

# Inviting Trump to Paris, Macron evokes the specter of fascism and the 1930s

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As he prepares to host US President Donald Trump on Saturday in Paris for the centenary of the armistice that ended World War I, French President Emmanuel Macron gave a long interview last week to *Ouest France*. In it, he warned that Europe faces the same threats today as 100 years ago, in the years between World War I and the rise of fascism and the eruption of World War II in 1939.

Amid rising working class anger at his policies, the “president of the rich” continued his empty posturing as a “progressive” opponent of nationalism and of far-right critics of the EU like Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. With protests called against Trump’s visit on November 11, and against austerity and fuel price hikes on November 17, he tried to speak to popular concern over the danger of dictatorship and war.

He declared: “I am struck by the resemblance between the era we live in and the inter-war period. In a Europe that is today divided by fears, nationalist resentments, the consequences of the economic crisis, we are seeing the almost methodical re-emergence of everything that shaped the life of Europe between the end of World War I and the 1929 stock market crash. We must keep this in mind, be lucid, and know how to resist this.”

Macron’s statement amounted to an acknowledgment from the French head of state of what millions of workers worldwide sense: the danger of war and authoritarian rule is real and growing. Yet Macron, a so-called “progressive” investment banker, only proposes policies that intensify these dangers, rooted in the grotesque social inequality and historic bankruptcy of capitalism. The only force that can offer a way forward in the struggle against the danger of a relapse into the barbarism of the 1930s is the working class.

Macron did not even try to reconcile his criticisms of nationalism with his invitation to Trump, the parasitic billionaire who personifies more than anyone the attempt to stir up fascistic nationalism and anti-immigrant hatreds to pursue militaristic and anti-social policies.

Less than two weeks before, Trump had cancelled the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty. Shortly before that, US Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison had threatened to bomb Russia in order to “take out” Russian missiles she claimed violate the treaty. As he scrapped the INF treaty, a measure expected to produce nuclear arms races both with Russia and China, Trump was also deploying thousands of US troops to the Mexican border to set up mass prison camps and threaten to shoot defenseless migrants seeking asylum.

Yet Macron warmly greets Trump in Paris while hypocritically denouncing Salvini and Orban.

These denunciations are essentially false, as Macron makes them in the service of the same class interests as Trump or Macron’s neo-fascist rivals in Europe. His plans for the European Union (EU) to spend hundreds of billions of euros more on the army, and for pension cuts, rail privatization and austerity targeted against workers aim to fuse the EU into a militarized imperialist bloc. As Macron then explained to *Ouest France*, verbal criticisms of nationalism in Europe aim to preserve this bloc’s crumbling unity and to advance its geopolitical interests.

He said: “Ours is an era of great powers who develop their policies on a planetary scale; rules for competition and order still have to be established. Europe faces a danger: to be torn apart by the nationalist cancer, thrown about by foreign powers, and to lose its sovereignty. This means having its security depend on

US decisions, having China more involved in key infrastructure, Russia sometimes tempted by manipulation, big financial interests and markets sometimes going beyond the weight that states can have.”

In fact, Macron’s presidency marked the breakdown of the EU’s ability to posture as a democratic alternative to the far right. Last year, Macron was elected by default against neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen, who had hailed Trump’s election. And Macron was hailed as part of a tandem with German Chancellor Angela Merkel that would make the European Union (EU) the new “leader of the free world,” perhaps through an alliance with the US Democratic Party, after Trump’s election.

A year later, these pretensions are in tatters. Merkel has announced her retirement as chancellor amid a furious campaign to rearm Germany, legitimize German militarism and promote German fascist traditions. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer declared that he would have joined a neo-Nazi riot in Chemnitz, amid growing evidence of collusion between the state and far right circles and mass protests mobilizing hundreds of thousands across Germany.

German intelligence also placed the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International) on a list of “left extremist groups” for opposing far-right militarism, while acknowledging that the SGP did not engage in violent activity.

As Macron’s allies in Berlin chart a far-right course and threaten to suppress oppositional sentiment at home, Macron is on essentially the same course. His forced privatization and wage cutting at the National Railways (SNCF), first proposed under a state of emergency suspending democratic rights and imposed despite strike action and overwhelming opposition by rail workers, has discredited his austerity agenda and shattered his presidency.

His raids on La France insoumise (LFI), an organization whose presidential candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon received 20 percent of the vote, signaled that the vast police state powers built under the French state of emergency can and will be mobilized against peaceful political opposition.

This evolution vindicates the position taken by the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (PES, the French section of

the ICFI) during the 2017 presidential election. It called for an active boycott of the run-off between Macron and Le Pen, in order to give a political line for the building of a movement in the working class against whichever candidate won. In doing so, the PES was not in the least unmindful of the danger of authoritarian rule in France. However, it warned correctly that Macron is no alternative to the far right danger and xenophobic nationalism represented by Le Pen.

And in *Ouest France*, Macron insisted that his model is Georges Clemenceau, the French president at the end of World War I. A ferocious defender of the Versailles peace treaty aiming to cripple and humiliate Germany, Clemenceau also demanded the execution of anti-war soldiers and draconian suppression of socialist, anti-war sentiment. Hailing “Clemenceau’s message,” Macron said he was “the father of victory, when all seems lost and the troops are in despair, he does not submit.”

In fact, the international upsurge of protests and strikes is an indication that masses of workers are moving into opposition to the European bourgeoisie’s militarism and austerity. The emerging movement against far right politics across Europe can only be waged as a political struggle, posing the issue of the transfer of power to the working class and the building of workers states pursuing socialist policies. This signifies, as the European sections of the ICFI insist, the struggle against the EU and for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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