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Karl Marx, [*Second Address on the Franco-Prussian War*]⁸⁰

[...] The war of defence ended, in point of fact, with the surrender of Louis Bonaparte, the Sedan capitulation, and the proclamation of the republic at Paris. [...] The German working class have resolutely supported the war, which it was not in their power to prevent, as a war for German independence and the liberation of France and Europe from that pestilential incubus, the Second Empire. It was the German workmen who, together with the rural labourers, furnished the sinews and muscles of heroic hosts, leaving behind their half-starved families. Decimated by the battles abroad, they will be once more decimated by misery at home. In their turn, they are now coming forward to ask for ‘guarantees’ – guarantees that their immense sacrifices have not been bought in vain, that they have conquered liberty, that the victory over the imperialist armies will not, as in 1815, be turned into the defeat of the German people; and, as the first of these guarantees, they claim an *honorable peace for France*, and the *recognition of the French republic*.

The Central Committee of the German Social-Democratic Workmen’s Party issued, on 5 September, a manifesto, energetically insisting upon these guarantees.

‘We,’ they say, ‘protest against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. And we are conscious of speaking in the name of the German working class. In the common interest of France and Germany, in the interest of western civilization

⁸⁰ This is an excerpt from Karl Marx’s (see note 1) *Second Address of the General Council of the International Working Men’s Association on the Franco-Prussian War*. It became necessary after the French defeat at Sedan and establishment of the provisional government of the Third Republic. It was written between 6 and 9 September, and approved on the latter date by the GC. It was released in English as a flyer and partially published in *The Pall-Mall Gazette* on the 16th of the same month. Publication in German and French soon followed in several newspapers and magazines of the IWMA. The full version is in GC, IV: 333–42.

against eastern barbarism, the German workmen will not patiently tolerate the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.... We shall faithfully stand by our fellow workmen in all countries for the common international cause of the proletariat!’

[...] We hail the advent of the republic in France, but at the same time we labour under misgivings which we hope will prove groundless. That republic has not subverted the throne, but only taken its place, become vacant. It has been proclaimed, not as a social conquest, but as a national measure of defence. It is in the hands of a Provisional Government composed partly of notorious Orleanists, partly of middle-class republicans, upon some of whom the insurrection of June 1848 has left its indelible stigma. [...] Some of their acts go far to show that they have inherited from the empire, not only ruins, but also its dread of the working class. [...] The French working class moves, therefore, under circumstances of extreme difficulty. Any attempt at upsetting the new government in the present crisis, when the enemy is almost knocking at the doors of Paris, would be a desperate folly. The French workmen must perform their duties as citizens; but, at the same time, they must not allow themselves to be swayed by the national *souvenirs* of 1792, as the French peasant allowed themselves to be deluded by the national *souvenirs* of the First Empire. They have not to recapitulate the past, but to build up the future. Let them calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities of republican liberty, for the work of their own class organization. It will gift them with fresh herculean powers for the regeneration of France, and our common task – the emancipation of labour. Upon their energies and wisdom hinges the fate of the republic. [...]

Let the sections of the International Working Men’s Association in every country stir the working classes to action. If they forsake their duty, if they remain passive, the present tremendous war will be but the harbinger of still deadlier international feuds, and lead in every nation to a renewed triumph over the workman by the lords of the sword, of the soil, and of capital. *Vive la Republique!*