German government crisis: The working class needs its own strategy against anti-refugee agitation, militarism and war

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In the 100 days since the new German government took office, all of the warnings of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP) regarding the character of the coalition between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) have been confirmed.

The grand coalition, in its third term, is the most right-wing German government since the overthrow of the Nazi regime. It is massively rearming Germany, implementing police state measures, preparing a new round of social cuts and adopting the anti-refugee policy of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

The current dispute between the CDU and the CSU is not about whether to implement this reactionary program in the face of growing popular opposition, but rather how best to impose it. Both the "national solution" of Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU), who is demanding that refugees be repulsed directly at the German border, and the so-called "European solution" of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) involve mass deportation and repression of refugees.

At a press conference at the start of the week Merkel declared: "We believe that the CDU and CSU have the common goal of better organizing and controlling immigration into our country and significantly reducing the number of people coming, so that a situation like 2015 will not and cannot happen again."

The "common goal" of the grand coalition was already formulated in the coalition agreement, which announced both the "development of the European Border and Coast Guard (Frontex) into a genuine European border police" and the "effective protection of internal borders."

This agenda is now being ruthlessly implemented. Over the past few days, the European Union and its national governments have made a series of proposals that recall the darkest periods in German and European history. Last Tuesday, the Polish EU Council president, Donald Tusk, called for the establishment of additional "transit camps" for refugees in North Africa. These are internment camps, where refugees undergo horrific abuse. Last year, both CNN and Amnesty International revealed that refugees are being tortured in Libya, sold off as slaves and murdered in the EU-funded camps.

Prior to the European Council meeting scheduled for late June, the German government is closely coordinating with the new coalition government in Italy, which is preparing measures that stem directly from the arsenal of fascism. Following his threat to expel "all 600,000" migrants from Italy, the far-right Italian interior minister, Matteo Salvini of the Lega party, announced that all Sinti and Roma in the country would be counted and registered. This has a precedent in Italian history. The fascist dictator Benito Mussolini registered the Jewish population during the Second World War before deporting them to certain death in Nazi extermination camps.

Many workers and young people are appalled. They are asking how it is possible that Europe, of all places, once again confronts the vile spectres of its past.

The answer requires a Marxist understanding of political and social developments. Last week, the *World Socialist Web Site* published a statement titled "The working class and the global war on immigrants," which declared: "The brutal and lawless attacks on immigrants are bound up with the immense growth of social inequality and the uninterrupted escalation of imperialist war."

It further states: "The fact that the assault on immigrants is a global phenomenon makes clear that it is not simply the product of the fascistic ideology of Trump or his European counterparts. Rather, it is the noxious expression of the objective crisis and historical bankruptcy of the capitalist nation state system, which is coming into increasingly violent conflict with the unprecedented integration of the global economy, producing war and repression."

The current conflict within the German grand coalition centers on how the ruling class can most effectively organise terror against immigrants, refugees and the working class as a whole. But the refugee issue is also being used to shift the entire spectrum of German politics to the right.

Following the failure of the G7 summit earlier this month and the outbreak of open trade war with the US, the German ruling class is embroiled in a fierce internal debate on how best to impose its diktat in Europe and advance the geo-strategic and economic interests of German imperialism worldwide.

The wing around Merkel, which is supported by broad layers of the CDU, the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party, seeks to promote military and economic cooperation with France, despite growing tensions with Paris. The Meseberg statement agreed June 19 by Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron called for "the examination of new ways to speed up and expedite EU decision-

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making in our common foreign and security policy." Specifically, the declaration calls for, among other things, the establishment of an "EU Security Council," the "development of a common strategic culture," a "European intervention initiative" and the "continued development of military capabilities."

The German government has made no secret of its intention to weld Europe together into an independent military bloc against the three largest nuclear powers in the world. On June 20, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) gave a keynote speech titled, "Courage to Stand Up for Europe—Europe United." In his response to what he termed "Donald Trump's egoistic policy of 'America First,' Russia's attacks on international law and state sovereignty, and the expansion of the giant that is China," Maas demanded an independent German-European foreign and defence policy. The implementation of this strategy, which draws upon German power plans laid out prior to the First and Second World Wars, demands an aggressive nationalist program.

Seehofer's CSU, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the far-right AfD and representatives of the other parties represented in the Bundestag (parliament) are increasingly and openly expressing this. Just a few days ago, the premier of the state of Bavaria, Markus Söder, declared that "the period of orderly multilateralism" in Europe and the world is being supplanted by "individual countries that make decisions." He added that, as a consequence, "respect for Germany" must be based on "the fact that we are also able to realise our own interests."

The CSU is critical of cooperation with Macron. Just one day after the Franco-German summit, Seehofer complained: "It's not good style to close such an important deal without the participation of the CSU. That is not acceptable." He said the agreement between Merkel and Macron would be discussed at the next grand coalition summit. "Only when we all know how much each proposal costs can we judge and decide," he added.

It is clear that the government parties want to use the coalition summit, along with all other meetings at a national and European level over the next few days, to further develop their reactionary plans behind the backs of the population. The new installment of the grand coalition—after it was effectively voted down at the last general election—was itself the result of a conspiracy of the banks and business groups, the military, the secret services and the political parties, which negotiated and intrigued for months behind closed doors. Whether the CDU, CSU and SPD can now reach agreement after 100 days in office remains to be seen. A bust-up of the coalition and an early end to the chancellorship of Merkel is now being openly discussed.

Seehofer has warned the chancellor against dismissing him should he impose national border controls. "If you sack a minister on this basis," he told the *Passauer Neue Presse*, "someone who cares about the security and order of his country, that would be a world first. Where are we then?" Noting that he was the chairman of "one of three coalition parties and acted with the full backing of [his] party," he declared, "If the Chancellery is dissatisfied with the work of the interior minister, then it is better to end the coalition."

No matter how the government dispute develops, one thing is clear: if the initiative remains in the hands of the ruling class, it will only step up its policy of militarism and rearmament, social cuts and war against refugees.

The benchmark is the AfD. Last Thursday, party leader Alexander Gauland gave an interview to the *Potsdamer Neue Nachrichten* in which he celebrated the fact that the grand coalition was adopting the policy of the AfD. "We have made sure that people talk about mass immigration. Much has changed in the meantime," he stated.

He cited as examples, "when Mr. Söder says that asylum tourism must come to an end, or when Mr. Dobrindt (chair of the CSU fraction in the Bundestag) refers to an anti-deportation industry." He continued, "If such formulations had come from us two years ago, we would have been shouted down as extreme right-wing and xenophobic."

The fact that the AfD's xenophobic incitement now dominates official policy—despite the fact that only a few weeks ago tens of thousands protested in Berlin against Gauland and company—is mainly due to the lurch to the right by the SPD, the Greens and the Left Party.

As long as two years ago, Gauland praised the parliamentary fraction leader of the Left Party, Sahra Wagenknecht, for her statement that "whoever abuses hospitality has forfeited the right to hospitality." Today, Wagenknecht declares "open borders" to be "naïve," to the applause of the pseudo-left.

In an interview at the recent party conference of the Left Party in Leipzig, Sascha Stanicic, the national spokesman of SAV (Socialist Alternative, the German section of the Committee for a Workers' International), also spoke out against "open borders," declaring that "the phrase, in the sense of a demand, is not helpful."

This plays into the hands of the extreme right!

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei is the only party exposing the lurch to the right by the entire political establishment—from the AfD to the grand coalition to the pseudo-left tendencies within and around the Left Party—and formulating an independent strategy for the working class.

In order to oppose the right-wing conspiracy, workers and young people must declare war on all factions of the ruling class and consciously take up a socialist program. The alternative to capitalist reaction in Germany and throughout Europe, which twice in the 20th century brought the continent to the abyss, is the construction of a powerful movement of the international working class and the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.

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