Ahead of state election in German state of Thuringia

Left Party Minister President Bodo Ramelow lauds the right-wing CDU

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Thuringia, the only German state with a head of government from the Left Party, is scheduled to hold state elections on October 27.

Minister President Bodo Ramelow is campaigning for a continuation of the coalition between his Left Party and the pro-war, pro-austerity Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens. However, given the risk that the Left Party, SPD, and Green coalition cannot secure a majority, which is a distinct possibility with the SPD currently running at just 7 percent in the polls and facing the threat of losing its place in the state parliament, Ramelow has not ruled out cooperating with the Christian Democrats (CDU).

There is currently "absolutely no time or opportunity to speculate or chatter about such things," Ramelow said last week in an interview with *Deutschlandfunk*, before adding that he is fighting for a "red-red-green"—i.e., a Left Party/SPD/Green Party—coalition. However, it is a "question of democratic culture that we always had contacts with the CDU in Thuringia when the fate of the state was at stake." This is "part of our strength in Thuringia. And that's why I'm not shocked when a Left Party Minister President talks to a CDU party leader and parliamentary group leader about issues."

Ramelow was also full of praise for federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU), who stands on the right wing of the conservative CDU/CSU alliance. Ramelow told *Deutschlandfunk* that he has spoken on several occasions with Seehofer, whom he "values very highly," about "options for how we can achieve more straightforward and better solutions in our refugee policy." Seehofer has now said "that we are prepared to accept one quarter of the refugees rescued at sea," according to Ramelow. With this pledge, "Germany has sent an important message to Europe," and "at long last linked the issue to a European solution."

Ramelow knows full well that the "European solution" propagated by Seehofer is based on the expansion of "fortress Europe" and thus the continuation of the mass drownings in the Mediterranean. Last Thursday, even *Der Spiegel* remarked that the "Malta agreement" on immigration praised by Berlin and Brussels would "seal the borders rather than save lives." According to the article, "the North African coast guards will be strengthened, while the involvement of private organisations, which have largely taken over sea rescue efforts recently, will be made more difficult."

Ramelow praises Seehofer because the red-red-green coalition in Thuringia is pursuing the same anti-refugee, anti-worker policies as the grand coalition in Berlin. Since Ramelow entered office in December 2014, he has presided over the second highest number of deportations among German states. Last year alone, his government initiated 1,650 deportations. Its brutal deportation practices have been repeatedly criticised by aid organisations.

The Ramelow government's entire domestic policy has been based on a law-and-order agenda, which has been directed against left-wing critics while collaborating with the far right. Earlier this year, it was revealed that the state prosecutor in Gera had conducted a 17-month-long investigation into the artistic group "Centre for Political Beauty" at the initiative of the AfD. The state prosecutor is answerable to the justice minister, Dieter Lauinger from the Greens. Following

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strong protests, the proceedings were halted, but this did nothing to change the government's course.

In May, the state government announced the creation of 160 new jobs for the police. Plans to strengthen the powers of Thuringia's state intelligence agency are also under discussion. And this in spite of the fact that the judicial, police and intelligence agency apparatuses in the state are rife with right-wing extremists.

Both Helmut Roever, who led the establishment of Thuringia's state intelligence service following German reunification, and Uwe Kranz, who at the same time worked to establish the state office for criminal police, are highly sought-after speakers and authors in far-right circles. Tino Brandt, the former state leader of the neo-Nazi NPD and head of the Thuringia Home Guard, out of which the three members of the right-wing terrorist group National Socialist Underground were recruited, was maintained as an informant by the state intelligence service for years.

The police state policies go hand in hand with savage attacks on social spending. Thuringia is one of the poorest states in Germany. According to current figures from the Federal Statistics Office, one in six households (16.6 percent) is at risk of poverty, including one fifth of children and young people under 18.

In his *Deutschlandfunk* interview, Ramelow boasted about his implementation of policies in the interests of big capital. He has "heard from companies: A Minister President has never had such close ties to businessmen." He also made no secret of his anti-communism, noting that he is a "professed Christian" who has "no desire to carry around my Karl Marx writings all day to show them to people."

With its right-wing and pro-capitalist policies, the Left Party, whose predecessors reintroduced capitalism into East Germany 30 years ago, bears major responsibility for the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). The fact that the party claims to be carrying out "left-wing policies" while presiding over a social catastrophe nourishes the political frustration that is exploited by the far right. According to a current poll, the AfD has 24 percent support in Thuringia, putting it in second place behind Ramelow.

The necessary lessons must be drawn in the face of these dangerous developments. The struggle against social inequality, the strengthening of the police state apparatus, anti-immigrant policies, militarism, and fascism requires a decisive political break with the Left Party and all pseudo-left defenders of a red-red-green coalition. The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) and International Committee of the Fourth International must be built as the only revolutionary leadership that represents the interests of the working class.

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