

German Marx21 in exploratory talks to form Hesse state government

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At the end of November, the network Marx21 published an article by Volkhard Mosler entitled “Balancing act in Hesse: the lesson of the government talks.”

The article makes two things clear. First, the pseudo-left Marx21, which works within the Left Party and has close ties to the International Socialist Tendency (IST), is now among the strongest supporters of a coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens, which will organise massive social attacks. And second, it finds it increasingly difficult to cover up its right-wing, anti-working class politics with “left” phrases.

Mosler, one of the theoretical leaders of Marx21 and an experienced pseudo-left cynic, attempts in his comment to defend exploratory talks in Hesse with the SPD and Greens that were ongoing for four weeks, while at the same time presenting a “left” face. To do so, he constructs a dishonest account with the aim of covering up the real politics of Marx21 and the Left Party, and to conceal their role in preparing an SPD/Green coalition of social cuts.

Mosler’s fairytale runs as follows: first, he claims that the SPD and Greens had “gone in to the election campaign with a left programme and left promises.” The Left Party subsequently took up exploratory talks with the SPD and Greens, while claiming that they would not support any social attacks. Janine Wissler, the chairwoman of the Left Party’s fraction in the Hesse state parliament, who is a member of Marx21, and the party’s state chair, Ulrich Wilken, had “left no doubt about their unwillingness to agree to job cuts in the public sector or other types of social cuts under the pressure of the debt crisis.”

The information provided by Mosler is as dishonest as it is absurd. The SPD and Greens, the parties that implemented the Hartz IV welfare reforms, do not represent a “left programme.”

Their programme—which they are now implementing on the federal level in a grand coalition, and on the state level in Hesse in a Christian Democratic Union (CDU)/Green coalition—consists of social attacks. The Left Party entered exploratory talks with the SPD and Greens because it is in

agreement with these policies. It is not concerned with discussing a supposed “left programme,” but rather preparing a government that serves the interests of big business and finance capital.

The Left Party noted repeatedly that the formation of an SPD/Green/Left Party government in Hesse would not fail because of them, and spoke out explicitly in favour of the inclusion of the debt break and the social cuts that would be connected with it. When it became clear in mid-November that the SPD and Greens no longer wished to pursue a coalition with the Left Party for the time being, due above all to tactical considerations on the federal level, the Left Party underscored this once again.

In a November 15 statement, Wilken and Wissler explained that the “removal of the CDU/Free Democratic Party [will] not fail due to the Left Party,” and that under any conditions they were prepared to compromise. “The fact is that the SPD, Greens and Left Party have reached considerable agreement in the talks in important areas like education, energy policy, workers’ rights, more direct democracy and housing policy. If the Left Party had not been prepared to make any compromises, there would certainly not have been four intensive rounds of exploratory talks.”

It becomes clear from the statement that the Left Party was not only “prepared to compromise” in the exploratory talks, but was in fact a driving force for austerity and job cuts.

“There can be no talk of ‘persistent refusal by the Left Party to accept responsibility for any form of cuts in the state budget’,” it stated. “The Left Party even made a series of suggestions for savings and calculated these.... [P]articular areas of the public sector can be reviewed to see if jobs can be reduced in order to create more sensible jobs in other areas.”

Mosler knows better than anyone else the extent of the social cuts that the Left Party suggested and supported in the exploratory talks. He is Wissler’s political mentor, who as the Left Party’s leading candidate in Hesse “fought” strongly until the end for a coalition with the SPD and

Greens.

Shortly after the SPD and Greens ended the talks, Wissler wrote via Twitter to Green Party regional leader Tarek al-Wazir, who in the meantime had begun coalition talks with the CDU, “I would be interested in what issues of content led you to believe that the Left Party cannot govern and does not want to.”

Due to her complete integration into bourgeois politics, Wissler was showered with praise from the media and business alike prior to the exploratory talks.

At the beginning of October, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* hailed her efforts: “The competitors in Hesse would also want someone like Janine Wissler. The charm and the clarity of the Left Party’s lead candidate in Hesse would have done the other parties good in the election campaign. While the other parties obstinately argued, Wissler showed herself to be bold and firm, and pleasant to her opponents.”

The *Tagesspiegel* also carried a profile in October that was full of praise for Wissler, under the headline, “Left Party’s fraction leader in Hesse: ‘We are reliable’.” The newspaper declared excitedly, “She is 32 years of age, has already been in the Hesse state parliament for six years, and is a combative speaker.... With a diploma in politics, she presents her views confidently and pleasantly, on podiums and in television and radio discussions. She has avoided the tendency to fly off in to Marxist theory.”

The business elite in Hesse also showed their satisfaction with Wissler. At the invitation of the chamber for industry and trade (IHK) in Frankfurt, she presented the Left Party’s programme before select representatives of regional business, for which she received applause and flowers. Karen Hoyndorf, deputy chair of the IHK Frankfurt and head of personnel at the Compass Group, stated in the podium discussion with Wissler that while she did not agree with some points, there were “many ideas in your economic programme that business could sign up to.

The role of Marx21 in Hesse is symptomatic of the transformation of formerly radical petty-bourgeois organisations into open instruments of capitalism. Mosler personifies the sharp shift to the right of a whole layer of middle class student activists who were radicalised in the 1960s and now stand with both feet in the camp of bourgeois politics.

At the end of the 1960s, Mosler was on the executive of the Frankfurt Socialist Students League (SDS) before he built the Socialist Workers Group (SAG) in the 1970s under the guidance of Tony Cliff as the German section of the IST. Although the SAG (later Linksruck—Keep Left) described itself as socialist and Marxist, and even Trotskyist for a time, it always opposed the insistence of classical Marxism on the revolutionary role of the working class.

In place of the struggle for the political independence and political education of the working class, SAG promoted the Stalinist and Social Democratic bureaucracies, national liberation movements, spontaneous activism, sexual liberation and various forms of identity politics as vehicles for social progress.

The reactionary nature of the theories and conceptions of petty-bourgeois anti-Marxism, which were so influential in the movements of 1968, has been obvious for some time. Former anarchists and activists like Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Joschka Fischer have broken all ties with their radical past and made their careers as bourgeois politicians and leading representatives of imperialism.

For others like Mosler, who have sought to conceal their own rightward trajectory behind limited pseudo-Marxist phraseology in order to confuse workers and students, it is becoming increasingly difficult. In the crisis of capitalism, he stands—together with aspiring politicians he has trained, such as Wissler—for the continuation of the attacks on the working class and the suppression of any opposition.

Workers, youth and students seeking to conduct a serious struggle against the ceaseless attacks on their wages and living standards must study in detail the political and theoretical questions behind this development and draw wide-ranging political conclusions.

The Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG—Socialist Equality Party), as the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, is the only socialist, Marxist and Trotskyist political tendency today in Germany. The PSG has defended the revolutionary role of the working class and the principles of the Fourth International against all forms of opportunism. On these historical foundations, it must be built as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class.



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