



CONSOLIDATION OF THE EURO-REALIST VOICE

This year brings with it the continuation and consolidation of the euro-realist voice. The European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) is pleased that during the European elections of 2014 the peoples of Europe used their vote to express their disdain towards the institutions in Brussels and voted for euro-critical, euro-realist and eurosceptic candidates. The EAF members shall continue to be there to represent these European citizens and together aim to reform the Union, bringing back some powers to national democracy. There exists vital need for proper alliances with a



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common vision to break the traditional left centrist- right

europhile alliance currently endorsing the legislation provided by the Commission which alliance may hope to break supranational control and instead ensure free European Nations once again. The EAF shall achieve these objectives by continually strengthening its network and starting even from lower levels of politics in many Member States. The EAF would like to thank everyone who is supporting us and hopes to continue working and attracting more support all over Europe during this coming year.

Sharon Ellul Bonici
EAF Secretary General

FEAR OF RADICAL ISLAMISTS

In a confidential report quoted by the daily *Die Welt* on 13 January, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) warned that there may be copycat terrorists ready to carry out attacks similar to those seen in France. Although the situation of Muslims in Germany is different from that in France, information about the assault in Paris has contributed to Germans feeling an increasing sense of threat. This in turn is exacerbating the existing political and social tensions provoked by fears of radical Islamists. In Dresden demonstrations against the “Islamisation of Europe” have been held every Monday since the end of October 2014 and they are attracting an increasing number of participants. The present context has brought about a situation in which the organisers of the Pegida demonstrations have become the only ones who adequately assessed the threat from radical Islamists. In consequence of this, they pose a serious problem to the parties represented in the Bundestag. On the one hand, politicians of the ruling coalition are calling into question the assessment of the situation presented by this anti-Islamist movement. On the other hand, they are urgently submitting draft laws aimed at raising the security level.

What is Pegida?

Since the third week of October 2014 Pegida which is an informal association has organized demonstrations every Monday in Dresden. These events are known as the ‘Monday demonstrations’ and these are a reference to the demonstrations held in East Germany from 1989, where the participants used to use the slogan ‘We are the nation’ in German and demand political reforms. Its name is an acronym formed from the name *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West). The organisers have made it clear through declarations that they are not racists or extreme right sympathisers. Bachmann himself, charged with drug trafficking, claims he is a “disappointed CDU voter”. The association wants a change in the asylum, immigration and integration policies, an increase in financing the police, the introduction of direct democracy and the defence of the Judeo-Christian culture of the West. During Pegida demonstrations the spectrum of chanted slogans is even broader – they range from demands for all



politicians to resign to appeals to Vladimir Putin to save Western civilisation.

In their manifest Pegida also has demands connected to topical issues such as: the war in Syria, street clashes involving Kurds and Salafists in several German towns, the appearance of young people wearing reflective vests with “Shariah Police” (*sic!*) written on them on the streets of Wuppertal, and the failings of the asylum system. Pegida is trying to respond to the growing sense of alienation and threat from Islam in the country. According to opinion polls 17.5% of Germans declare that they feel alienated in their own country because of Muslims (opinion poll by *Die Welt* from 10 September 2014). 57% of those surveyed consider Islam a threat and 61% believe Islam to be a religion incompatible with Western civilisation (*Religionsmonitor* on 8 January 2015). There are between 3.8 and 4.3 million Muslims in Germany, constituting approximately 5% of the population in Germany. Although the majority of the Muslims in Germany declare their attachment to constitutional values, a serious influx of people who sympathise with Salafism (a radical movement in Islam) has been observed in recent years. In 2011 the number of Salafists in Germany was estimated at 2,000. At present the figure stands at 7,000.

The political problem

Angela Merkel has stated that xenophobic views are not tolerated in Germany and there is no place for people preaching such views, however the CSU would like the demonstrators’ message to be listened to. Heiko Mass the Justice Minister (SPD) has characterised Pegida as a ‘disgrace for Germany’.



After the Paris assault the large political parties are trying to make up for their previous negligence and are precluding the further growth of Pegida. Angela Merkel together with President Joachim Gauck are doing their utmost to ensure that people do not equate Islam with terrorism. The government has repeated the statement made by the former President Christian Wulff that 'Islam is part of Germany', during a meeting held on the 12 January with the Turkish Prime Minister. President Gauck on the 9 January held that where someone comes from or their religion should not be a deciding factor of whether such person belonged to the German society. To defend the freedom of speech and to fight terrorism Sigmar Gabriel has asked that all political parties join in a demonstration so as to counter the calls by Pegida and the CSU has called on Pegida to suspend its demonstrations.

While Alexander Gauland, the head of the AfD in the in Brandenburg expressed his support for the movement Pegida, Bernd Lucke, an MEP and the AfD's party leader cautioned against a shallow stigmatisation of all followers of Islam. Results of opinion polls indicate that actions undertaken by German politicians are overdue and ineffective and the attacks in Paris have led to increased support for Pegida. According to the latest survey published on 8 January by the *Bild* 29% of Germans believe that the association is right (up from 22%). The number of the people who fear terrorist attacks has also risen from 49% to 74%. The German government is in a difficult situation. On the one hand, it has to talk openly about the threat from radical Islamists in order to mobilise ordinary citizens to be more vigilant. On the other hand, this fuels the sense of threat

and xenophobic feelings, which may lead to an escalation of tensions and clashes between Muslims and, for example, Pegida followers. It could, furthermore, lead to an increase in support for the political parties which promote anti-immigration slogans.

A genuine problem

The confidential report by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) quoted by the media on 13 January confirms that fears of attacks are justified. It is not the first warning that has been issued by the German services in recent months. The present situation is more dangerous, though, since the assault in France may, according to the BKA, serve as an example for radical Islamists in Germany. According to data from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, there are 260 people in Germany who might carry out attacks. They are in part former Islamic State militants who have returned from the war in Syria. The Federal Ministry of the Interior has been trying for many months to develop regulations which would make it impossible for German citizens to travel abroad to fight in wars. It is an element of a broader action to keep Salafists who could pose a threat under surveillance and to neutralise them pre-emptively.

The assault in Paris has forced German politicians to take a stance and to accelerate actions with regard to issues which have been festering for a long time with solutions being delayed. An increase in support for movements which promote such slogans as Pegida and, consequently, increased pressure from public opinion on the government, will make it necessary for the grand coalition to discuss the integration of immigrants and changes in the immigration law.

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