

The all-party conspiracy behind the return of the Left Party to government in Thuringia

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One month after Free Democratic Party (FDP) politician Thomas Kemmerich was elected Thuringia state premier with the votes of the extreme right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD), his predecessor, Left Party leader Bodo Ramelow, is back in office.

Ramelow was elected state premier on Wednesday by the Thuringia state legislature in the third round of voting, in which a simple majority was sufficient for victory. He received the votes of the Left Party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens. The AfD representatives voted against him, the Christian Democrats (CDU) abstained and the FDP boycotted the election.

The new government is, in fact, an all-party government in which the AfD sets the tone. The governing parties, the Left Party, SPD, and the Greens, agreed to a “Stability Pact” with the CDU the morning before the election stating that they will not cooperate with the AfD in controversial votes, but will work together to find a solution in joint talks.

But the same “Stability Pact” practically grants the CDU a right to veto government policies. “We are three parties that together form this government. But we are four parties, together with the CDU, who together set out to initiate and secure stability for this country,” Ramelow explained.

This is the same CDU that made a pact with the AfD just four weeks ago. The advocates of open cooperation with the right-wing extremists are so strong in the CDU that it has almost torn the party apart in the last four weeks.

In practice, the “Stability Pact” means that the “red-red-green” minority government cannot decide or do anything that is rejected by the CDU. And the CDU will reject anything that meets with the opposition of the AfD, because otherwise, the conflicts within its

own ranks will flare up again.

As the only opposition party in the Thuringian state parliament, the AfD is thus in a position to dictate government policy. And not because of adverse circumstances, but because Ramelow and his coalition partners want it that way!

The election of Kemmerich with the votes of the AfD had triggered a nationwide storm of protest in February, which the CDU, the FDP—and also Ramelow—had not expected. The anger and indignation increased even more when a neo-Nazi murdered nine people in Hanau for racist motives.

Since then, Ramelow has done everything possible to dampen these feelings of outrage and to help the CDU out of the crisis its cooperation with the AfD in the election for state premier had triggered. If he had insisted on immediate new elections, the Left Party would have won 40 percent of the vote and the CDU would have collapsed, according to surveys. But Ramelow did not want that on any account.

Under no circumstances does he want to hold new elections and fight for a government majority in face of a growing radicalisation against the right. In the tradition of right-wing social democrats like Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske, Ramelow appealed to the CDU’s “state responsibility,” tweeting that responsibility for the state must be the first priority for every politician, regardless of which party. “First the federal state, then the party and only then the person.”

Ramelow even offered to let the CDU take over the leadership of a transitional government, in the person of former state premier Christine Lieberknecht, who would be supported by the Left Party, the SPD and the Greens. When this plan was opposed by CDU headquarters in Berlin and Lieberknecht withdrew her willingness, Ramelow proposed a new plan.

Now, the CDU was to guarantee his re-election as state premier in the first round of elections with at least four votes, and in return, he would grant the CDU a veto right and hold new elections in spring 2021—after the CDU has recovered somewhat.

But even this offer failed due to the CDU's strict refusal to relax its policy decision excluding any cooperation with the Left Party. De facto, this decision means that the CDU is just as close to the AfD as it is to the completely bourgeois Ramelow Left Party. In order to spare the CDU another ordeal, Ramelow finally abandoned this condition and offered the CDU a veto right without conditions.

Ramelow himself justified his behaviour citing his concern for democratic institutions. But this is simply a lie. In reality, the Left Party and its Social Democratic and Green coalition partners agree with the CDU, FDP and AfD on all essential political issues.

Ramelow's red-red-green coalition had lost its majority on October 27, 2019, because its policies were no different from those of CDU- or SPD-led state governments. It pursued a drastic austerity programme, ruthlessly deported refugees and stepped up repressive state powers. Contrary to its election promises, it also did not abolish the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (as the secret service is called), which in Thuringia is closely linked to the neo-Nazi scene.

The "Stability Pact," agreed upon by the red-red-green coalition and CDU, means the adoption of another austerity budget and an increase in the size of the police force. This was dictated by the effort to strengthen the authority of the state apparatus in the face of growing social tensions.

After his swearing-in as the new state premier, Ramelow effusively thanked the CDU and stressed that his main task would be to maintain the political order "in this beautiful and successful federal state." Never again should "important state offices and organs of state" be treated with such disdain as they were at the beginning of last month, he said.

The AfD is being used and deliberately strengthened to promote this policy, which is directly aimed against the working class. In his state parliament speech after his re-election, Ramelow made it clear that he too is prepared to cooperate with the AfD.

After the election, he had refused to shake hands with AfD parliamentary faction leader Björn Höcke, when

the latter sought to congratulate him. The reason was not Höcke's racist and fascist statements or his trivialisation of Nazi crimes, but his weakening of state offices and state organs.

Ramelow said, "If I can clearly hear that democracy is in the foreground, then I am prepared to shake hands with you too, Mr Höcke. But only then, when you defend democracy and do not trample democracy underfoot and nobody in this House actually knows how you vote, why you vote at all, or whether you are again setting traps for democrats in other groups."

Ramelow's policies and his alliance with the CDU strengthen the extreme right-wing AfD. The all-party alliance in Erfurt is directed against the working class. It aims to disorient, demoralise and stifle the broad resistance against the AfD and the return of fascism.

The events in Thuringia confirm the assessment of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) that the Left Party is not an alternative to the rise of the right, but an important element of an all-party conspiracy.

The fight against fascism and the rise of the AfD requires a political struggle against all bourgeois and pro-capitalist parties that directly or indirectly pave the way for it. Only the mobilisation of the working class based on a socialist programme can prevent the return of fascism and war.



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