

Free Captain Raketete! Stop the mass murder in the Mediterranean!

Martin Suchanek, GAM Infomail 1060, Berlin 30.05.19 Wed, 03/07/2019 - 08:20

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The arrest of the captain of the Sea Watch 3 triggered a storm of indignation throughout Europe. On Lampedusa, it was not only the thugs of the racist Interior Minister and Lega leader Salvini who met the 31-year-old Carola Racketete, who took her ship into the port on the night of 28-29 June. Many demonstrators also loudly expressed their solidarity with the courageous woman.

For two weeks, the Italian government had refused to allow the ship to moor and let the fugitives land. The captain finally ended the standoff by entering the port "on her own responsibility". Italy's Interior Minister and "strong man", Salvini, is outraged by this allegedly "criminal" act and the "attack" on a boat belonging to the Italian financial police, which was trapped for a few minutes between the quay wall and Sea Watch. The head of Lega was outraged that Racketete and the crew of the rescue ship had "almost killed people" and thus provided further proof of his own cynicism.

While he exaggerates a comparatively harmless situation in the port, he considers mass murder in the Mediterranean, the acceptance by European governments of Libyan torture chambers and the starvation of people who have made it as far as a boat like the Sea Watch, to be suitable ways to "deter" fugitives.

Public outrage and cynicism

The public outrage in many European countries undoubtedly shows that millions of people still do not want to accept the shift to the right and the merciless closure of the EU's external borders.

The racist, murderous policies of a Salvini and his helpers, Seehofer, Orbán and Kurz, of national conservatism, right-wing populism and neo-fascism rightly arouse disgust. Their aggressive, pseudo-radical, "people-oriented" right-wing populism articulates the mood of a growing part of the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and also of parts of the working class that fear being crushed under the wheels of global competition. They are trying to combine them into a political force.

Unlike the still dominant parties and organisations of the "Centre", whether mainstream conservatives, liberals, Greens or even social democrats, they no longer try to justify the sealing of the EU's external borders and its racist laws in a "humanitarian" way. They not only demand national and "European" isolation, they also implement it gleefully. Thousands of dead in the Mediterranean Sea become proof of the superiority of "our" "western", "Christian" or otherwise "higher" culture. The mass murder in the Mediterranean becomes proof that they are serious about "defending their homeland".

Such arch-reactionary forces, which have long since given rise to right-wing populist movements, including fascist mobilisations, do not challenge references to a "breaking of taboos" or "crossing of borders". The fact that "decent people" accuse them of a breach of human rights, a lack of humanity or even contempt for humanity is seen by the European right only as confirmation of their loyalty to their convictions.

Above all, however, the accusations directed at Salvini by the bourgeois establishment, the European governments and the EU prove to be toothless and hypocritical. The fact that the Italian government is sealing off the ports, pursuing a rigorous policy of isolation, fighting and criminalising refugees and refugee helpers, is part of the "securing of the EU's external borders", as decided by the EU Commission, the German and French governments, albeit a part that has been swept under the carpet. It was not Orbán or Salvini that concluded the agreements with Turkey and Sudan, it was the EU under the leadership of German and French "humanists" such as Merkel and Macron.

On the occasion of the arrest of Captain Rackete, the SPD Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, expressed outrage, "sea rescue must not be criminalised" he twittered, forgetting that the EU and "his" government have been closely involved in such criminalisation. Maas apparently also "forgot" that his ministry and the SPD supported all the racist tightening of laws hatched in Seehofer's Ministry of the Interior. At best, the Social Democrats have "softened" them with some social cosmetics. Those deported to Afghanistan, North Africa or other "safe third countries" will no doubt be grateful.

Maas, and with him the entire federal government, has obviously forgotten that for two weeks not only had Italy's Salvini closed all ports to Sea Watch 3, but also that no EU country was prepared to accept the 53 (!) fugitives who had to wait on the ship. So much for the "humanity" of our governments.

Solidarity and movement

Humanity, courage and determination, however, have been shown in abundance by people like Rackete and her crew. They knew that when they entered the port they would face not only racist agitation but arrest and even imprisonment for up to 10 years. Of course, the helpers of refugees do not only run the risk when they are deployed on the high seas or entering ports. Even in Germany their offices are exposed to racist attacks, so that Sea Watch's Berlin office has had to be moved several times.

The fight to support the helpers and against their criminalisation must therefore go hand in hand with the fight not only against racist agitation, whether it is from right-wing or "established" bourgeois media, parties, but also physical attacks.

From the left and social democratic parties, from the trade unions, which rightly condemned the arrest of Rackete and demanded her release, we certainly have to demand more than fine words scandalising racism. The real scandal is 'normality'. The systematic sealing of the EU's external borders must stop. The borders must be opened to all refugees! They must no longer be housed in inhumane camps, but their right to stay, their full citizenship rights, especially freedom of movement, education, work, housing and medical care, must be recognised and realised immediately.

This is not a utopia. But it does require a break with neo-liberalism, austerity politics and redistribution in favour of the owners of capital and property. Through such a Europe-wide struggle, the division between "domestic" and migrant people forced by the state, capital and the right wing could be overcome at the same time.

Let us therefore combine solidarity with Captain Rackete and her crew with the construction of a Europe-wide movement against racism, isolation, fortress Europe and the attacks of capital!

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