macron’s European conceptions. But we should keep a level head. The ‘fundamentals’ in Germany never change.”

Le Point poured cold water on the French banks’ hopes that the SPD would oversee looser monetary policy and the common eurozone budget and investment plan proposed by Macron. It recalled how, after the 2008 Wall Street crash, during the eurozone debt crisis, Paris clashed with SPD Finance Minister Peer Steinbrück. Then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy called Steinbrück a “big as*hole” and considered him “arrogant,” *Le Point* wrote.

The daily *Libération* complained that German Chancellor Angela Merkel “is far from being a great European, as she showed during the euro crisis, where she only accepted reforms necessary to its survival unwillingly, at the last minute.”

Nevertheless, with a Grand Coalition government, *Libération* continued, “Macron can hope to see his European dream realized. Many commentators snickered at his overreach when he tried to influence Berlin’s agenda by speaking on Europe on September 26 at the Sorbonne, three days after the legislative elections. But in fact, he succeeded. ... The future majority claims at the outset that it is ready to work hand in hand with France.”

The right-wing *Le Figaro* wrote, “Berlin will finally be

able to respond to the propositions of French President Emmanuel Macron on relaunching the EU.” It added that Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian ally, the Christian Social Union (CSU), were torpedoing Macron’s plans, however: “The chancellor’s allies were at the same time inflicting a real defeat on Emmanuel Macron: the European Parliament—instigated by the CDU/CSU—rejected the plan for ‘transnational’ lists in the May 2019 European elections, a central ambition of the French president for the EU.”

Le Figaro, which is close to the Gaullist The Republicans (LR) party and its new leader, Laurent Wauquiez, was pointing to divisions between LR and its ostensible German ally, the CDU. Wauquiez claims to favor “economic protectionism” and is moving towards the neo-fascist National Front. “It is time for France to take care of our European priorities, and not only to be naïve about the Franco-German relationship. Germany is not the only country in Europe,” Wauquiez said on television, when asked about Merkel’s criticisms of protectionism.

Le Monde alluded to deep social opposition among German workers to the Grand Coalition’s right-wing agenda, which culminated in a recent metalworkers’ strike. It called the conservative/social-democratic coalition deal “an ad hoc compromise that aims to avoid what the leaders fear above all: the holding of new elections.” It added that the coalition agreement “gives mainly the impression of trying to guarantee the survival of an existing order.”

What is left unsaid is that the Grand Coalition deal and the Berlin-Paris axis to “lead” the post-Brexit EU are based on the most right-wing program since fascist parties ruled Europe. Berlin is rearming and preparing an aggressive military policy, combined with stepped-up repression at home, and the Grand Coalition is working with Macron on his reactionary social agenda and the imposition of a military-austerity diktat across Europe.

Macron aims to tear up all the social gains of the working class after the October 1917 revolution and the Soviet Union’s defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. His labor decrees, worked out with the SPD, allow the unions to suspend the Labor Code and impose sub-minimum wage salaries, workplace by workplace. He also plans to end lifetime employment guarantees for public sector workers and rail workers, privatize the railways, and make draconian cuts to unemployment insurance. Unspecified, deep cuts to pensions and health care are announced for later in his term.

At the same time—amid escalating conflicts between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing threatening to provoke war between major nuclear powers—Macron and Merkel are plunging tens of billions of euros into tax cuts for the rich, the army, and nuclear weapons.

This agenda is deeply unpopular. Just as 70 percent of the French people opposed the labor law and Macron’s labor decrees, barely 30 percent of Germans support the Grand Coalition.

The Berlin-Paris axis proceeds only because Europe’s population is kept in the dark about its plans. Germany’s Left Party, which has aligned itself with the Grand Coalition, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon or the New Anticapitalist Party in France, who tacitly fell in behind the media campaign for a Macron vote and refused to boycott last year’s presidential run-off, are all politically complicit.

This underscores the significance of the call of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP) for a rejection of the Grand Coalition and for new elections—what *Le Monde* admits the ruling class fears most. The SGP has demanded the publication of the secret agreements, between the German parties and between Berlin and Paris, underlying the Grand Coalition deal. This aims to give a voice to the working class and a way to intervene in political struggle against the drive to militarism and austerity in Europe.

There is no national road to oppose militarism and austerity. The forces claiming to speak for French national interests against Germany are unflinchingly chauvinist and anti-working class. The way forward for European workers opposed to the Grand Coalition is to fight to unify their struggles with those of their class brothers and sisters in Germany and support the revolutionary and internationalist campaign of the SGP and International Committee of the Fourth International.



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