

Refugees ensnared in European dragnet

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On Friday, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) agreed to back a major crackdown on refugees negotiated by Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU).

The agreement marks the adoption by the parties of the German political establishment, represented by the grand coalition government of the SPD and CDU/CSU, of the racist and criminal immigration policies of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD), the main opposition party in the German parliament.

To complement its dragnet roundup of immigrants, the German government has agreed to the establishment of mass internment camps for refugees inside Germany and throughout Europe.

These so-called "anchor centres," to be located throughout the country, will intern potentially tens or even hundreds of thousands of people behind barbed wire and under police guard for 18 months or longer.

The camps will exist outside of basic legal frameworks, violating every fundamental democratic right of the men, women and children unfortunate enough to be ensnared in them. The inmates will be treated as criminals for seeking their right to asylum and subjected to the most degrading and inhuman treatment.

The German government has sought to distance itself from historical parallels to Germany's previous experiences with mass internment, declaring that the new internment centres—where inmates would be detained against their will—would not be "closed camps."

It is hiding its crimes behind bureaucratic phrases. A government paper on the resolutions of the most recent EU summit declared, "Increased use of dragnet controls and other intelligent border police approaches can significantly increase the number of people detected near the border with a EURODAC [European

fingerprint data base] entry, who can receive immediate processing in the Special Reception Facilities."

According to the plans of the German government, the refugee camps in Greece and Italy, euphemistically called "hotspots," are now to be extended to the whole of Europe. A draft of German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer's "Master Migration Plan" states that "reception centres in Italy and Greece should be supported and expanded by sufficient staff from the member states."

"Hotspots," "dragnet," "Master Plan:" These revolting euphemisms for the mass internment of innocent human beings are just one indication of the horrors being prepared for their inmates.

"Iron wire interwoven into squares, up to four, five metres high," the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* wrote of Camp Moria, an EU "hotspot" camp on the Greek island of Lesbos. "Barbed wire has been rolled over the fence, watchtowers and security guards stand at all entrances to the camp, rifles slung over their chests." Inside, too, the camp, which with 7,500 people is massively overcrowded, resembles a veritable "hell," in which the Geneva Convention and fundamental rights have been suspended.

If Seehofer describes such horrors as a "Master Plan" and "anchor centres," it is because Hitler already used the phrases "final solution" and "concentration camps."

The grand coalition's new refugee plan provides the practical basis for the creation of prison camps that exist in a legal vacuum. The coalition paper states that during the planned "transit procedure," persons are "legally not entering Germany." With this reactionary legal construct, similar to America's Guantanamo Bay prison camp, extraterritorial zones will be created that do not legally qualify as state territory and constitute a de facto legal vacuum in which the police are given free

reign.

The utter indifference to human dignity, the most shameless violation of human rights, the use of chilling bureaucratic language to hide even more chilling crimes—all of it has the stench of the 1930s. Bourgeois democracy in Europe is disintegrating, increasingly replaced with dictatorial forms of rule.

What is true of Germany, with its supposed “welcoming culture” presided over by “Mutti” Angela Merkel, is true of the whole world. In Italy, the neo-fascist government of Matteo Salvini is carrying out a census of the Roma in preparation for their mass roundup. In the United States, immigrant children are separated from their parents and kept in cages. In Greece, under the “radical left” Syriza government, refugees from throughout Europe are rounded up in mass internment camps.

All over the world, the same filth and putrefaction, the same stench of criminality, is oozing from the pores of every capitalist nation-state. Israel’s slaughter of hundreds of unarmed Palestinian demonstrators is openly defended, and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Yemeni civilians by Saudi Arabia, backed by the United States, is simply ignored.

The ruling classes, in the words of Leon Trotsky in the 1930s, are transforming the world into a “foul prison.”

These criminal policies of the capitalist parties stand in stark contrast to the humane sentiments of workers and young people throughout the world. The grand coalition’s embrace of the refugee policy of the fascists was met with protests Sunday by tens of thousands throughout Germany, while hundreds of thousands have participated in demonstrations in the United States against the Trump administration’s barbaric treatment of refugees.

The task now is to connect the humane and democratic sentiments of workers all over the world with a political program that expresses their social interests. The defence of immigrants and refugees must be connected to opposition to war, social inequality, declining wages and the assault on social programs.

Four years ago, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP), the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, was the first to raise the alarm about the establishment parties’ embrace of neo-fascist politics through the

official promotion of academics like Jörg Baberowski, who declared that “Hitler was not vicious.”

Now the SGP is leading the fight to organize resistance to the grand coalition, which is supported by the entire middle-class “left,” in the struggle to defend the rights of refugees as a central plank of the socialist program to overthrow the capitalist system that is dragging mankind back into the fascist sewer of the 1930s.



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