

# Left Party supports anti-refugee policies of German government

By Johannes Stern  
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Many people are appalled at the brutal and inhumane treatment of refugees by the European Union and its national governments. At the EU summit last week measures were discussed and prepared which recall the darkest period of German and European history. They range from the building of veritable concentration camps in North Africa and Europe, to the registration of Sinti and Roma in Italy, to the deportation of hundreds of thousands back to war zones in the Middle East.

In Germany, the grand coalition has adopted the extreme-right-wing refugee policy of the Alternative for Germany (AfD). The current coalition dispute between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU), concerns how best to organize and carry out anti-refugee measures. Both the “national solution” of Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (CSU), who wants to turn back already registered refugees at the German border, as well as the so-called “European solution” of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU), portend mass deportations and the brutal rejection of refugees.

That these policies can be advanced despite widespread opposition against right-wing extremism and fascism is mainly thanks to the rightward turn of the entire red-red-green milieu. While the Social Democratic Party (SPD) promoted an anti-refugee line as a ruling party, the Greens stood behind Merkel and the EU, and the Left Party managed to attack the grand coalition from the right.

The conflict between the CDU and the CSU is “mere symbolic politics” and not concerned with the refugee problem itself, complained Sahra Wagenknecht, leader of the Left Party’s parliamentary wing, in an interview with German news station Phoenix on Tuesday. “Everyone knows that what Seehofer proposes would

not change the problem at all. If Germany unilaterally declares we are going to turn back registered refugees, then other countries would also say unilaterally that they will no longer register them but wave them through. Then we would be in the exact same situation we are in today.” Both sides are “completely overwhelmed by the core problem” and this is “not a good indicator for Germany’s future,” she added.

Wagenknecht’s nationalist and anti-refugee tirade is not new. At the beginning of 2016, she declared, “Whoever abuses our hospitality has forfeited the right to be our guest” and was applauded by AfD chairman Alexander Gauland. In the meantime, the entire party has swung over to this line. And it is not just a shift in rhetoric. Wherever the party has governed at the state level with the SPD and the Greens, it has treated refugees at least as brutally and ruthlessly as the grand coalition in the federal government or Seehofer’s CSU in Bavaria.

The party freely admits this. An article titled “A Balance Sheet of left-wing asylum policy in Thuringia and Berlin,” currently displayed on the website of Marx21, reads: “Thuringia is after the Saarland the second-most diligent state in the matter of deportations. In the first half of 2017, the proportion of people deported to the number of those required to leave the country was 45.5 percent, almost three times as high as in Bavaria.”

Marx21 is a pseudo-left group that holds high offices in the party and its parliamentary wing. It is directly involved at all levels in the policies it describes in the article. The author, Irmgard Wurdack, paints a portrait of a party which is on a par with openly right-wing groups and brutally terrorizes refugees.

“There are increasing reports that refugees are intimidated during return consultation so that they will

leave ‘voluntarily.’” The Refugee Council of Thuringia has repeatedly criticized “the deportation practice in Thuringia.” One is “dealing here with a completely new dimension: In Thuringia there are mass deportations, even in cases that were clearly handled illegally,” Wurdack quotes a spokesperson from the refugee council.

It is equally apparent in Berlin “that a government in which the Left Party is active does not at all mean a left-wing asylum policy,” Wurdack writes further. In fact, “the debt brake to which the Left Party committed itself in the red-red-green senate leaves little room for additional funds to provide for new arrivals or those already living here.” Thus “refugees will be ghettoized by the thousands in mass camps—including in containers, sub-standards and even on Tempelhof Field.”

Additionally, Elke Breitenbach, the Left Party senator responsible for social services, has “denied services for full board in the form of cash and instead reintroduced benefits in kind.” In the re-established “arrival centre,” refugees must “spend their nights in a 20-meter-high airplane hangar with more than 100 people with constant noise and sleep in bunks which are open at the top and have no doors.” Senator Breitenbach bears sole responsibility for the “inhumane conditions in the hangar.”

At the end of her balance sheet, Wurdack excuses the antisocial and anti-refugee policies of her party with the words: “Even the refugee policy of those states with Left participation in government” shows “especially painfully how much our colleagues there are forced by the limits of the political framework.”

In reality, the Left Party politicians are not “forced.” They implement reactionary policies which they actually support, and which correspond to the social and political interests of the affluent middle-class layers that they represent. That holds especially true for all the pseudo-left tendencies within the Left Party. Marx21 has long beat the drum for a red-red-green governing coalition and is deeply integrated into the fabric of German militarism. Now these tendencies support openly right-wing positions in refugee policy.

This also applies to Socialist Alternative (SAV), another pseudo-left fraction of the party executive. In a new interview at the most recent Left Party conference in Leipzig, national spokesman Sascha Stanicic

explicitly rejected the call for “open borders.” Such a thing “cannot exist within the framework of capitalism,” he said, “only in a socialist world.” That means “that the formulation presented as a demand is of little help.” Moreover, “it is a concept that is hard to communicate to sections of the working class.”

In reality, there is significant opposition among workers and youth to the brutal treatment of refugees and the rightward turn of the entire political establishment. It is clear that the terror employed against refugees is directed at the entire working class and serves to shift German and European politics even further to the right. To fight back against the politics of militarism, the building up of the state apparatus, social cuts and the persecution of refugees, workers and youth must fight against all factions of the ruling class—from the AfD to the pseudo-left in and around the Left Party—and consciously advocate for a socialist program.

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