

German parliament passes draconian deportation law

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On June 7, Germany's grand coalition government (a coalition of the Christian Democratic Union/CDU, Christian Social Union/CSU and Social Democratic Party/SPD) passed a so-called "Orderly Return Law," which had been introduced to parliament by Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU). The Greens and Left Party voted against the law, arguing there had been insufficient time for a proper parliamentary debate. The majority of deputies in the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and neo-liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) abstained.

The law overrides basic democratic rights, as the WSWs pointed out in its analysis of the original draft. Immigrants can be deported for trivial offences and can be punished if they do not voluntarily assist in clarifying their identity—a measure required to enforce their own deportation. Asylum seekers required to leave the country can more easily be sent to "security confinement" centres and put into regular prisons, although they have committed no offence.

In the course of the discussions on the draft, a further restriction was added: In future, police officers can search the home of a refugee whose request for asylum has been denied "for the purpose of seizing the foreigner for deportation."

The new law directed against refugees and immigrants is an integral part of a systematic attack on the democratic rights of the entire working class. Hardly a day goes by without new plans and proposals aimed at increasing the powers of the police and intelligence services.

The ruling class is responding to growing disaffection and opposition by building a police state. The incessant propaganda directed against refugees and attacks on immigrants are being used to move official politics further to the right. This is an international

phenomenon. The same methods are being employed by Donald Trump in the US, Matteo Salvini in Italy and Sebastian Kurz in Austria.

It is no accident that the "Orderly Return Law" was adopted shortly after the European elections, in which all the parties of the grand coalition were severely punished. With just under 45 percent of the vote, the parties forming the government lost their majority. The SPD registered its worst ever national result with 15.8 percent and is in deep crisis.

The SPD has responded with yet another lurch to the right. On the same day the Bundestag passed its new deportation law, former SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel recommended his party embrace in full the refugee policy of the far-right AfD.

In an article written for the *Handelsblatt* business newspaper, Gabriel praised the Danish Social Democrats as a role model. The Danish Social Democrats had shown "that socialists can win elections if they stand for a clear policy," he wrote. "Leading candidate Mette Frederiksen was not afraid to get close to the Danish right-wing populists in her drastic shift in migrant and immigration policies." In so doing, Gabriel continued, she had won back those people who felt overwhelmed by the country's immigration policies.

Gabriel accused the SPD of protesting "at the relatively harmless initiatives of the German government for faster deportation," while "the Danish Social Democrats had agreed on a—to put it mildly—'robust' immigration and asylum policy."

It was a matter of "recovering control: control of one's own territory as well as control of a deranged financial capitalism," Gabriel concluded. "Taming the social situation, the creation of rules and the enforcement of statehood is the real theme behind the election victory of the Danish Social Democrats."

The vice president of the Bundestag, Thomas Oppermann (also SPD), argued in a similar manner. In *Der Tagesspiegel*, Oppermann demanded a refugee and immigration policy “linked to tough rules which are then enforced.” “We set clear rules and insist they are enforced. With great severity, when necessary,” he said.

That the Danish Social Democrats adopted the xenophobic program of the far-right People’s Party in the parliamentary election held on June 5 is true. That it gained votes is false. At just under 26 percent, its tally was about the same as in the previous four elections.

Beneficiaries of the collapse of the People’s Party, which plummeted from 21 to 8.7 percent, were, aside from a number of smaller far-right parties, the Greens and left Liberals, who criticised the right-wing immigration policy of the right-wing government. Now both parties are likely candidates for a new coalition headed by the Social Democrats.

Gabriel, however, is quite prepared to lie through his teeth when it comes to justifying a policy directed against refugees, immigrants and the working class as a whole. The strong state and the tough rules that he, Oppermann and other social democrats are demanding are directed primarily against those workers and young people who are no longer prepared to accept social cuts, layoffs, militarism, the reinforcement of state forces and environmental destruction. Under conditions where the SPD is no longer able to win majorities in elections, it is increasingly relying on an authoritarian state.

In this respect it has the support of sections of the media, which in the past were prepared to offer up some defence of democratic rights. A commentary in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* following the adoption of the new asylum law is typical.

Stefan Braun praises the law as an “historic event” with the “potential to permanently pacify dangerous conflicts.” The *SZ* journalist, based in Berlin, notes with satisfaction that in addition to “tightening up deportations” the Bundestag agreed another law “to facilitate immigration.” While refugees and asylum seekers are rejected, entry regulations for skilled workers urgently needed by German industry are to be simplified.

Of course, there are “critics who warn against a sell-out of asylum law when dealing with refugees,” Braun admits. However, sanctions against refugees who

conceal their identity were “not only problematic, but unfortunately also the product of the experiences of many policemen and interior authorities.” The possibility of raiding an apartment in extreme cases, while representing “a major extension of powers” was “also a reaction to the fact that there are cases in Berlin and elsewhere where the authorities have been led by the nose.” Those who “do not want faith in state authority to be undermined” face a dilemma that can be resolved by the new laws, Braun claims.

This is the typical German social democrat and petty bourgeois. Dismantling fundamental democratic rights and strengthening the police are “problematic,” but when the police and state authorities say so, then “state authority” has priority. This is nothing more than the justification for a police state.



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