

German ruling party lauds Hungarian Premier Orbán

Markus Salzmann
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Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán was guest of honour September 23 at a conference of the CSU parliamentary group held in the Banz monastery, Bavaria. The invitation extended by the Christian Social Union, the Bavarian partner of the ruling Christian Democratic Union, was a deliberate attempt to incite xenophobic sentiments and pressure the policy of the government even further to the right.

For the past five years the Hungarian Prime Minister has been systematically establishing an authoritarian state, introducing measures aimed at wiping out basic democratic rights such as freedom of the press and social rights, and, notably, the introduction of compulsory labor for welfare recipients.

In the Banz monastery Orbán described himself as a “border guard captain,” who insisted on measures to block the “wave of migration.” He regards it as his duty to protect the external borders of the Schengen area, as well as limit the uncontrolled movement of refugees from Austria to Bavaria.

Orbán's government has recently completed a 175-km-long fence on its border with Serbia and has used water cannons and tear gas against defenceless refugees. Orbán has also deployed the army to repel refugees. He also works closely with the fascist party Jobbik. At the meeting in Bavaria, he praised his own “successes.”

“Illegal border crossing has been reduced to a fraction. Bavaria's southern borders are now being protected in Hungary,” he boasted.

CSU leader Horst Seehofer thanked Orbán for his efforts to combat the “irregular” and “lawless” state of refugee migration and spoke of the greatest challenge since the German reunification 25 years ago. It was their duty, Seehofer continued, to talk to one another and seek appropriate solutions.

Seehofer repeatedly pointed out that Orbán enjoyed

the full support of Bavaria. “To secure the external borders, we need Hungary,” he emphasized before the meeting. “It is our common belief that we do everything humanly possible to bring order into the system.”

Bavaria's ex-Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber also greeted Orbán as an ally in the campaign to restrict asylum policy. In an interview with *Die Welt*, Stoiber said it was necessary to prevent the rise of right-wing parties by adopting their policies and always bearing in mind “those fearful of the refugees.”

Orbán's invitation to Banz was in great part a result of Stoiber's intervention. Stoiber had vehemently argued for solidarity with Orbán in the CSU's leading body. The Hungarian right-wing populist had already received the Franz-Josef Strauss Prize from the Seidel Foundation and attended Stoiber's 70th birthday celebration.

CSU parliamentary leader Thomas Kreuzer has called for the rapid amendment of European Refugee Law. Instead of indefinitely continuing to take in refugees, the EU must agree on quotas, agreed by every member state, he demanded.

By inviting Orbán, Seehofer is attempted to pressure the federal government to adopt a tougher refugee policy and at the same time strengthen his own position. Both Orbán and Seehofer fiercely criticised the CSU's partner in government, the Christian Democratic Union, and its chairperson Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Orbán accused Merkel of “moral imperialism.” Seehofer accused her of overturning European regulations by deciding to permit refugees stuck in Hungary to travel further. As a result Europe now faced “chaotic conditions.” Seehofer told *Der Spiegel*: “That was a mistake that will occupy us for a long time. I see

no way to get the genie back in the bottle.”

The repulsive policy of CSU stands in stark contrast to the wave of sympathy for refugees among the population. Thousands welcomed refugees when they arrived last week at Munich Central Station.

The invitation to Orbán and the united front against refugees also serves domestic political purposes. The CSU has suffered a number of defeats recently at a federal level. The auto toll for foreigners proposed by the CSU has been shelved, and the party’s proposal for a care allowance for parents was ruled out by the Constitutional Court. Party insiders speculate that Markus Söder is currently being groomed to replace Seehofer.

The recent refugee summit in Berlin made clear that federal and state governments largely agree on undermining the right of asylum. Representatives of the federal government and the premiers of the states agreed to a further tightening of asylum law.

Calls for a tightening of asylum are becoming louder within the CDU as well. Deputy CDU leader Julia Klöckner complained this week that an imam refused to shake her hand because she was a woman. Klöckner demanded an “integration law,” which pledges immigrants to abide by German “key values.” Guido Wolf, the leadership candidate of the CDU in Baden-Württemberg, is also employing xenophobia in his campaign for the state election due in March 2016.



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