

The far right determine Europe's refugee policy

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The European Union (EU) Commission plans to nearly treble its spending on migration in the next six-year financial period, from 13 to 35 billion euros (\$US 15 to 40.5 billion).

This money will not be spent on supporting and integrating refugees, but rather on sealing off Europe's external borders, deporting refugees en masse, as well as on other measures aimed at deterring refugees from entering. The EU border protection authority Frontex is to be increased from its present staff of 1,000 to 10,000 officials and expanded into a high-tech, up-to-date, military-style border police.

With its plans, the EU Commission is reacting to the failure of its previous efforts to distribute refugees through the 28 member European states based on a quota system. Right-wing, nationalist governments—such as the Hungarian, Polish and Czech—had refused to accept even a single refugee. The dispute over the refugees and the sealing off of internal European borders threatened to blow up the EU.

Now the crisis is to be solved by the entire EU adopting the policies of the extreme right and hermetically sealing off external borders, while ruthlessly harassing, imprisoning and deporting refugees. Brussels has the full support of the German chancellor Angela Merkel, France's president Emmanuel Macron and other European heads of state.

In Berlin on Wednesday, Merkel met with Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who governs in Vienna in an alliance with the right-wing extremist Freedom Party (FPÖ). Kurz himself is the pioneer of a brutal anti-refugee policy.

Austria, which is due to take over the presidency of the European Union for six months in July, will focus “deliberately on the issue of security,” Kurz said at the subsequent press conference. In addition to “greater

cooperation in security and defense policy,” this also included “a solution to the migration issue in order to ensure internal security in our European Union.” Austria will “focus on external border protection” and “pursue one goal,” namely “to stop the influx of illegal migration, refugee and migration flows to Europe.”

Kurz was supported by Merkel. Asked whether his views on immigration were “more of a role model or deterrent,” the German chancellor responded by saying she agreed “we need to strengthen the external border guard.” To this end she relied upon the “activities of the Austrian [EU] presidency.” As a role model, she cited the migrant deal struck with Turkey, which has pledged to ensure that no more refugees enter Europe.

The adoption of the policies of the far right by the EU encourages them to demand more.

After visiting the German chancellor, Kurz met with Germany's interior minister, Horst Seehofer, the following day. Seehofer is also chairman of the conservative Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) and has repeatedly criticised Merkel's refugee policy from the right. Currently, Merkel and Seehofer are sharply divided, because he wants to stop refugees at the border who have registered in another EU country. Merkel rejects this measure because she fears it will split the EU.

Kurz and Seehofer showered each other with compliments, declaring they looked forward to working closely with the Italian interior minister, Matteo Salvini, on issues of security, terrorism and immigration. Salvini, leader of the Lega, is a right-wing extremist and racist. Just three days earlier, he had fueled popular outrage across Europe by refusing to allow the rescue ship Aquarius, with 629 refugees on board, to dock in Italy.

The Austrian interior minister, Herbert Kickl (FPÖ),

is also a self-confessed ultra-rightist. He is infamous for his racist, anti-Muslim campaign slogans. In January this year, he announced that asylum seekers must be kept “concentrated in one place”—a clear allusion to Nazi concentration camps.

Kurz described the planned collaboration against refugees in terms reminiscent of the military alliances of the First and Second World Wars. He hoped for an “axis of the willing,” he said. He was pleased with the “good cooperation between Rome, Vienna and Berlin, which we want to build upon to make a good contribution to better managing immigration.”

Seehofer was visibly pleased. Officially, the CSU and Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) have distanced themselves from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which sits in the German parliament. In reality, Seehofer works very closely at a European level with parties affiliated to the AfD. It is only a matter of time before the latter is accepted into government in Germany. “There used to be a lot of opposition to our positions in Europe, but now the group that supports us has grown a lot bigger,” Kurz said.

Support for the refugee policies of the far right is not limited to the CSU and the right wing of the CDU. Andrea Nahles, the leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), recently demanded that the Maghreb [North African] states be declared safe countries of origin. With the provocative sentence, “We cannot accept everyone,” she opened the floodgates to all those witch-hunting refugees. As coalition partner of the CDU and CSU in the national government, the SPD fully supports Merkel’s refugee policy.

As far as the so-called opposition parties are concerned, they also back the right-wing refugee policies. The propaganda of the Free Democratic Party hardly differs from that of the AfD. Writing in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the Green Party mayor of Tübingen, Boris Palmer, recently demanded a harsher response against “criminal aliens.” As for the Left Party, the main concern at its congress last weekend was to call for unity with party leader Sahra Wagenknecht, who shares the stance of the AfD on refugee policy.

The current developments take place against the background of a xenophobic campaign in the German media that has been raging for weeks. Even supposedly

reputable journalists have ditched any adherence to the basic principles of truthful and conscientious reporting. The tragic murder of a 14-year-old girl is being exploited, along with alleged improper and criminal asylum decisions made by the Bremen branch of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bamf). It has now turned out that these allegations were wrong and deceitful.

These attacks are not only directed against refugees. They are part of a systematic campaign to abolish democratic rights, build up the intelligence and police services and strengthen right-wing extremist forces. As was the case in the last century, the ruling class is once again preparing to try and crush the growing resistance to social inequality and militarism.



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