

Hungary builds internment camps for refugees

Ulrich Rippert
11 March 2017

Hungary plans to intern all refugees in the country in camps adjoining its borders. The camps will consist of large-scale ship containers for between 200 to 300 refugees and recall the barracks set up by the Nazis in their own concentration camps. The camps will be secured with high barbed wire fences and watchtowers. Armed border police with dogs backed by gangs of right-wing thugs will patrol the camp perimeter.

Beginning now, it is impossible for refugees and asylum seekers to move freely in Hungary or leave the country as long as their legal proceedings are in progress. The parliament in Budapest passed a bill on Tuesday with the votes of the right-wing conservative governing party Fidesz and the opposition far-right Jobbik party. The parliamentary vote restores a practice that Hungary had suspended in 2013 following pressure from the EU, the UN and the European Court of Human Rights.

Hungary's ultra-right government under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is thereby intensifying its policy of walling off the country against refugees. Already in January it introduced custodial measures for all asylum seekers in the country, arguing the measure was justified by security risks.

Although Hungary's borders are already hermetically sealed off, Orbán warned of a "wave of refugees" threatening to overrun the country. Hungary was "under siege," he declared, with hundreds of thousands of migrants threatening to make their way to Europe. One could not ignore the danger, Orbán continued, but was obliged to protect borders in the strictest and most effective way.

"Migration is the Trojan horse of terrorism," he stormed in his xenophobic hate speech on Tuesday morning in a Budapest exhibition hall to several hundred newly sworn-in border guards. According to

Orbán, migrants come to Europe to live according to their own culture and habits, but at a "European level" and at Europe's cost.

The human rights organization Pro Asyl protested sharply against the Hungarian parliament's decision to intern asylum seekers in camps. Its European speaker Karl Kopp told the *Neue Osnabrück* newspaper: "The imprisonment of asylum seekers in Hungary violates EU law and international law."

Kopp called for the EU to initiate proceedings against Hungary for treaty violations. The EU also had to ask itself whether "Hungary's right to vote in the EU Council should be suspended, because the internment of refugees is a clear violation of European basic values."

This appeal to European basic values is worthless and runs in the face of reality. The racist policy of the Orbán government is a direct consequence of EU refugee policy.

The EU has been working for years to seal off Europe's external borders and build the walls of "Fortress Europe" in such a way that they are insurmountable. The declared objective of the European refugee policy is to prevent asylum seekers from entering Europe in the first place. If they do get in, the EU objective is to confine them in border camps and limit their freedom of movement within Europe as much as possible.

In line with this policy the EU favours mass internment for refugees in countries outside Europe. In order to ensure that refugees do not leave the inhuman and overcrowded camps in Jordan, Lebanon and other countries neighbouring Syria, the EU donated €1 billion last year to the World Food Program and the United Nations Refugee Fund. African countries have also given financial support to detain refugees.

Most of the money allocated to deterring refugees, however, goes to the Frontex border protection agency, which is being constantly expanded. Originally, the task of the European agency was to coordinate the protection of the EU's external borders between the member states, but it has increasingly developed into an independent European border police with a military infrastructure and its own monitoring apparatus.

In the meantime, Frontex is responsible not only for the coordination of border control, but also for risk and hazard analysis at the EU's external borders, the training of border guards, support for member states regarding personnel and technology, the deportation of refugees and cooperation with the European police authority Europol and the security agencies of non-EU countries. The agency also plays an important role in military surveillance and deterrence of refugees in the Mediterranean.

The persecution of refugees is not a Hungarian peculiarity, but is based on the EU's own brutal refugee policy and is supported by leading EU politicians, despite some occasional criticism. Viktor Orbán is a close friend of the head of the German Christian Social Union (CSU), Horst Seehofer. Orbán's national conservative party Fidesz is a member of the European People's Party (EPP), which also includes the German ruling parties, the CSU and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Orbán also receives support for his racist policies from the media. In *Die Welt* this week, Jacques Schuster wrote: "Hungary is more honest in the refugee question than we are." The former speechwriter for the former mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen (CDU), wrote: "It is the task of every state to protect its borders. Anyone who wants to integrate refugees must deter masses of immigrants." Hungary is merely taking on board what some would call the EU's "dirty work."

Even if Angela Merkel would never admit it, Schuster continues, she has long since realised that her policy and some of her statements were well intended but not thought through, and disastrous: "If it were otherwise, the refugee policy today would not consist of 'deportation, deterrence, rejection.' But the chancellor and her party don't like to talk about it."

Orbán's racist refugee policy is a direct result of the EU's refugee defence and cannot be combated by appeals to the European institutions. Rather, the

construction of internment camps, recalling the concentration camps of the Nazis, must be seen in the context of the fundamental changes taking place in Europe and the rest of the world.

The many thousands of asylum seekers are fleeing the catastrophic consequences of the imperialist wars that have been waged for decades in the Middle East, the Balkans and other regions by the US and NATO states. The first Gulf War and the Yugoslav wars, the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the bombing of Libya, and the devastation of Syria and Yemen have killed hundreds of thousands. Cities and entire countries have been laid waste and millions forced to flee.

The many desperate asylum seekers and their families, who are now being interned and terrorized, are part of the world working class threatened by imperialist war policy.

The assumption of power by Donald Trump in the US has acutely increased the danger of new war. With his slogan of "America First" Trump's government of generals and billionaires threatens the whole world with economic and military confrontation.

The German government has responded to this development with a crazed program of military rearmament. Demands were raised at the Munich Security Conference three weeks ago to triple the country's military budget. This is only possible through enforcing a drastic savings program with massive reductions in all spheres of social welfare.

As was the case on the eve of the Second World War, this war policy can only be implemented with the establishment of a police state and dictatorial methods.

Today it is refugees from war who are being herded into internment camps. Tomorrow opponents of war and political dissidents will have their turn. The return of concentration camps in Europe is a warning. It shows how urgent it is to make the defence of refugees the starting point for an international struggle against war and capitalism.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact