

Germany's Left Party embraces "herd immunity" policy

Johannes Stern
22 October 2020

Bodo Ramelow, Left Party State Premier of Thuringia, last week praised the "Swedish model" when it comes to coronavirus policy. In this way, Ramelow underscored that the policy of "herd immunity," i.e., the murderous infection of the population with the coronavirus, is not only pursued by openly right-wing governments such as the Trump administration in the USA, but also by pseudo-left forces such as the Left Party or Podemos in Spain.

In the discussion on the *Maybrit Illner* talk show, which focused mainly on how to prevent a second lockdown in Germany, Ramelow boasted that he had received Swedish Ambassador Per Thöresson in Erfurt the day before the Coronavirus Summit in Berlin last Wednesday. "I could spend the whole day with the Swedish ambassador. That was interesting because we tried to compare the Swedish model and our situation," Ramelow said.

Then he praised Sweden's coronavirus policy to the skies. In that country, he said, "what the Public Health Authority recommends is being followed by the Swedes. The official recommendations "almost have the character of a prescription," whereas, in Germany, people first ask "about the penalty, the fine and the control measures." He found "it would be exciting if we were to calmly compare how the Swedish development has unfolded and how ours has missed the mark."

Ramelow did not elaborate further on the murderous strategy he was embracing with this. However, emails from the Swedish chief epidemiologist and head of the Public Health Authority, Anders Tegnell, reveal that the Swedish government has pursued a policy of "herd immunity" from the start. When the virus reached Sweden in March, the authorities, unlike in other countries, refused to impose a lockdown. All stores

remained open, and attendance at schools continued—with the declared aim of accelerating the spread of the coronavirus.

At the same time, the Swedish government worked behind the scenes to convince other European governments of the course it had taken. In an email to his Finnish counterpart Mika Salminen on March 14, Tegnell wrote, "One point in favour of keeping the schools open would be to reach herd immunity more quickly." When Salminen replied that the Finnish authorities rejected this idea because children would also spread the virus, Tegnell replied, "Correct, but probably mainly among themselves because of the extremely age-stratified contact structure we have."

The result of this homicidal policy was a death rate among the highest in Europe and the world. With about 10.3 million inhabitants, there have been more than 5,900 deaths from coronavirus and over 103,000 infected persons in Sweden so far. In comparison, neighbouring Scandinavian countries, which are most similar to Sweden in terms of social structure and population, have much lower case numbers. Finland, with a population of around 5.5 million, has so far reported only 13,555 infections and 351 deaths; and Norway, with a population of just under 5.4 million, has reported 16,539 infections and 278 deaths.

The fact that more and more governments worldwide are embracing the policy of herd immunity and refusing to take necessary measures against the spread of the virus, despite exploding case numbers, has been strongly condemned by health experts in recent days. In a statement issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Oct. 15, it states that "attempts to achieve 'herd immunity' by exposing people to a virus are scientifically problematic and unethical. The spread of COVID-19 in populations of all ages and health

conditions leads to unnecessary infection, suffering and death.”

The renowned medical journal the *Lancet* also published an article on Oct. 15 describing the policy of “herd immunity” as “a dangerous fallacy,” which “has not been scientifically proven.” The article states that “the herd immunity experiment in Sweden has been seen to fail,” which has “the highest mortality rate in the Nordic countries.” Only “the controlled containment of COVID-19 in the population” is “a safe way to protect society and economies until a safe and effective vaccine is available and drugs can be developed in the coming months.”

The criterion of the Left Party and its European sister parties is not scientific knowledge and the life and health of the population, but the interests of the economy. When the talk show moderator Maybrit Illner noted that the “economic damage” in Germany due to the lockdown was “much greater” than in Sweden, Ramelow agreed with her and in the further course of the discussion said, “I hope that we now finally understand that we do not always have to decide on a lockdown for the whole of Germany uniformly.”

With its vehement opposition to a second lockdown to contain the virus, the Left Party continues its policy in the interest of German capital. At the end of March, it had voted in the Bundestag (federal parliament) for the “coronavirus emergency package” worth billions, which essentially benefited large corporations, banks and the super-rich. Subsequently, wherever it shares power—in Bremen, Thuringia and Berlin—it has forced through the official policy of Germany’s grand coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, and the European Union, to squeeze gigantic sums out of the working class again.

The catastrophic consequences of this policy are becoming evident—in Europe currently, about 130,000 people are infected every day and more than a thousand die; Berlin and Bremen are considered coronavirus hotspots and in Thuringia, too, the number of cases has increased tenfold in the last few days. Under these conditions, the Left Party, like all other parties in the Bundestag, makes clear that it will do nothing to stop the spread of the virus.

“I am preparing myself for the fact that we must learn to live with coronavirus,” Ramelow said at the end of the programme. One should “simply also accept that

the virus means a life risk... If we drive a car, it is also a life risk. And the other diseases are all still life risks. And we accept these life risks. And with coronavirus, we’re following a completely different track.”

Workers and young people must draw the necessary conclusions from this mixture of recklessness and stupidity. In the fight against the pandemic, the Left Party and the pseudo-left groups in its orbit stand on the other side of the barricades, just as in the fight against war and social inequality.

While the Left Party rejects even the most elementary measures to contain the pandemic—not to mention a socialist programme of expropriating the fortunes of the super-rich to finance the necessary medical and social measures—its leaders are drumming up propaganda for giving the state apparatus greater means of oppression. “The regulatory authorities must be made fit [for purpose]. The [local] police must be deployed. The federal police must be deployed,” Ramelow demanded on the *Maybrit Illner* show. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union, CSU) had even “offered to deploy the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) to reinforce them,” for which he was “very grateful.”



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact