German Social Democrats-Left Party coalition in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania: Social attacks, state armament and viral spread

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On Monday, Manuela Schwesig (Social Democrats, SPD) was re-elected as prime minister of the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. After governing with the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) for four years, the SPD is now forming a coalition with the Left Party to advance and intensify the policies of fiscal austerity, state rearmament and allowing COVID-19 to spread unchecked. The coalition agreement that Schwesig and Left Party faction leader and deputy prime minister Simone Oldenburg signed on Saturday makes this abundantly clear.

The joint coalition agreement states in the first sentence that, in the opinion of both coalition partners, the former-East German Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has "developed well since German unification." In reality, the reintroduction of capitalist conditions caused a social catastrophe in the state. Over the past three decades, public welfare systems were largely destroyed and health care privatized, while the so-called "at-risk-of-poverty rate" rose to the highest in the nation.

The fight against COVID-19 goes unmentioned in the document. All references to "Corona" instead refer exclusively to the financial and economic aspects of the pandemic and, in the manner of the far right, invoke the alleged threat to "fundamental rights" posed by any protective measures. The course is clear. The new state government will continue the contagion policy that has already led to more than 1,200 coronavirus deaths, even in the sparsely populated and agriculturally dominated state.

The coalition agreement between the SPD and the Left Party has been described in the media as a "comprehensive social program," but in reality, it is nothing of the kind. It promises to improve the ratio of caregivers to children at day care centers, to pay educators better and to create a few additional positions at vocational schools. These empty promises are all subject to funding considerations.

In fact, the government is pursuing a rigorous austerity course. With reference to the "constitutional regulations on the 'debt brake,'" (the federal ban on deficit spending) it explicitly states that "the budgets for the coming legislative period" will be "adopted without taking on new debt," and pursues "debt reduction" in the municipalities.

While no new taxes are envisaged, "any annual surpluses" are to be used "for budget consolidation, repayment of the MV Protection Fund [coronavirus rescue packages] loans and further debt repayment," i.e., transferred to banks and investors. Terms such as "sound fiscal planning" and "budget consolidation"—familiar code words for social cuts—appear throughout the document.

Tellingly, both Schwesig and Oldenburg referred in the press to their parties' last coalition—1998 to 2006—which set the national standard for austerity. During this period, the Ministry of Labor, led by the Left Party (then PDS) under Helmut Holter—who today, as Minister of Education in Thuringia, is responsible for the infection with coronavirus of unvaccinated schoolchildren—radically privatized public hospitals in order to "consolidate the state budget." In the election

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following this extremely reactionary performance, the fascist National Democratic Party (NPD) won its first seats in the state parliament.

Today, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania leads the nation in the privatization of health care, with private hospitals supplying more than 50 percent of care, while the state residents' average income has for years remained the lowest in the Germany.

The Left Party's renewed participation in government serves to continue and advance the social attacks that the first such coalition started. Any misgivings in the population are to be countered by massively arming the police state.

Thus, in addition to "full-range protective policing," the government program commits itself to rapidly fill an additional "approximately 6,200 positions for the police" and to the so-called "Security and Order Law" (SOG-MV), which suspends fundamental democratic rights. The law, drafted by the CDU, allows "long-term observations" and the "bugging of homes" without requiring a "concrete danger." It authorizes police officers to enter homes at night to install trojans (spyware) on the smartphones of those targeted by the state.

The civil rights organization Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte (GFF), which filed a constitutional complaint against the law in June, notes that "the rule of law is not guaranteed for all surveillance measures provided for in the law."

Not only the police are being outfitted. The Bundeswehr (German armed forces), which is "deeply rooted in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania," is to be further intertwined with civilian authorities. Among other measures, the "trusting cooperation with ... the German Armed Forces and Reservists Association" is to continue, and a "joint concept with the state and municipalities" developed, to be used "in large-scale emergencies exceeding official disaster relief capacities." Former Bundeswehr soldiers are to be provided "concrete offers in state service."

The paper by the SPD and the Left Party states: "The coalition partners are committed to intensive cooperation with the Bundeswehr as a reliable partner."

In this light, official claims of "support for a democratic community" or even "disarming extremists" can only be described as bold-faced lies. It is obvious that arming and empowering the military and police strengthens right-wing terrorist networks operating nationwide, which in hardly any other state are so demonstrably ingrained in the state apparatus and have such close ties to the highest political circles.

Schwesig's deputy of many years, then state Interior Minister Lorenz Caffier (CDU), was forced to resign a year ago after details emerged about his ties to the far-right Nordkreuz group. Among other things, Caffier was the patron of an annual international special forces weapons training in Güstrow, which reporters from ZDF television broadcaster and *DieTageszeitung* newspaper both identified as a transfer point for munitions shipments. The minister even purchased a weapon from the organizer of the event, a Nordkreuz member.

The group is the northern offshoot of a fascist network in the German state apparatus that has stockpiled weapons and tens of thousands of rounds of ammunition and planned the assassination of political opponents on a "Day X." It enjoys access to the Eurofighter squadrons at the German Air Force base in Rostock-Laage and has maintained an enemies list with over 5,000 entries. Its far-right leader, Marko G., who illegally stashed more than 55,000 rounds of ammunition, is a former sniper instructor and special officer with the state criminal police department, and remains a free man.

The fact that the Left Party and the SPD are massively arming the state security agencies must serve as a warning. These fundamentally right-wing bourgeois parties fear the fascists' program less than the growing social and political opposition in the working class. Significantly, SPD state parliament member Dirk Friedriszik, who himself received death threats as a member of the NSU investigation committee, did not run for another term in state parliament. His reason: "I'm completely alone in my faction with my greatest concern, the fight against the right."

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