

In October already, Germany has hardened its policy towards refugees

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The Federal Parliament adopted a new “Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz” law on October 15 under the new denomination of “Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz”. That means that the refugees who are not able to obtain a status that gives them the right to remain on German territory can be repatriated more quickly. If they put up any opposition, they lose the right to a certain number of subsidies – they still have the right to be housed, to have their accommodation heated, to basic food, personal hygiene and medical care, but they lose the right to subsidies for clothes and other daily necessities. They will have much less money, and instead they will have coupons with which to buy food. They no longer have the right to the minimum income fixed by German law nor to subsidies that guarantee access to education for their children.

In fact, these measures are in contradiction with the human rights guaranteed by the German Constitution, the “Grundgesetz”. But on October 16, the Bundesrat (representing the “Länder” of the German federal state) approved the new law by a large majority, with the exception of the Land of Thuringia which has a left government (made up of Die Linke as the majority party and the SPD as junior partner).

This decision is in flagrant contradiction with a decision of the German Constitutional Court (“Bundesverfassungsgericht”) of July 18, 2012, which formally forbade pushing refugees below the minimum income. But the pressure of xenophobic agitation and mobilizations on official policy is producing results that are step by step leading the federal government presided over by Chancellor Angela Merkel to destroy what remains of the right of asylum and promises of «welcome».

The idea of «transit zones», preventing the refugees from setting foot on German soil and making it possible to sort them out quickly, so as to be able to repatriate all those who have little chance of obtaining a status that would enable them to remain in Germany for a certain time, had been put forward by Horst Seehofer (president of the CSU, the sister party of the CDU in Bavaria). It had led to many protests, but Chancellor Angela Merkel had ended up accepting the idea, more or less, under the pressure of many Christian Democrat leaders.

The SPD opposed it, and the compromise that was adopted stipulated that the reception centres would be on German soil –although they met more or less the same criteria as the «transit zones» demanded by Seehofer.

The Minister of the Interior, Lothar de Maizière of the CDU (Christian Democratic Party, in the majority in the governing coalition, with the SPD as junior partner), had, a few days earlier, publicly proposed to worsen the status of Syrian refugees. Up to now they can obtain a status that allows them to stay in Germany for three years and to bring their husbands or wives and their children (“Familienzusammenführung”) into the country.

De Maizière wants them to have only a «subsidiary status» that would only give them the right to stay in Germany for one year and would forbid them from bringing in their husbands or wives and their children. Many protests, carried by the mass media, seemed to be blocking de Maizière, but now

Angela Merkel, under pressure from many CDU leaders has agreed with his proposal. The SPD, so far, is opposed to it, but on the other hand many of its leaders say they agree with the Minister of the Interior. So it is very probable that Lothar de Maizière's idea will be adopted in the coming days.

The mobilizations of the far right are in full swing again. Pegida mobilized about 8,000-9,000 people on November 9, a symbolic date (the anniversary of the anti-Jewish pogrom in 1938) in a symbolic square, which was called «Adolf-Hitler Platz» under the Nazi dictatorship. Yes, there were 4,000 counter-demonstrators, and the same evening, in Erfurt, 6,000 who called publicly for solidarity and a welcome to the refugees and against the racist and Islamophobic demonstrations. But the agitators of the right are becoming more radical. Already, there are calls to mobilize at the border to block the refugees who want to come and live in Germany.

It is also true that the movement of solidarity and practical help to the refugees continues to develop in Germany. So mass consciousness in Germany remains polarised. But the wave of solidarity must become generalised on the level of society as a whole. Only if the «losers» of the "German model" unite with the refugees – losers in the capitalist system on a world level – will there be a real change in the relationship of forces: the capitalists, the hugely rich, the great trusts and the big banks must pay for the consequences of a world order that generates the crying inequality and dire poverty of the millions and billions of the disinherited.

Manuel Kellner

P.S.

* Translation IVP. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>

* Manuel Kellner is a member of the leadership of the ISL, which is one of the two public factions of the section of the Fourth International in Germany, and also a member of the editorial board of *Sozialistische Zeitung* (SoZ), a publication that represents the views of the isl. He was from May 2010 to May 2012 scientific advisor to Michael Aggelidis, a comrade of the isl, who was at that time a Die Linke member of the Land parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia.