

# German establishment spawns right-wing Pegida movement

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The demonstrations of the Patriotic Europeans against Islamisation of the West (Pegida) movement are the product of a systematic campaign being waged by German politicians and media, directed not only against immigrants but against the entire working class.

Police claimed that some 15,000 people had gathered for the anti-Islamic demonstration last Monday. Never before have so many joined such a protest. The participants, who had travelled from all over Germany, left no doubt as to their reactionary, far-right standpoints.

Along with numerous German flags, protesters carried placards with slogans like, “More money for our children instead of asylum swindlers”, “No Sharia law in Europe”, and “Against religious wars on German soil.”

According to their own admissions, “many officials and members” of the fascist National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) were among the demonstrators. In recent weeks, the party has mobilised its members for the marches and called on its supporters to participate.

The right-wing nationalist Alternative for Germany (AFD) was also represented. Its Brandenburg parliamentary faction head Alexander Gauland, among others, attended. He had previously referred to the demonstrations as legitimate protests against ineffective asylum policies, claiming that the vast majority of asylum seekers living in Germany were neither politically persecuted, nor even refugees.

The mobilisation of the dregs of society who took to the streets in Dresden is the result of a deliberate campaign. Over the past weeks, the initially very small marches in Dresden received extensive and wholly disproportionate coverage in the media.

The reports ranged from trivialising the protests as “disorderly grumbling from the people” (*taz* daily

paper) or “a contradictory phenomenon” (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*), to outright support and incitement from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ).

On Monday, FAZ co-publisher Berthold Kohler rejoiced that no longer would “Nazi baseball bats need to be swung about so much, before the Union [CDU-CSU alliance of conservative Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union] poked its head out and took notice of what was happening like a turtle.” Kohler called for protesters to be taken seriously and asked the government “to pursue an immigration policy, whose rules are strictly geared to the interests of our own country.” Effectively, he is pressing for the abolition of the right to asylum.

Representatives of the federal government expressed similar views. In early October, before the start of the demonstrations, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) defended protests against refugee hostels, describing them as “legitimate”. When the Dresden demonstrations began to gain momentum, he gave the participants his backing, declaring their concerns had to be taken seriously.

Social Democratic Vice-Chancellor and Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Sigmar Gabriel also said that one had to meet halfway those demonstrators who felt insecure and were going along with the crowd. His party colleague, Rhineland-Palatinate interior ministry head Roger Lewentz, disliked the idea of labelling the demonstrators right-wing or xenophobic. “When so many people take to the streets for their own reasons, you have to take them seriously,” he said.

The Saxony state government was especially keen to support the protesters. Saxony’s Prime Minister Stanislaw Tillich (CDU) announced last week his intention to enter into dialogue with the Pegida supporters. His interior minister, Markus Ulbig (CDU),

also said it was “completely wrong to stigmatise the people and categorise them all as right-wing.”

Tillich and Ulbig are directly continuing the pro-Nazi traditions of the Biedenkopf CDU in Saxony. From 1990 to 2002, Kurt Biedenkopf was prime minister, and his state government was a bastion of far-right politicians.

Steffen Heitmann was his justice minister of from 1990 to 2000. In 1993, Heitmann had already formulated the programme that now underlies the central demands of the Pegida demonstrations. After visiting Stuttgart and other west German cities, he said that, given the high proportion of foreigners in the country, he felt “threatened by the ‘otherness’ bearing down on us,” and had come to the conclusion that “Germans must be protected from being overwhelmed by foreigners!” One of Heitmann’s successors was Thomas de Maizière, Saxony’s justice minister from 2002 to 2004.

Due to his public utterances, Heitmann had to relinquish his candidacy for the office of federal president in 1993. Now, not only right-wing cliques of the CDU but also sections of the SPD express such reactionary views. They go far beyond Heitmann’s positions and mobilise support for the right-wing Pegida demonstrations.

Pegida is not the expression of a general move to the right on the part of the population, but a systematic campaign driven by politicians and the media. Its aim is to channel increasing social and political tensions into reactionary channels and establish a fascist movement.

The year 2014 was marked by the revival of German militarism. Since Federal President Joachim Gauck announced the end of military restraint at the beginning of the year, the federal government has implemented this programme, adopting an aggressive course against Russia and “legalising” the participation of German soldiers in the war against the Islamic State (IS). Only last Wednesday, the federal cabinet resolved to deploy combat troops to Iraq.

The war drive is also supported by the so-called opposition, the Greens and the Left Party. At the same time, a propaganda war has broken out in the media, reviling anyone who dares speak against it.

Despite these attempts at intimidation, the vast majority of the population remains hostile to the war policy. Likewise, opposition to social inequality and

persistent cuts in social spending is growing throughout Europe.

The mobilisation of far-right mobs in Dresden marks a further escalation of the campaign. It serves to suppress this opposition, enforce the war policy and divert attention from the latest anti-social attacks. In order to do so, the ruling elite is willing to mobilise far-right forces, as it did in the darkest period of German history.

This development confronts the working class with great dangers, which they must counter by preparing themselves politically. The struggle against the danger of fascism is inextricably linked to the struggle against militarism and the ruling elite and their political parties, which promote it. Only an independent workers’ movement based on a socialist programme can halt the revival of the extreme right.



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