

Angela Merkel's party congress speech: Anti-immigrant chauvinism and right-wing nationalism

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The speech by German Chancellor and party chairwoman Angela Merkel at the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party congress in Karlsruhe had been awaited with anticipation by the German political establishment. Many media outlets had reported in lengthy analyses and commentaries that Merkel's refusal to specify an upper limit for the number of refugees to be accepted in Germany was meeting opposition in her own party.

After Merkel concluded her 90-minute speech on Monday, a storm of enthusiasm broke out in her audience of party functionaries. The thousand delegates rose for a 10-minute standing ovation. As at a successful opera premiere, the applause was repeatedly broken by cries of "bravo." The main motion of the congress, the so-called Karlsruhe declaration of the CDU on terrorism and security, migration and integration, was subsequently passed with only three votes against.

The CDU officialdom greeted with enthusiasm Merkel's explicit statement that, despite her reputation of promoting a "welcoming culture," she fully supports imposing brutal deterrence measures, deporting refugees and intervening militarily in the Syrian war.

To the applause of delegates, Merkel laid out a 10-point plan to reduce the number of refugees entering Germany and deport many who are already in the country. "First of all, we have agreed to a list of the safe countries of origin," she proclaimed, referring to an agreement worked out between the CDU and CSU. Refugees arriving from so-called safe countries of origin can be deported through expedited and semi-legal procedures. She declared that refugees from these countries, such as the western Balkans had, "no perspective of staying here."

While during the first six months of the year "40 percent of arriving refugees came from the western

Balkans, now it is virtually none," Merkel declared, adding triumphantly, "Our policy was successful."

Merkel went on to declare her support for slashing financial assistance to refugees, replacing such payments with benefits in kind. She went on to attack Social Democratic (SPD) and Green state governments for refusing to cut refugee benefits.

Merkel also declared her support for keeping refugees detained in internment camps, so that "we can more easily deport people after they have been rejected."

This was followed by praise for interior minister Thomas de Maizière, who has implemented a universal ID card for refugees, and laws restricting the reunification of refugee families.

Merkel noted the action plan agreed between Turkey and the EU, aimed at preventing those refugees already in Turkey from coming to Germany, and at achieving "the reestablishment of the strict protection of our external borders." She declared that Italy, Greece and a few other countries on the European Union's external borders had to build so-called "hot spots," where refugees would not only be registered "but also deported after a legal procedure."

In addition, the establishment of a "European coastguard and European border police" was urgently necessary, Merkel declared. She said combatting the sources of the refugee crisis required an "extension of our intervention in Afghanistan" and in Syria. Merkel thanked the "soldiers" for their engagement and declared that only in this way could "domestic alternatives for refugees" be created.

Merkel did not leave out a single point of the right wing's anti-refugee programme. "Whoever has fled and sought refuge with us," she said, must "acknowledge our laws, values and traditions" and "they must learn

German.” Merkel declared that “multiculturalism” was a “sham.” Whoever came here had to “stick to our values and traditions.”

Germany could be proud of what it had achieved over recent decades, particularly in the last 25 years, she continued. Germany “continues today to be our country, our identity, our language, our culture.”

Merkel’s exuberant nationalist populism provoked a storm of enthusiasm from the delegates.

“But I know one thing for sure,” she continued. “I would like Germany in 25 years still to be my Germany, our Germany, a Germany which retains all of its dearest values, features and strengths and passes them to the next generation; a country with an impressive cultural tradition, cosmopolitan and diverse, impossible not to recognise Germany, our Germany, the most beautiful and best Germany that we have.”

This bizarre hymn of praise to “our Germany, the most beautiful and best Germany” is directly bound up with the revival of German great power politics and militarism and its historic slogan, “Germany over everything” (Deutschland über alles).

Fifteen years ago, in the autumn of 2000, when the then CDU/CSU parliamentary leader Friedrich Merz raised the demand for a “defining German culture,” it triggered a wave of outrage.

We wrote at the time on the WSWS, “The mere idea that immigrants should be required to subordinate themselves to a defining culture—irrespective of how it is defined—contradicts elementary democratic principles. In this regard, even Prussia’s Frederick the Great (1712-1786) was more progressive, when he announced that in Prussia everyone could find their own salvation—although practice in the Prussian state rarely measured up to this ideal. In any case, it is part of the elementary principles of any civilised society that no one should be forced to adopt a specific culture, religion or anything of a similar nature.”

Today, the demand for subordination to German “values” no longer triggers protest, but rather standing ovations from the CDU delegates.



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