

Archbishop Agrelo: “Migrant Camps Are Concentration Camps”

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Archbishop of Tangiers, in Morocco, Santiago Agrelo Martinez, [is outraged](#) at the way the E.U. is treating migrants. He claims that setting up camps in Africa where these migrants are to be processed would be tantamount to creating “concentration camps for people who have no rights.”

The Archbishop’s language is disconcerting. “Concentration camps” – we think immediately of the Nazis or the Soviets – were places that people were violently herded into, lived in subhuman conditions, and were shot if they tried to escape. In the camps themselves, they were beaten, starved, tortured, and murdered en masse.

The camps the European Union is planning to set up in Africa will be places where migrants will be examined as to their claims to asylum. If the claim is upheld, they will be assigned to a country in Europe that will take them in. If their claim is denied, they will be sent home. There of course will be no starving, beating, or killing. At any time, anyone in these camps can request that he, or she, be sent home. While in the camps, the E.U. will see to it that they receive perfectly adequate food, are given medical attention when necessary, and clothing suitable to the season and the climate. None of this, of course, occurs in real concentration camps. They are there not to be punished or harmed, but simply placed there so that their application may be properly weighed. They want to be in those processing centers, are glad to be there, for they recognize it as a step on the path – so they devoutly hope – to being admitted to Europe.

Could it be that Archbishop Agrelo is unfamiliar with what happened in real concentration camps? Does he need to be informed of how the prisoners in Treblinka, Belzec, Birkenau, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and dozens of other infamous places were worked to death, tortured, gassed, electrocuted, hung, stabbed, burned alive, injected with phenol into the heart, frozen to death in fiendish medical experiments performed on them by “Doctor” Mengele and so many others? Does he need reminding of all the fun the Germans had tormenting those prisoners in ever-more imaginative ways? Sometimes they would throw Jewish babies up in the air, and catch them on their bayonets. Or they would have great fun setting prisoners to fight each other, letting them know that the one who lost would immediately be shot. And the survivor of one bout would then have to fight another opponent, and another, until he lost, and it was his turn to be killed. What fun, too, to force prisoners to run straight into electrified fences. Or to make them lift heavy stones fourteen hours a day, until they died of exhaustion. Likening these E.U. processing centers, where would-be migrants are required to live temporarily in

order to have their applications for asylum processed, to the Nazi death camps, is indecent and unforgivable.

The Archbishop adds: "We treat them like slaves."

"If we want them, we take them from their homes and countries to work on our agricultural land, but if we don't need them, even though they're hungry, we enclose them in camps."

How are they treated like slaves? Is he talking about the economic migrants who have been pouring into Europe, quick to claim every possible benefit the generous welfare states of Europe provide? If admitted, they immediately start to receive free or highly subsidized housing, free medical care, free education, family allowances, and the equivalent of unemployment benefits without ever having to have been employed. "Treat them like slaves"? What kind of slaves are treated like that?

"We take them from their homes and countries." The Archbishop has got it backwards. These migrants are not "taken" from "their homes and countries." They leave their homes willingly, and try desperately to get into Europe. They are forcing their way in, not being forced in. They clamber over fences topped with barbed wire to get into Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves within Morocco, which means they have made it legally into Spain. They take any sort of vessel they can, crossing the Mediterranean to land wherever the boats are permitted. Meanwhile, Europeans, having recently allowed millions of migrants in, from Africa and the Middle East, with all the problems that has created, are now trying to keep out the hordes of people who want in. They are not "being taken from their homes" but are, rather, pushing themselves into Europe, economic migrants who present themselves as "refugees" – "asylum seekers" fleeing persecution and death. Those allowed into Europe take full advantage of all the benefits that Europe offers, and many are in no hurry to find work, finding the benefits of Europe's generous welfare states to be

sufficient.

Whether they live on benefits, or are willing to work – obviously at lower-paying jobs, given their lack of skills and training – these migrants are not, as the Archbishop seems to think, “slaves.” They are at all times free to return to their countries of origin. No one is making them remain in Europe to receive benefits, or to work at jobs they may feel are beneath them. What does the Archbishop mean when he claims that “if we don’t need them, even though they’re hungry, we enclose them in camps”? Like any other worker, if a migrant is laid off from his job, he receives benefits from the government. He is not starving; these benefits include allowances for food and shelter. Nor are he or his family forcibly “enclosed in camps.” Where are these “camps” where unemployed migrant workers are supposedly “enclosed”? The only camps are those used to house would-be migrants, until their claims can be evaluated.

If they are allowed to remain in Europe, they are sent to housing provided, free or at very low cost, by the government. The only new development is that the E.U. now proposes to place some of those processing centers in Africa, which would make it easier to return to their homes those whose claims are denied. The Archbishop’s language – “concentration camps,” “taken from their homes and countries,” “treated like slaves” – is hallucinatory.

The EU already hosts a number of ‘temporary stay centers for migrants arriving in the bloc’s overseas territories in Africa.

The two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla play host to the EU’s only land borders on the continent of Africa.

More than 6,000 migrants have travelled to the Spanish cities on Morocco’s northern coast this year, according to the United Nation’s refugee agency UNHCR.

Archbishop Martinez said migrants arriving at the EU's gates in Africa are forced into hiding in nearby forests and wastelands on the outskirts of the security fences surrounding the two enclaves...

The Archbishop claims that the crowds of Arabs and Africans who try to clamber over the security fences around the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are “forced into hiding...on the outskirts of the security fences...” These Arabs and Africans are engaged in besieging those outposts of Spain, for if they manage to get into Ceuta or Melilla, they are then considered legally to be in Spain, which means they have also made it into Europe, and cannot then be turned back. They are not in “hiding,” because they are being pursued by the police, much less by the equivalent of S.S. men. Having failed in an attempt to scale the border fences, they simply go somewhere nearby, and wait, eager to try to breach the fence again. The worst thing that can happen to them is not some kind of concentration camp horror, but that they may be returned to their home countries, from which, of course, they may try yet again to make it into Europe.

The Archbishop seems to believe that Europe should fling wide open its doors to all those who want to enter. In this respect he is echoing Pope Francis, who believes that Europe, that the West, has a duty to let in all who want to come, no matter what their motives or mental baggage, and that those who oppose this policy, the so-called “populists” who would like to keep control over their own borders, are akin, insists the Pope, to Hitler. For both Pope Francis and Archbishop Agrelo, it is somehow illegitimate for Europeans to want to choose with whom to share their home, their country. Is that desire really so hard for the Archbishop and the Pope to fathom? They apparently believe that Europeans owe these Arabs and Africans a duty, not just to admit them, but to assure them of support. These economic migrants are not fleeing persecution or death, though they claim asylum. They want only to improve their

standard of living, to be taken in by a European country, preferably one of those which offers the most generous benefits. Billions of people have lower living standards than Europeans. Would the Archbishop and the Pope argue that whoever wants to get into Europe should be admitted? I'm afraid so.

The hysterical language used by the Archbishop, about Europeans putting these would-be migrants into "concentration camps" and then "treating as slaves" those admitted to Europe, is matched only by the Pope's extraordinary language comparing those who want to decide for themselves whom to admit into their midst, rather than be dictated to by E.U bureaucrats in Brussels, to Adolf Hitler.

It's a failure of mind and heart, by both Archbishop Agrelo and by Pope Francis. A country should be thought of as akin to your family's home. You want to be able to choose for yourself who enters your home and lives with you. That's all Europe's "populists" want. They want to be able to make that decision for themselves, based quite reasonably on what they have learned from their experience with migrants, and above all with Muslim migrants, so far. They want to protect their countries from this new kind of invasion. They do not wish to harm anyone. Yet the Pope likens them to Hitler, and Archbishop Agrelo calls the centers where migrants stay while being processed "concentration camps."

This refusal by Archbishop Agrelo to ignore the observable effect so far of tens of millions of Muslims already let into Europe, and his choosing instead to cruelly demonize Europeans who want only to be able to vet those attempting to enter their countries, their homes, is deplorable, though given the example of the Pope, not surprising. Pope Francis has gone from bad to worse – for what could be worse than comparing "populists" (that is, those Europeans who have read enough, studied enough, and observed enough, to become wary of more Muslim migrants) to Adolf Hitler? Pope Francis has been Pope

for five years; he is 81; for many, his retirement can't come fast enough. As for Archbishop Agrelo, perhaps he should concentrate more on the well-being of his own Believers in the archdiocese of Tangiers (*Dioecesis Tingitanus*), rather than warning about non-existent "concentration camps" being set up for migrants. As Christians in a Muslim sea, *in partibus infidelium*, his tiny flock of brave Christians – 2,500 of them – in Tangiers will no doubt continue to need his protection for as long as they are allowed to subsist.

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