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**Interview with Emmanuel Macron 'We Need to Develop Political Heroism'**

**In a DER SPIEGEL interview, French President Emmanuel Macron talks about his first months in office, elaborates on his plans for Europe and discusses his developing relationship with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.**

Interview Conducted by [Klaus Brinkbäumer](http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/interview-with-french-president-emmanuel-macron-a-1172745.html), [Julia Amalia Heyer](http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/interview-with-french-president-emmanuel-macron-a-1172745.html) and Britta Sandberg in Paris

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Jerome Bonnet/ DER SPIEGEL

**DER SPIEGEL:** Mr. President, since entering office in May, you have made significant waves around the world. The German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who you read during your university studies, once described Napoleon Bonaparte as "the *Weltgeist* ("world spirit") on horseback." Do you believe that a single person can, in fact, steer history?

**Macron:** No. Hegel viewed the "great men" as instruments of something far greater. It should be said that in referring to him in that way, he wasn't being particularly nice to Napoleon, because he of course knows that history can always outflank you, that it is always larger than the individual. Hegel believes that an individual can indeed embody the zeitgeist for a moment, but also that the individual isn't always clear they are doing so.

**DER SPIEGEL:** How must a president, a politician, behave to move things forward and to change history?

**Macron:** Personally, I don't think it's possible to do great things alone or through individual actions. On the contrary, I think it is only possible to know what to do in a specific moment once you have understood the zeitgeist, and it is only possible to move things forward if you have a sense of responsibility. And that is exactly the goal I have set for myself: to try to encourage France and the French people to change and develop further. But that can only be done as a collective, with one another. You have to bundle the strength of those who want to take that step. The same is true for Europe.

(*The president's dog wanders in.*)

**Macron:** Nemo, sit!

**DER SPIEGEL:** Nemo ... did you name him that?

**Macron:** Yes. He was abandoned as a puppy and spent a year in an animal shelter. I had decided that I wanted a dog from an animal shelter. Normally, presidents have purebred dogs, but he is a Labrador-griffon mix. Absolutely adorable. Quite a stroke of fortune, isn't it? From the animal shelter to the Élysée Palace. I quite like the idea, even if he has little idea where he has ended up.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You have lived for the last five months here in the Élysée, an almost mythical place. Do you feel that you have changed at all? Infallibility? Megalomania?

**Macron:** I try to follow certain rules. Nothing here should become habitual, because routine lends one a deceptive feeling of security. You begin not noticing certain things and lose your focus on what's important. Uncertainty and change keep you attentive. This place and, to a certain extent, my office, help me avoid developing habits. The function of president in France is one of significant symbolic value; it can't be compared with that of prime minister or cabinet member. Everything you do, everything you say - but also what you don't say - suddenly has meaning. That might sound quite formidable or even stressful, but I think it is a product of the history of this role.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What's it like to live here?

**Macron:** It is a place laden with history. The emperors spent time here, Napoleon I and Napoleon III. In the Fourth Republic, it was the palace of a president without powers. Only in the Fifth Republic did Charles de Gaulle move back in. It is a place where power has left its mark - over the course of centuries, ever since the revolution. You just sort of become part of it and continue the history. But, of course, there is a sense of gravitas.

**DER SPIEGEL:** That sounds a bit suffocating.

**Macron:** No, because you can leave this place when you want to. I go out and I say and do what I want - even if people may find that shocking. One could, of course, decide to be suffocated by all the pomp here. But if you decide to resist it, then you won't be suffocated.

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**DER SPIEGEL:** It seems your predecessors weren't always particularly successful in that effort.

**Macron:** What is clear is that being president is the end of innocence for you as an individual. Nothing is innocent anymore when you are president. And that changes your life dramatically. Normally, everyone can afford the luxury of doing things that make no sense. They do things, no matter what it is, and nobody cares. But when you are president, everything is significant, at least for the others. Everything is important and could even have profound consequences. That is sometimes troubling, yes. But it isn't overwhelming.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Do you think that Angela Merkel feels the same way?

**Macron:** Germany is different from France. You are more Protestant, which results in a significant difference. Through the church, through Catholicism, French society was structured vertically, from top to bottom. I am convinced that it has remained so until today. That might sound shocking to some - and don't worry, I don't see myself as a king. But whether you like it or not, France's history is unique in Europe. Not to put too fine a point on it, France is a country of regicidal monarchists. It is a paradox: The French want to elect a king, but they would like to be able to overthrow him whenever they want. The office of president is not a normal office - that is something one should understand when one occupies it. You have to be prepared to be disparaged, insulted and mocked - that is in the French nature. And: As president, you cannot have a desire to be loved. Which is, of course, difficult because everybody wants to be loved. But in the end, that's not important. What is important is serving the country and moving it forward.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Often, things work quite a bit different in practice than in theory, even for those who have thought through every step.

**Macron:** That is true. You can anticipate and plan everything, but when you actually experience it, it's different. For me, my office isn't first and foremost a political or technical one. Rather, it is symbolic. I am a strong believer that modern political life must rediscover a sense for symbolism. We need to develop a kind of political heroism. I don't mean that I want to play the hero. But we need to be amenable once again to creating grand narratives. If you like, post-modernism was the worst thing that could have happened to our democracy. The idea that you have to deconstruct and destroy all grand narratives is not a good one. Since then, trust has evaporated in everything and everyone. I am sometimes surprised that it is the media that are the first ones to exhibit a lack of trust in grand narratives. They believe that destroying something is part of their journalistic purpose because something grand must inevitably contain an element of evil. Critique is necessary, but where does this hate for the so-called grand narrative come from?

**DER SPIEGEL:** Why is this narrative so important?

**Macron:** I think we need it badly! Why is a portion of our youth so fascinated by extremes, jihadism for example? Why do modern democracies refuse to allow their citizens to dream? Why can't there be such a thing as democratic heroism? Perhaps exactly that is our task: rediscovering something like that together for the 21st century.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You have been increasingly criticized in France due to your aloofness. You have been accused of arrogance and hubris.

**Macron:** Who is leveling those accusations? The press.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Not just the press.

**Macron:** Have you ever heard someone on the street say: "He is aloof?"

**DER SPIEGEL:** Yes.

**Macron:** I am not aloof. When I travel through the country, when I visit a factory, my staff tells me after three hours that I am ruining the schedule. When I am with French people, I am not aloof because I belong to them. My view is that the French president belongs to the French people, because he emanates from them. What I do is this: I am putting an end to the cronyism between politics and the media. For a president, constantly speaking to journalists, constantly being surrounded by journalists, has nothing to do with closeness to the people. A president should keep the media at arm's length.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You recently held a celebrated speech at the Sorbonne about Europe in which you said you would like to "rebuild" Europe.

**Macron:** Regarding the speech, I am quite modest about it. There has always been extensive talk about Europe. My initiative contains some new elements, but I also revisited ideas that have been around for a while and been proposed by others.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Modesty has thus far not been one of you most noticeable qualities.

**Macron:** What's new is this: Since 2005, when the French and the Dutch voted "no" on a constitution for Europe, nobody has developed a real project for the EU. And certainly not France. If there were ideas, they came from Wolfgang Schäuble or Joschka Fischer, and these German ideas were downright quashed by France. I want to put an end to that. Perhaps I am following in the footsteps of Mitterrand, who really did want to shape Europe. My predecessors, by contrast, thought it was best to say nothing at all and to keep all their options open. That may sound like a tactical approach, but perhaps it was simply because they didn't have any ideas for Europe at all.

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**DER SPIEGEL:** You have proposed the establishment of new institutions and the simplification of procedures. But isn't Europe's problem more that everyone seems intent on pursuing their own interests?

**Macron:** What I am proposing is to start a new chapter in Europe. To begin this adventure anew, and differently, if you'd like. The institutions as such aren't particularly important to me - and I think most people feel the same. The problem is that debates over Europe have become disputes between experts and lawyers. Yet Europe was initially supposed to be primarily a political project! The EU never would have come about had it been up to experts or diplomats. It was created by people who had learned from the drama of our collective history. I am proposing a new beginning, not one in which it is first deliberated ad infinitum what instruments one needs, but one that follows from the goals we want to achieve. What do we want? What should our Europe look like? I want to renew the European dream and reawaken ambitions for it.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What does the Europe you dream of look like?

**Macron:** For me, Europe consists of three things: sovereignty, unity and democracy. If we keep our eyes on these goals and work toward them together then - and only then - can we fulfill our promise: the guarantee of lasting peace, prosperity and freedom. Let's put an end to this European civil war, the existence of which we don't want to admit, and stop constantly looking at whether we are better than our neighboring country at this or the other thing. We have to be open to new things, and that includes things that have been taboo until now: France still insists that the treaties cannot be changed. Germany doesn't want any financial transfers. We have to leave these old ways of thinking behind.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What does that mean concretely?

**Macron:** I think the goal should be that of creating a space that protects us and helps us survive in this world. The European community of values is unique: It combines democracy with the market economy, individual freedoms with social justice. How can we expect the U.S. or China to defend these values, this one-of-a-kind European balancing act that has developed over the course of decades? The challenges are manifold, issues such as migration or terrorism are important to us all. But the switch to renewable sources of energy must also be planned together. And last, but not least, there is digitalization and the societal change that goes along with it. We can only have success on all those fronts if we move forward together.

**DER SPIEGEL:** How do you intend to do so? How can you get the Eastern Europeans to get behind your project, and all those countries that are increasingly displaying nationalist tendencies and that don't want to have anything to do with Europe anymore?

**Macron:** I don't think what you say is true. I was in Bulgaria in August. The people there are excited about Europe. We can't start dividing people up into categories. In the past, France has often committed the error of not speaking to everybody because there was a belief that some countries could be neglected. I am convinced that there is a desire for Europe. And by the way, who is to be blamed if that isn't the case? The Europeans. We have allowed the development of a kind of collective defeatism and are allowing primarily those to speak who hate Europe and want to give up on it.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You are exaggerating.

**Macron:** I have often taken part in grotesque meetings as a sherpa. It was said there, for example, that summits exclusively for Eurozone members shouldn't be held because it could offend the British or the Poles. And what have we woken up to five years later? The British want to leave and the Poles are increasingly distancing themselves from Europe. That only shows that the more reticent one is with European ambitions, the less progress one makes.

**DER SPIEGEL:** How important is the trans-Atlantic relationship with the U.S. to you?

**Macron:** The trans-Atlantic relationship is strong and must remain so. The U.S. is an ally in the camp of freedom. On security and military questions, whether in Iraq and Syria or in Africa, we are closely tied to one another. But we have to establish a joint strategy on other issues, such as Iran and North Korea, but also on climate change. That's why I think it is important to speak at length with the American president and show him a path forward for possible cooperation. I feel an obligation to do so.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Does Trump make you afraid?

**Macron:** (*Thinks for some time before answering.*) Trump is here, he is the head of a global power. I speak with him and explain my views. We have an extremely cordial relationship. Sometimes, we have contradictory views but sometimes we agree. I won't stop working together with him.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You speak of a united Europe, but one gets the impression that you are fond of taking unilateral action - things like inviting Trump to Paris, offering to mediate between the Iraqi government and the Kurds following the independence referendum and holding an important speech on the future of Europe two days after the German elections.

**Macron:** Every country has its own diplomacy. Being part of Europe doesn't mean giving up one's independence or no longer being able to take the initiative. There are 27 of us - does that mean it is forbidden for some of us to be more ambitious than the others? No, otherwise stasis would be the result and we would be putting ourselves in handcuffs. For example, I often speak with (Turkish) President (Recep Tayyip) Erdogan. I have established a certain relationship with him and talk about it with the German chancellor. When I speak with the Turkish president, I defend European positions. That is how we European partners must do things. You also will have taken note of the fact that I intentionally avoided holding my Sorbonne speech before the elections in Germany. I coordinated closely with the chancellor and spoke with her at the end of the campaign and even on the evening of the election. She even received a copy of my speech before I delivered it.

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**DER SPIEGEL:** Did you change anything in your speech as a result?

**Macron:** I took into account some things and deliberately left open the technical implementation on some points. I don't trust certain political debates that often lead to big things failing because of the technical details. But we are essentially in agreement: The chancellor concurs with the goals and direction I outlined in my speech, and that is important to me. Of significance is our joint ambition to create something new for Europe. It was important to me to avoid triggering discussions in Germany that would have forced the chancellor to distance herself from my speech. We were able to prevent that thanks to close consultation and perfect coordination.

**DER SPIEGEL:** "France must make it possible for Europe to take a leading role in the free world," you said recently. That doesn't sound particularly modest, either.

**Macron:** Ambition is never modest. If modesty means to have middling success, then I can only say: I'm not interested. France has a special position: We are Continental Europe's nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This special role, though, only makes sense if France fills it as a member state of the European Union. France cannot play this role alone, it must be seen as a part of Europe. I have always insisted on that. Our international role depends on a strong Europe and a strong Europe depends on France's ability to share leadership with others, including Germany. If France is economically weak and doesn't carry out reforms, it is no longer credible. Europe's position on the global stage is thus weakened. I would like to change all that. France needs a strong Germany and a strong chancellor. But Germany also needs a strong France.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told us in an interview that he has learned a lot from Angela Merkel. Is the same true for you?

**Macron:** I speak often with Madame Merkel. We talk at least once or twice a week. We send messages to each other regularly and have a lot of joint meetings. I have great respect for her, even if we have a lot of differences.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What kind of differences?

**Macron:** We don't have the same history or the same background, yet there is still this complete desire to understand each other. I have extremely friendly feelings for your chancellor. I think she is very courageous, and that is one reason I have such great respect for her. But I also know that she has now survived French presidents for 12 years. I am constantly trying to imagine all the mistakes my predecessors made and to avoid repeating them.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Despite all the differences, is there something that unites the two of you?

**Macron:** Yes, of course. We are both people who proceed methodically, we love details. (*The Europe adviser in the room nods vigorously.*) At summits, we two are among the few heads of state and government who take notes. I have always been someone who wants to explore things down to the last detail so I can understand them. And she is the same, I value that about her. I love the discussions that we have with each other about such things.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You are more than 23 years younger than the German chancellor. Do you nevertheless see your relationship as one of equal partners?

**Macron:** Absolutely. I tell her, for example, that we can't stop here with Europe - we must continue to move forward. I think we complement each other. What I really value in her is that she has never tried to tap the brakes on my élan, my enthusiasm. She tells me: I'm not going to play the role of the person who has already experienced and seen everything.

**DER SPIEGEL:** It almost sounds like you are a bit in love.

**Macron:** We have developed an extremely close relationship. I never would have held the Europe speech at the Sorbonne had Angela Merkel and I not agreed on the salient points.

**DER SPIEGEL:** She is not, in other words, the political Sphynx she is for many Germans, who still have the feeling that they don't really know their chancellor?

**Macron:** No, and I would even say: Madame Merkel embodies Germany's 20th century fate. It is not up to me to pass judgment on her place in history, but I believe that she is the chancellor of Germany's reconciliation with Europe. She stands for a Germany for whom globalization has been a success and which accepts its role in foreign and defense policy. I thought the way she dealt with the refugees was courageous. I think she is the chancellor of reconciliation. And I hope that she can become the chancellor of the rebuilding of Europe, in close cooperation with the role that I will play in the process.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Are you concerned that Merkel's potential coalition government with the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens could stand in the way of your European project? The rise of the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany will also certainly make things more difficult.

**Macron:** I don't think so and I told the chancellor that as well. There are three possible ways to react to right-wing extremist parties. The first is to act as though they don't exist and to no longer risk taking political initiatives that could get these parties against you. That has happened many times in France and we have seen that it doesn't work. The people that you are actually hoping to support no longer see themselves reflected in your party's speeches. And it allows the right wing to build its audience. The second reaction is to chase after these right-wing extremist parties in fascination.

**DER SPIEGEL:** And the third possibility?

**Macron:** To say, these people are my true enemies and to engage them in battle. Exactly that is the story of the second round of the presidential election in France. That is also what I told our German friends: Don't be shy with these people. Look at me, the Front National got many more votes than the AfD. Ms. Le Pen ended up with 34 percent of the vote, 34 percent! I defended Europe, an open society and all my values. And today, the Front National has been significantly weakened. In the debates, you don't hear anything from them anymore - because we engaged them in battle. Now is the time to be bold! The only answer to the AfD is courage and ambition.

**DER SPIEGEL:** In all seriousness, how do you intend to gain support for this project from an AfD voter who feels threatened by globalization and Europe?

**Macron:** The point is to show that Europe protects people. The rise of the AfD could also be an opportunity to force us to clarify things. Many European parties, including the conventional parties in France, no longer have the ability to keep people together. And in terms of the coalition government, I am convinced that the chancellor has the necessary will and ambition. I want to be very cautious with my statements about her coalition negotiations, but support for Europe is part of the DNA of both the Greens and the FDP. I was very pleased that the heads of both parties spoke out positively about the European project. I also took note of Wolfgang Schäuble's enthusiasm for rebuilding Europe. As such, I am hopeful.

**DER SPIEGEL:** The weekly magazine *Le Point* has described you as "France's last chance." Does that create pressure for you?

**Macron:** No, otherwise I would not have taken on this battle. If this enormous pressure didn't exist, I wouldn't have been elected. It would have been one of the usual candidates. But that also means that there is no time for a breather right now. I titled my book "Revolution." And that is exactly what it is. France is experiencing a time of transformation - in education, on the labor market and in the pensions system. We're talking about a cultural revolution.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Many French people view you as a representative of a world that is not theirs. You have referred to these people as "slackers" or have told them, as you did last week, that they should find a job instead of protesting and creating chaos. Why do you do that?

**Macron:** People have been accusing me of that ever since I got involved in politics. Some would just like to stick a pin through me like insect researchers do a dried butterfly and then say: Look, there's the banker who doesn't like people. If that were the case, I would not be here. I am not arrogant to the French - I am determined. During the election, I traveled all across the country. I like my country and the French. I love talking with them and convincing them. It is my job each day to fight for my compatriots. But also to not succumb to demagoguery and lies or agree to favors.

**DER SPIEGEL:** The French left views you as an unbending neoliberal who protects his own caste.

**Macron:** What does one have to do today to reconcile France? Distribute public money - that's what some expect, especially the radical left. They think that you help people by handing them money. But that is a fallacy because it is not me distributing the money, but rather future generations. So, it is my duty to say: Something has to change. I say that very directly, in clear words so that nobody can misunderstand me. And I believe in our new initiative for continuing education and vocational training. For French people who are socially disadvantaged, this means real recognition and support.

**DER SPIEGEL:** But it is precisely those French who also can't understand why you want to get rid of the wealth tax.

**Macron:** Why? Because the wealth tax doesn't do anything for them. It doesn't exist in Germany or elsewhere in Europe. So, we want to build up Europe and yet retain the wealth tax at the same time? And what is it that leads company founders to leave, which in turn results in the loss of those jobs? We aren't protecting the people who most need it when those who can contribute to the country's success emigrate. Contrary to what some claim, I am not doing this to help the rich. My predecessor taxed wealthy, successful people at a higher rate than ever before. And what happened? They left. And what came of it? Did unemployment drop? No.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You are aware of the power of symbols. And by eliminating the wealth tax, you took a symbolic step that has riled up the left against you.

**Macron:** I stand completely behind this decision. I am not from the political or banking elite. I am a child of the middle class far from Paris. And if someone had told me that success is bad or if they had placed hurdles in my path, I wouldn't be where I am today. I want it to be possible for young people in our country to be successful - whether they want to find that success in the family, as an artist or by founding a company. I refuse to give into the sad reflex of French envy because this envy paralyzes our country. We cannot create jobs without company owners, the state cannot create jobs by decree.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You visited Germany this week, where you opened the Frankfurt Book Fair together with Angela Merkel. What do you learn about your country when you read contemporary French authors like Michel Houllebecq, Virginie Despentes or Patrick Modiano?

**Macron:** Houllebecq is surely the novelist who best describes contemporary phobias and fears. He also succeeds perhaps like no other in portraying the postmodern character of our society. He addresses the possibilities of genetics at times, or Islamism, and infuses all of it with a certain amount of absurdity. I get a very strong sense of that in "Submission." The way he toys with the absurd makes him an author *sui generis*, one who stands out from the others. I call the fears that Houllebecq so magnificently describes "sad passions." Patrick Modiano, on the other hand, is a melancholic author who describes a certain Paris, with an obsession for World War II and the traces it has left behind in our society.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Who else do you read?

**Macron:** I am very interested in writers from the Francophone world. I like Kamel Daoud a lot, for example. In "The Meursault Investigation" and "Zabor," he shows a passion for the French language, a very special way of writing that belongs to those who live on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. It is language that connects us. It allows people there to cling to our history, our culture and sometimes also our values. Leila Slimani, a Moroccan who has lived in France for years, has also written impressive books about society in France today and about our contemporary societies in general. I thoroughly believe that reading and literature can help a society to better understand itself.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Your prime minister writes novels, as does your economics minister. When will your first novel be published?

**Macron:** I do write, but for now I am keeping it all in the desk drawer. I have always written. The only book that I have published was "Revolution," during the election campaign, a book that contains both personal and political chapters. I have never been happy with what I have written, including three novels that, from my point of view, are incomplete.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What was missing? What wasn't good enough?

**Macron:** In political life, dissatisfaction is remedied, or at least combated, through action. For as long as you are not totally satisfied, you remain active and keep going. In literary life, at some point you have to stop and allow others to read what you have written. I find that difficult. I am probably too proud. In any case, that is why I have never published anything. But I do plan to do so one day.

**DER SPIEGEL:** It was your grandmother, for the most part, who introduced you to literature and encouraged you to read.

**Macron:** That is true. The story of my grandmother is that of a French woman from the provinces who through her perseverance and thirst for knowledge worked her way up to become the head of a school. She belonged to a generation that didn't travel much. She took perhaps two trips, but no more. But she believed in Europe and she wanted Europe. And she read a lot - she knew mythology, literature and the classics very well. She passed that on to me, along with the conviction that you can earn your own position in society.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Can you still remember the first German book you read?

**Macron:** My father read Günter Grass. He introduced me to German literature. I believe the first book I read by a German author was from Grass.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Which one was it?

**Macron:** Wait a second. I don't want to say something that's inaccurate. I read Goethe in a bilingual edition and then a lot of philosophy later on. In terms of contemporary German literature, however, it was Grass and Patrick Süskind.

**DER SPIEGEL:** "Perfume"?

**Macron:** Yes. But also "The Double-Bass." By Grass, of course "The Tin Drum." After that, Thomas Mann accompanied me for a few years during my literature studies. I tried again and again to read the original German text, but I never really succeeded. German poetry also touches me, especially the Romantics.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What about music from German composers?

**Macron:** I come from a family in which music was important, especially German music -- from Bach to Beethoven. I played a lot of piano, mostly Bach. I really loved Glenn Gould's interpretations. The subject of the master class I was supposed to take, incidentally, was "The Well-Tempered Clavier." It is a universe within itself. The music has such a depth, such an intimacy - it is touching and timeless at the same time. What I like about Bach is that there are no bells and whistles. It's like looking at a painting by Georges de La Tour: Despite all its beauty, there is an extreme austerity. It forces a person to drop any sense of vanity. As terribly banal as it may sound, Mozart was the most brilliant. You can play the role of the biggest snob, but it always comes down to that. When Daniel Barenboim was in Paris a short time ago, we spoke about this very thing. Even he enjoys playing Mozart the most. Mozart is to music something like Rimbaud was to literature. They are people who created something that nobody before them had. Absolute geniuses. You can recognize their harmonies among thousands. There is something very powerful about German music. That's why I chose German music with a European meaning for the day of my election. Accompanied by the music of a deaf German ...

**DER SPIEGEL:** ... you're referring to Beethoven, of course, the Ninth Symphony ...

**Macron:** ... I crossed the inner courtyard of the Louvre to the sound of the European anthem.

**DER SPIEGEL:** What has life been like for you since then?

**Macron:** I travel a lot - around France, Europe and the world. In the exceptional event that there is no evening appointment or obligations dictated to me by protocol or a working dinner with colleagues, I go through files here.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Are there ever occasions when you find yourself sitting here in this lounge reading together with your wife?

**Macron:** Yes, so far, we have succeeded in maintaining a certain amount of togetherness. We have at least one night a week when we see each other. And I have never given up reading. I read each evening, at night and whenever possible during the day when I am traveling. I have always read.

**DER SPIEGEL:** You have said several times that the family of your wife Brigitte, her children and seven grandchildren, are your bedrock, your foundation. Is there room for them in the Élysée?

**Macron:** Oh yes, our children and grandchildren visit us regularly. The little ones are constantly running around outside in the garden. The first time they were intimidated by this place, but now they move around here totally normally. I think it is important that people really live in this place.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Have you changed many things since you moved in?

**Macron:** Everything. This office, for example, looked totally different. There was a giant, heavy rug and a lot more furniture. We made everything lighter and more modern and we provided more space to contemporary artists. I want to open up this palace. A concert will be held tonight. We have invited school classes from socially disadvantaged neighborhoods and Élysée Palace staff and their families. That's 200 people who normally wouldn't have access to this building. Living in a place like this also means sharing it with others.

**DER SPIEGEL:** Mr. President, we thank you for this interview.