

# German government settles dispute at refugees' expense

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3 July 2018

The governing Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union parties provisionally settled their fierce dispute on Monday evening with another attack on refugees and basic democratic rights. Interior Minister and CSU leader Horst Seehofer, who announced his resignation 24 hours earlier, will now remain in office. The third coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), has welcomed the agreement but wants to discuss some details in a coalition committee meeting this evening.

The CDU and CSU have agreed to prevent asylum seekers who are already registered in another European Union country from entering Germany and to lock them up at the border. "We are setting up transit centres from which asylum seekers who are rejected are sent to the relevant countries (rejection on the basis of a fiction of non-entry)," states the three-point agreement.

This is to be done in consultation with the countries concerned. If they refuse to take back the refugees, the "rejection at the German-Austrian border is to take place on the basis of an agreement with the Republic of Austria."

In practice, this amounts to the establishment of camps or prisons directly on the border, which are not technically considered German territory and therefore represent a legal no man's land--a kind of European Guantanamo. Taking the figures of recent years, several tens of thousands of refugees would be affected.

As recently as the end of 2017, the SPD rejected such transition centres, which almost caused the coalition to fail. The then-minister of justice and today's foreign minister, Heiko Maas (SPD), tweeted, "We don't need huge prisons on the border, but places for quick decisions. #centres of entry instead of #transit zones."

The federal government's commissioner for migration, Aydan Özoguz (SPD), declared, "In practice, this is no different from huge camps where entire families--men, women and children--are locked up."

Now the SPD welcomes the same measure!

At the insistence of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, after the EU summit decided last week to set up

"debarkation platforms" and "control centres" for "the resettlement and new settlement" of refugees, a comprehensive camp system is being set up within the EU and in North Africa, reminiscent of the Nazi concentration camps. To stop, capture and lock up refugees in the camps, the Frontex border management agency is to be increased by 10,000 men over the next two years and expanded into a military police force.

Concentration camps were set up in Germany immediately after Hitler took power to imprison communists, trade unionists and other political opponents of the Nazis and place them in a legal vacuum. Later, Jews, Sinti and Roma, alleged social misfits, disabled people, prisoners of war and others were added, until after the start of the war the extermination camps emerged, with which the term concentration camp is now forever associated.

With the "transit centres," "debarkation platforms" and "control centres," a technical and legal infrastructure is once again being created which will make it possible to lock up opposition forces and undesirable minorities in future. The German police are already persecuting young people who protested against the G20 summit in Hamburg last summer on charges of "forming a terrorist organisation," one of the gravest charges in the German penal code, Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has ordered Sinti and Roma to be registered as a prelude to throwing them out of the country.

In the fierce dispute between Merkel's CDU and its Bavarian sister party, which in the last two weeks almost burst the federal government and the seventy-year-old CDU/CSU parliamentary group, the issue was never if, but only how the grand coalition would impose its reactionary program against growing popular opposition. Both Seehofer's "national solution," which insists on unilaterally rejecting asylum seekers who are already registered in another EU member state, and Merkel's "European solution" mean the brutal rejection of refugees.

With the measures now agreed on, the grand coalition is moving further to the right and the entire European Union is adopting the refugee policy of the far-right.

After the settlement of the dispute, Deputy CDU Chairwoman Julia Klöckner appeared before the cameras with a radiant smile and praised the inhuman agreement as a "humane" compromise that "breathes the spirit of Europe" and "upholds the European idea."

Klöckner added that the CDU and CSU had always agreed that there should be "no asylum tourism" in Europe. Four days earlier, even Seehofer had to withdraw this inflammatory term on the talk show "Sandra Maischberger."

The sharpness that the conflict between the CDU and CSU assumed is a result of the reactionary goals pursued by the grand coalition, which are opposed by large sections of the population--social cuts, militarism and the build-up of a strong state. This inevitably generates friction, conflicts and crises.

The formation of the new government had taken a record six months, after all parties of the previous grand coalition had been punished in the Bundestag elections and achieved the worst result in their history.

When the attempt to forge a conservative-neoliberal alliance between the CDU and the FDP with the support of the Greens failed, the WSWS wrote: "The cause of the crisis is not the petty squabble between the Jamaican parties, but the deep gulf between the economic and geopolitical interests of capital, which are defended by all parties represented in the Bundestag, and the needs of the broad mass of the population."

Finally, the CDU, CSU and SPD agreed on the most right-wing government program in Germany's history. "The grand coalition that is to be formed on its basis represents the interests of banks, the corporations and the super-rich. It will continue the attacks on the working class and arm itself massively both internally and externally. Its policies inevitably lead to war and dictatorship", the Socialist Equality Party (Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei-SGP) warned, calling for new elections and the publication of "all secret minutes and lists of participants in the coalition talks."

The working class has "a right to know what the grand coalition is up to," the SGP stressed. This applies "also to the far-reaching agreements and arrangements that were made behind the scenes."

These warnings have now been confirmed. Faced with the intensification of the conflict with the United States, an imminent trade war and growing national tensions within the European Union, the ruling class is accelerating military armament and preparing new social attacks on the working class.

Chancellor Angela Merkel admitted openly to her government's reactionary goals in a government declaration she made last Thursday in the Bundestag.

Merkel explicitly reaffirmed NATO's two percent target,

which means doubling annual military expenditure to 70 billion euros. In view of "a new quality of the threat to Europe... this goal had also been decided by Germany," she said.

The government can already "look back on four years of successful adjustments," she added. This would also be reflected in the 2018 and 2019 budgets. "We must become more coherent and effective in foreign policy," Merkel continued, referring to the trade conflicts with the US.

Regarding refugee policy, she advocated the further development of the Frontex border management agency "into a genuine European border police force with even more powers and possibilities."

The number of asylum seekers in Germany has fallen, but, she said explicitly, "We cannot yet be satisfied." She expressly praised Seehofer's "master plan," insisting that both "national measures and international measures are necessary" to maintain domestic security.

The agreement between the CDU and the CSU is a warning to workers and youth. If the working class does not intervene independently with a socialist program, the ruling class will resolve such crises in the most reactionary way possible and use these crises for a further political shift to the right.

There is no resistance from the so-called opposition parties. On the contrary, they all more or less openly agree with the policies of rejecting refugees, internal militarization and rearmament, and stand ready to assume governmental responsibility for their implementation if necessary. This applies to the Greens and the FDP as well as to the Left Party and the Alternative for Germany (AfD).



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