

Merkel is starting a battle in order to save her duet with Sarkozy

Merkel zaczyna walkę o przetrwanie duetu z Sarkozym, Rafał Sadowski

On 29 January the CDU secretary general, Hermann Gröhe announced that the German Chancellor Angela Merkel would actively back Nicolas Sarkozy in his presidential campaign, which will include her participating in Sarkozy's electoral rallies. At the same time Gröhe starkly criticised Sarkozy's counter-candidate the socialist François Hollande by claiming that his proposals challenging the fiscal compact or the redistribution of national revenues would "weaken France and, in consequence, Europe". The announcement of the active participation of the German chancellor in the presidential election in France is unprecedented.

Commentary

- Germany and France's right and left-wing political parties are in close co-operation. The French Socialist Party's candidate François Hollande gained the support of the German SPD during its congress held on 5 December 2011 in Berlin. Similarly, in the case of the right-wing CDU and UMP, despite the initial lukewarm relations between Merkel and Sarkozy, the French president endorsed the German chancellor in the 2009 election and their co-operation grew closer in 2011 with regard to preventing a crisis in the eurozone.
- The CDU, by pledging its support for Sarkozy, who is losing out to Hollande in opinion polls, is seeking to preserve the Merkel-Sarkozy tandem. Hollande's victory would make it necessary to review the current agreements between the two countries. Hollande expressed reservations about the inclusion in the constitution of the principle of a balanced budget and called for a renegotiation of the fiscal pact, the issuing of euro bonds and an extension of the European Central Bank's mandate; all of which Germany opposes.
- The CDU's support for Sarkozy has come about due to Sarkozy's announcements about introducing structural reforms in France modelled on the German ones (including cuts in public spending, the liberalisation of the labour market and an increase in VAT); all of which are rejected by Hollande. In his recent statements Sarkozy has often referred to Germany as a model. This is also linked to public opinion polls in which 62% of the French are in favour of introducing certain elements of the German social and economic model and 74% believe that Germany is better at managing its economy than France.

- Sarkozy's victory would guarantee the pain-free establishment of a new power structure in the EU, where the most important decisions would be made by Paris and Berlin with the participation of the eurozone states. However, in this structure it is Germany that occupies the stronger position. This has been caused by a deteriorating economic situation in France.
- Even if Hollande wins the presidential election both countries will be in close co-operation. Hollande has refrained from responding to criticism from CDU representative and announced that he would pay his first foreign visit to Germany.