“Corona demonstrations” in Germany: Neo-Nazis join hands with Free Democrats, Christian Democrats and Left Party

Peter Schwarz
15 May 2020

Three months after Thomas Kemmerich of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) was elected as minister president of Thuringia with the support of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), events in the German state are showing once again how closely the establishment parties now collaborate with neo-Nazis.

On May 9, FDP state leader Kemmerich participated in a demonstration against the measures put in place to restrict the spread of the coronavirus. Like other mobilisations across the country, it was dominated by right-wing extremists.

The protest was registered by Peter Schmidt, head of the staffing agency Jenatec Industriemontagen, who also sits on the board of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Business Council in Thuringia. The vice president of the Business Council is Friedrich Merz, who is vying for the CDU party leadership and aims to replace Angela Merkel as chancellor.

The two main organisers of the protest were a pair of well-known local neo-Nazis, Vanessa P. and David S. According to a report in the *Tagesspiegel*, the two are part of Schmidt’s circle of friends and work for him at Castle Osterstein. The castle, which is situated above Gera, the town where the protest took place, has been partially owned by Schmidt for several years and is currently being expanded for commercial purposes.

Vanessa P. describes herself as a right-wing “riot girl.” Her partner, David S., the *Tagesspiegel* reported, collects donations—according to his own admission—for the *Reichsbürger* (member of an ultra-right movement that rejects the legitimacy of the modern German state) and former Mr. Germany, Adrian Ursache, sentenced to seven years imprisonment in 2019 after firing a shot at a special forces police officer.

S. also distributes videos of the neo-Nazi NPD’s party newspaper *Deutsche Stimme* (German Voice), and shares posts on Facebook describing the end of the war in 1945 as a “total defeat” and “subordination.” Appeals from the AfD’s Stefan Brandner, a deputy in the federal parliament, calling for opposition to “forced vaccination” have also been shared by S. He is allegedly close to the right-wing extremist Thügida Movement and performed a Nazi salute at a right-wing mobilisation in Gera in September 2016.

At the latest demonstration in Gera, which drew around 750 participants, Vanessa P. and David S. walked side-by-side with Kemmerich and Schmidt through the city centre. Vanessa P. wore a large Star of David.

“Jewish stars” like this and inscriptions such as “CoV-2” and “not vaccinated” were carried by participants in demonstrations in other cities. The president of the Central Jewish Council, Josef Schüster, viewed this as an alarming sign that right-wing extremists are using the fear triggered by the coronavirus to propagate anti-Semitic myths.

Schmidt himself left little doubt that he shares the far-right views of his protégés. He welcomed Kemmerich, the main speaker at the demonstration, as “our only currently legitimate Minister President,” who was “unseated by a telephone call from a power hungry woman in South Africa.” He described the federal parliament as the representative of the interests of “corrupt politicians,” “international eco-profiteers,” “the pharma lobby” and “shadowy foundations.”

Kemmerich was elected as Thuringia’s minister president with the votes of the AfD, which is led in the state by the fascist Björn Höcke, the CDU and the FDP. After an international protest movement developed against the “Minister President at Höcke’s mercy,” Kemmerich was forced to resign. German Chancellor

© World Socialist Web Site

Merkel, concerned by the mass opposition, spoke out during a visit to South Africa and criticised Kemmerich's election. Then, on March 4, Kemmerich's predecessor, Bodo Ramelow, was elected as Minister President of a minority government with the votes of the Left Party, Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Greens.

Kemmerich's appearance in Gera underscores the fact that his resignation was merely a manoeuvre. Although the FDP leadership felt compelled to distance itself from Kemmerich's appearance, this had no long-term consequences for the politician. A video conference of the FDP leadership, including Kemmerich, held on Wednesday merely agreed that Kemmerich would step back from his post on the party executive until the end of the year. He will retain the leadership of the party in Thuringia and the parliamentary group in the state parliament.

Leading FDP figures previously celebrated Kemmerich's election as minister president with the votes of the AfD. Only after the party dropped badly in the polls and lost its representation in the Hamburg Senate did the leadership carry out a retreat.

Notwithstanding its public declarations of anger, the Left Party-led governing coalition is also promoting the right-wing extremists. While FDP and CDU politicians demonstrate against the coronavirus lockdown measures with neo-Nazis, the Left Party/SPD/Green coalition is enforcing their programme in practice. In the process, they are sacrificing human life to big business and corporate profits.

Earlier this week, the state government largely lifted the remaining restrictions. Although two of Germany's five coronavirus hotspots, the districts of Geiz and Sonneberg, are located in Thuringia and have seen their number of cases rise above 50 per 100,000 over the past seven days, Thuringia is going further with reopening than most other states.

As of Wednesday, demonstrations with no limit on the number of participants were permitted, and almost all public facilities have reopened. This includes leisure centres, sports clubs and limited visits to hospitals and care homes. Restaurants, hotels and other tourist facilities will follow suit today, before kindergartens reopen on Monday. On June 1, gyms and outdoor swimming pools will open, as well as indoor clubs, sports facilities and leisure activities. Only indoor pools, saunas, steam rooms, cinemas, nightclubs and brothels will remain closed until June 5.

The fact that the Left Party is enforcing the demands of the far right is not a new development. On the contrary, it is one of the chief characteristics of its policies in office. Prior to his replacement of Kemmerich, Ramelow, the Left Party's only minister president in Germany, was proud of the fact that Thuringia had one of the highest deportation rates for refugees. He slavishly followed the prescriptions from the grand coalition in Berlin—and not just on the refugee question, but also on social spending by enforcing austerity budgets.

When the FDP united with the CDU and AfD to vote him out of office, Ramelow did not appeal to the upsurge of anger within the population. Instead, he offered to cooperate with the CDU in a CDU-led government under Christina Lieberknecht, a former CDU minister president. And when the CDU rejected this, Ramelow granted the CDU veto power over his policies to secure its agreement to abstain in the state parliament in order to assure his reelection.

In practice, this means "that the Left Party/SPD/Green minority government cannot decide or do anything that the CDU opposes," we commented at the time. "And the CDU will reject anything that meets with resistance in the AfD, because otherwise conflicts would erupt in its own ranks." This has now been confirmed.

But Ramelow went even further. Newly in power, he used his deciding vote to secure one of the vice president positions within the state parliament for the AfD. Ramelow's backing for the AfD underscored the reality that, regardless of tactical differences, the Left Party is a key component of the establishment parties' alliance against the working class.

The more the capitalist crisis and class contradictions intensify, the more these parties, the Left Party included, move to the right. With the coronavirus crisis, which is exposing before the eyes of millions the capitalist system's complete inability to safeguard their most basic needs, this process is accelerating.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site