

MATERIALIST BACKGROUND TO THE 2015 “REFUGEE CRISIS OF EUROPE”

by József Böröcz
Professor of Sociology
Rutgers University
<http://borocz.net>

In April, 2015, the nationalist-Christian-neoliberal government of Hungary reacted to a drop in its polling results, under advice from a US-based right-wing “neocon” PR firm, by initiating a domestic anti-immigrant propaganda campaign. The campaign began before the massive influx of people displaced by the wars of west Asia reached the southern border of Hungary.

The government of Hungary used the unprecedented global media attention to spread an essentialist, archconservative, hyper-nationalist—in its broad outlines, neo-fascist—rhetoric. It claimed “Hungary must be defended” against the “onslaught” of “livelihood migrants” who purportedly violate “European values” by their very physical presence, endangering “a millennium of organic Christian culture”. Initially, it also made an explicit exception for refugees.

Once the flow of the millions displaced by the wars in west Asia began approaching east-central Europe, the Hungarian government’s rhetoric took a sharply anti-refugee, anti-asylum—hence anti-human-rights—direction. Erstwhile-state-socialist Schengen states have formed a solid voting block against the EU’s proposal for a quota-based distribution of asylees. As far as it is possible to tell, the societies of the region are solidly behind their government on this issue.

In this paper, I provide a materialist background to these political-ideological developments by sketching a historical geopolitical-economic landscape of the context.

First, I place the west Asian wars in the context of the geopolitics of the large-scale transformation of the world. Second, I outline the structure of European integration as a system of hierarchical dependencies, with the societies of eastern Europe tied into the west European circuits of capital *via* quasi-legal ties such as foreign direct investment, centripetal infrastructural investment, the hollowing out of the poorer economies of the EU, creating pressures for west-bound intra-European migration of historic proportions.

This paper offers a social-psychological mechanism through which the current European geopolitics of neoliberal Eurocentrism has produced this extreme-nationalist, cultural-racist, anti-human-rights shift.