

AFD'S SLOGAN: THE MORE REFUGEES, THE MORE VOTES

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As is known, far-right parties across Europe are increasing their votes compared to the previous election period. If we evaluate the issue in Germany, we can easily say that the far-right party, Alternative for Germany (Ger. *Alternativ für Deutschland - AfD*), has found an effective way to increase its votes. This method is populist discourse conducted through anti-refugee rhetoric. It is clear that this discourse gained strength throughout March 2020.

In early March, the maltreatment against refugees on the Greek border clearly showed that Europe and especially Germany failed to implement concrete regulations on anti-refugee action. Moreover, Manfred Weber, President of the European People's Party, defended use of force against refugees rather than condemning attacks by the border police on refugees. Furthermore, Weber explained that the law and order at the external border of the European Union shall be protected by implication of brute force[1]. Weber went further by claiming that Turkey intentionally organized to leave refugees along the border and said that he fully supported the Greek border polices violent attitude.

Towards the end of the month, an increase in news about xenophobia and racism was observed in Chemnitz, located in the east of Germany. Recently, members of the extreme right-wing terrorist organization "Revolution Chemnitz" were sentenced to prison between two years, three months and five and a half years[2]. According to the indictment, the far-right terrorist organization "Revolution Chemnitz" was preparing for "fatal actions" that would destroy the democratic state of law. The indictment also included that the organization is preparing for armed actions against foreigners, political opponents, and government representatives[3]. The anxiety caused by such attacks on foreigners is also striking. Germany expresses its concern about these issues openly and frequently. The uneasiness of Germany stems from AfD's anti-immigrant rhetoric and its activities in the city.

Chemnitz has become a field where the neo-Nazi groups associated with AfD and Pro-Chemnitz backed by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) are struggling. This struggle between two groups reveals itself right next to the Karl Marx monument, which has become the symbol of the city and had even named the city for a period. In fact, the Marx statue in Chemnitz symbolizes the principles of both mentioned groups. One of these principles is represented by the sentence, "All the workers of the world unite!", being written in four languages behind the statue and forming the essence of the book "Communist Manifesto". The other principle, belonging to neo-Nazi groups and AfD is represented by Karl Marx himself because of the book, "Eastern Question [Turkey]", penned by him and Friedrich Engels in 1897.The book outlines the anti-immigrant stance, common denominator for neo-Nazi groups and AfD, and descibes Turks and Muslims to be 'barbarians' countless times explicitly, which naturally attracts attention. In summary, the book states that the Turks are the most talented people to overcome the Balkan people despite their small population in Anatolia, and that they are based on the power of "barbarism". These statements document how old the xenophobia roots date back to Europe.

Considering the last year, 317 racist attacks took place in Saxony. This figure shows that the attacks increased by 40% in a year. It is seen that approximately 80 of the attacks occurred in Chemnitz only. The attack rate in Chemnitz increased dramatically by 400% last year[4]. This increase shows that the anti-refugee AfD became the party to win the struggle between the two mentioned groups of Chemnitz. Today, anti-refugee terrorist groups such as "Revolution Chemnitz" and the idea of xenophobia still continue to get stronger. At this point, it is worth to note that anti-Semitism still remains to be a problem.

Although AfD refuses to be associated with neo-Nazi groups, AfD's votes are much higher in the east with respect to the west of Germany. The main reason of this situation is based on economic foundations. After the Berlin Wall collapsed, East Germany lost 10% of its population and two-thirds of the working female population to West Germany. This change is stated to result in an aggressive population in the East that cannot keep up with the new German order[5]. Therefore, the number of refugees in Germany has become an election material used by AfD to increase the votes, as stated at the beginning of the article.

However, the racist discourses of AfD and the presence of members that praise Hitler are not new developments. Speaking during the January 2017 meeting of the racist, anti-Islamic movement Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West (Pegida); Björn Höcke, referring to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, said "The Germans are the only people who plant a monument of shame in the heart of the capital."[6]. AfD vice president Alexander Gauland also supported Höcke and demonstrated his pro-Nazi stance[7]. In our previously released analyses, we have already stated that, because of his mentioned racist statements, calling Höcke a 'fascist' was decided not to be illegal[8]. A recent development on this issue is the statement of the head of the Bundesamt für Verfassungschutz - BfV (Eng. *Federal Constitutional Protection Organization*), Thomas Haldenwang upon the racist rethoric of AfD. During his statement, Haldenwang stated his institution to be working actively against the increasing far-right threat. He further added

that the activities of AfD are classified as radical and thus, AfD is kept under surveillance[9].

At every opportunity, the members of the AfD claim that Islam is neither compatible with Germany nor Europe and Muslims have no place in Europe. AfD politicians have clearly demonstrated their racist attitude not only at the level of discourse, but also actually by representing their party themselves at the meetings of the far-right movements.

It is possible to say that Chemnitz is a small reflection of all Europe. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rise of far-right parties, racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism has become a significant problem across the Europe. The most important point that must be emphasized is that, the EU accuses Turkey of using refugees as a foreign policy tool. A remarkable point here emerges as Europe is unaware of the serious racist developments within the Union. This is because, racism is engraved in the genes of Europe itself.

*Photo: *https://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/chemnitz-sonrasi,1976*

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