

Thuringia, Germany: Minister president elected with votes of far-right AfD announces resignation

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Twenty-four hours after being elected with the support of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), Christian Democrats (CDU), and Free Democrats (FDP) as Minister President of the state of Thuringia, Free Democrat politician Thomas Kemmerich announced his resignation. Kemmerich stated at a press conference Thursday afternoon that his party's parliamentary group had decided to table a motion to dissolve parliament. If the required two-thirds of deputies fail to support the measure, he would call for a confidence vote in his government.

If the parliament is dissolved, new elections must be held within 70 days. Kemmerich could theoretically remain minister president during this period. If he loses a confidence vote, the parliament has three weeks in which to elect a new minister president. Should this take place, former Minister President Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) intends to stand. If no candidate can secure a majority, new elections must be held within 70 days.

Earlier Thursday, Kemmerich was still ruling out the possibility of his resignation in an interview on the “Morgenmagazin” show on public broadcaster ARD. But the pressure then became too much to bear. In the face of an outpouring of outrage among the population, one leading politician after another turned their back on Kemmerich.

CDU party leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer threatened to take punitive measures against any members in Thuringia who cooperate with Kemmerich. This would amount to a breach of the party line, which excludes all cooperation with the AfD, “with all the consequences following from that,” she said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke from South Africa, stating that the election result had to be

overturned. The CDU could under no circumstances be part of a government under Kemmerich, she said. His election broke with the fundamental conviction that “no majority should be won with votes from the AfD.”

FDP leader Christian Lindner, who was aware of the FDP Thuringia's plans from the outset and initially welcomed Kemmerich's victory, travelled to Erfurt, the state capital, on Thursday to convince him to resign his post.

The Social Democrats (SPD) called for a meeting today of the coalition committee, which regulates disputes within the federal government. “What happened in Thuringia was a cold, calculated plan,” SPD General Secretary Lars Klingbeil told Spiegel Online. Both CDU leader Kramp-Karrenbauer and the FDP's Lindner were well aware of the various potential scenarios, he added. Until now, a consensus has existed—“no cooperation with Nazis.” This has now been called into question, continued Klingbeil.

However, it would be a mistake to believe that Kemmerich's resignation means the issue of cooperating with the AfD has been dealt with. The collaboration with the party of the fascist Björn Höcke in Thuringia was a trial run in which, as Klingbeil correctly pointed out, the leaderships of the parties involved were fully informed. They wanted to see how far they could go and therefore made sure to remain in the background. The goal was to break the taboo of collaborating with the AfD so that next time around, the cooperation could go even further.

There was no lack of pledges from the bourgeois parties in the early 1930s never to cooperate with the Nazis. But this did not prevent them from bringing the Nazis into government (for the first time in Thuringia

in 1930), appointing Hitler chancellor in 1933, and voting en masse for the Enabling Act, which legally consolidated his dictatorship.

It is now clear that strong factions of the CDU and FDP are pushing for close cooperation with the AfD. Burkard Dregger, head of the CDU in the Berlin state Senate, described Kemmerich's election as a democratic decision that should not be criticised. Former CDU Thuringia Minister President Bernhard Vogel advised his party to work as part of Kemmerich's government. And the former president of the Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany's secret service, Hans-Georg Maassen, described the election as a "huge success." "The main thing is that the socialists are out," he said.

Although the Left Party and SPD are protesting loudly over the events in Thuringia, they are equally complicit. There have been and continue to be prominent advocates of AfD positions within the SPD's ranks, like Thilo Sarrazin and Heinz Buschkowsky. In the federal government, the SPD is implementing the AfD's refugee policy. There is nothing in the party programme that would represent a principled barrier to their cooperation with Gauland and Höcke's AfD. General Secretary Klingbeil has already announced that the SPD will place the strong state at the centre of their future election campaigns, "a state capable of action."

The Left Party and its lead candidate in Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, have shifted so far to the right that the notorious anti-communist and former German President Joachim Gauck personally intervened to call on the Left Party and CDU to cooperate.

Even some commentators in the bourgeois press are aware that an irreversible shift of bourgeois politics to the right has taken place in Thuringia.

"What Thuringia experienced on February 5, 2020, is not simply a turning point in the history of this small, rather unimportant state," wrote *Die Zeit*. "It is an act that will have tremendous impact on many things in the Federal Republic in the coming months and years: the dam has burst."

The *Augsburger Allgemeine* also referred to the events as amounting to "the bursting of the dam." Kemmerich's election was only possible because "the CDU there indirectly sided with Höcke, who described the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin 75 years after the

liberation of Auschwitz as the 'monument of shame.'"

London's *Financial Times* commented, "Germany's post-war consensus about excluding right-wing extremist parties broke down on Wednesday. ... With the election of Thomas Kemmerich, the AfD has become a kingmaker in German politics for the first time."

Poland's *Rzeczpospolita* opined, "The dark scenario of the German elites has become reality." The election in Thuringia is a "political earthquake that will not only unsettle Berlin, but also Warsaw."

The established parties are being driven to line up alongside the AfD by the deep polarisation of society, the intensification of the class struggle, and the return of militarism. Bourgeois rule and capitalism are no longer compatible with democratic forms of rule. The danger of fascism can only be stopped through the independent mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a socialist programme.



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