

Left Party's coronavirus policy fuels massive increase in infections in German states

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The ruthless official policy of opening up the economy at both the federal and state level has led to a huge increase in infection rates throughout Germany. On Friday, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported 17,482 new infections, about 4,600 more than a week ago. Two-hundred-and-twenty-six people died of COVID-19. On Saturday, the seven-day incidence rate rose to over 100 per 100,000 people, the highest level since the beginning of February. A week ago, the incidence rate was 69.1.

There has been a particularly dramatic increase in the federal states where the Left Party participates in the state administration. The premier of the state of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow, is a leading member of the Left Party, and Thuringia currently leads the way nationwide for infections, with a seven-day incidence rate of 201.

The state of Saxony is in second place, with an incidence rate of 134. In Bremen and Berlin, where the Left Party rules in coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens, the seven-day incidence rates are 97 and over 100, respectively, according to the RKI.

Infection rates and deaths are also rising rapidly in these three federal states. On Saturday, the RKI reported 867 new infections in Thuringia, 893 in Berlin and 107 in Bremen. This means that a total of 86,588 people have been infected with the coronavirus in Thuringia, 137,918 in Berlin and 19,526 in Bremen. According to the RKI, the number of deaths has risen to 3,188 (Thuringia), 2,984 (Berlin) and 391 (Bremen).

These numbers will continue to explode over the next few days, with leading virologists warning of a further round of mass fatalities, with some 1,000 coronavirus deaths per day over the Easter holidays in a week's time. These casualties are a direct result of the federal

government's reopening policy, which is also being aggressively pursued by the Left Party. In recent weeks, in common with all other governing parties and against the vast preponderance of scientific advice, the Left Party has systematically reopened schools and scaled back pandemic protection measures.

In Bremen, primary school pupils were forced to return to in-person teaching on 1 March. From the fifth grade upwards, pupils study in alternate classes wearing masks, but this has not stopped the rapid spread of the virus. With an average class size in Germany of 18 children, there are still nine children per class, with teachers moving back and forth between classes, meaning they are both potential carriers and potential victims of the virus.

In Berlin, classes for grades one to six and 10 to 13 have been attending school in alternate classes since 17 March, and day-care centres have been open without restrictions for at least seven hours a day since 9 March. Only classes for grades seven to nine have not yet resumed in the German capital. According to the mayor of Berlin, Michael Müller (SPD), this is due to take place immediately after the Easter holidays.

In Thuringia, the end of the lockdown for schools and day-care centres was enforced in several stages. Since 22 February, grades one to four have been back in school. On 1 March, all other grades followed. Officially, this was described as a "limited regular operation," but this is no more than window dressing. Despite the high incidence of infection, the state government is putting pupils, teachers and their families at greater risk.

On 12 March, the Left Party-led health and education ministries once again expanded the scope for easing lockdown measures and have since recommended closing schools and kindergartens only when the

incidence rate reaches 150. In other words, even in the case of a sharp increase in infections that far exceeds the official coronavirus emergency figure of 50 or 100, districts can decide in consultation with the state to keep schools open or reopen them.

In the district of Schmalkalden-Meiningen, for example, where the incidence rate is over 300, schools are to open on 22 March. The district office announced Thursday evening that children in grades one to six will be able to attend school. Home schooling could “not be a permanent solution,” declared district administrator Peggy Greiser, explaining the decision. Greiser, who ran as a candidate for the SPD and the Left Party in 2018, is quoted by Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk as saying, “There has to be an end at some point to the permanent burden placed on working parents.”

In fact, Greiser’s overriding concern is not to ease the burden on parents, but rather to ensure their ability to work. In order to secure corporate profits and underwrite the gigantic sums in the form of emergency coronavirus aid handed out to the financial oligarchy by the German government, with the support of the Left Party, parents are to work and their children are to go to school despite the spread of the deadly pandemic. This is taking place under conditions where even a rudimentary testing capacity is lacking, let alone an effective vaccination programme.

In a revealing comment, Thuringia’s education minister, Helmut Holter (Left Party), went on record to reveal that his government had not even ordered long-promised coronavirus tests. “If we want to have the tests in schools and kindergartens, then the state must procure them now,” he said. “For that we need the money and central logistics.” He warned that any hesitation would mean “we will be without tests after Easter.”

The policy of the Left Party is an integral part of the murderous strategy of the entire ruling class. Following the last federal-state summit on coronavirus policy, Ramelow explicitly spoke out in favour of “talking about herd immunity.”

Last autumn, he praised the “Swedish model,” thereby underlining the basic unity of the supposedly “left” bourgeois policies with the openly right-wing parties in pursuing a policy that knowingly sacrifices hundreds of thousands of lives by rejecting measures, including serious lockdowns, that infringe on the

economic interests of the capitalist ruling elite.



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