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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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09.02.2020

A Fascist Coup Attempt in Germany



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While millions this week stared at Iowa and Washington with worried amazement, confusion or anger, Germany, too, had its own messy confusion – which turned into a frightening alarm signal!

For the very first time, a state government – in Thuringia – was able to achieve rule with the support of the far, far right Alternative for Germany (AfD), a party whose leaders are in a continuous flirt with Nazi phrases, Nazi goals and Nazi methods. Every other party has sworn up and down never ever to have anything to do with AfD! Although there were

suspiciously contrary murmurs in some circles of the Christian Democrats (CDU, Merkel's party), this pledge had been kept. Until Wednesday, February 5, 2020.

The events that day were astounding. Thuringia had not had a regular, stable government since its elections last October. The three-party coalition which ruled since 2014 (and since October on a temporary caretaker basis) was led by Bodo Ramelow of the LINKE (Left) party). It was the first and only state government ever led by the LINKE – together with the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens as junior partners and based on an ultra-shaky majority of one single vote in the legislature. The LINKE minister-president Bodo Ramelow, 63, a union leader who had moved to East Germany after unification. He proved to be not the radical Bolshevik fire-eater so many had almost hysterically warned about but rather a mild-mannered father-figure, always accompanied by his little terrier Attila, and with a somewhat leftish program. Last October his party defied East German trends and increased the LINKE share of the votes (to 31%) – and 29 seats (of a total 90). But both partners, the Greens and especially the SPD, had slumped – and now the three together had only 42 seats, instead of the one-seat majority now four seats short. And neither the CDU nor the equally right-wing, stoutly pro-capitalist Free Democrats (FDP) – misleadingly called the Liberals – was willing to join up with those blood-red “Honecker-followers”, no matter how mild (and even anti-GDR) Ramelow had become.

One other party had also gained votes in October – and that was the fascist AfD. With 23.4% and 22 seats they were in second place, a result of East German disappointment, insecurity about the future, and well-founded feeling of being second-class citizens in united Germany – plus the hatred of foreigners infused by the rightists, with more than enough assistance from the oh-so-democratic mass media plus vicious campaigns in the social media.

But all the other parties had made that pledge – never ever with fascists! So there seemed only one way out. Ramelow would continue the three-way coalition as a minority government, dependent in every vote on every issue in the legislature on at least temporary support from a few CDU or FDP voters. A very shaky set-up indeed, but seemingly the only possibility. And everybody reckoned with it – or so it seemed.

But behind the scenes another scheme was being hatched out. The rules called for three secret votes. If, in the first two, no candidate won a full majority then, in a third vote, a plurality would suffice – simply more votes than anyone else. As expected Ramelow

missed out in the first two. He expected to win out as the only candidate in the third vote (or possibly against a weaker AfD candidate). Then, suddenly, in jumped another counter-candidate, the almost unknown Thomas Kemmerich, 54, local head of the FDP, which had only barely crossed the necessary 5% hurdle to get seated at all. (It got about 5.0005 % – with a plus of 71 votes, many from his own family with its six sons and daughters plus in-laws). But in that secret ballot he not only got his own five-man caucus votes but those of all AfD members as well, who had obviously made a deal to drop their own hopeless candidate. Even together the two had only 26 delegates, however. It was the secret support by the CDU delegates which, defying all their party's pledges, joined the AfD to give Kemmerich the needed success: 45 to 44.

Ramelow was out! And, like a thunderbolt from Hades, was the fact that the AfD, while probably not officially in the new government, would have veto power over its every decision. Far worse, the CDU, the biggest party in Germany – or its local affiliate – had broken the taboo on the fascists. The AfD leader in Berlin triumphed: "It has finally become clear that there is a majority, not only on paper, against Left-Social Democrat-Green domination... away from de-industrialization, hatred of automobiles, climate hysteria as well as from gender gaga and antifa violence."

It was thus in peaceful Thuringia, Germany's "green lung", with its handsome hilly forests and wonderful old castles and historic cities – Weimar, Eisenach, Erfurt, Jena – that the AfD had its first major success – and where it has long been most virulent. Its up-and-coming boss, Björn Höcke, is notorious for comments against Jews, Africans, the Left:

"Christianity and Judaism are an antagonism. That is why I cannot comprehend the term 'Christian-Judeo Occident'".

Or, denouncing the monument to Holocaust victims in Berlin, Höcke said: "We Germans, our people, are the only people in the world to plant a monument of shame in the center of their capital."

"I don't want Germany to have only a thousand-year past. I want Germany to also have a thousand-year future." (It was Hitler who constantly spoke of his Thousand Year Reich!)

Looking forward to a future AfD rule, he said: "A few corrections and small reforms will not be sufficient, but German resoluteness will be guarantee that we will grasp things

decisively and basically. When the change-over take place we Germans will not take half-way measures, the garbage dumps of modernism will then be removed.”

Making his plans even clearer, Höcke, when a TV moderator dared to disagree with him, responded: “I can assure you that this will have massive consequences... perhaps someday I will become an interesting personal and political personality in this country: It can happen. And then I wish you great success in your career.” Soon after he got up and walked out.

With the pledge by all other parties never to collaborate in any way with the AfD now broken by two of them, and its resultant taboo-break and gain of influence in Germany, other omens took on added significance: the leading cop in a Berlin borough seen lunching, chatting and driving off with a leader of a pro-Nazi gang which has been threatening anti-fascists, smearing Naz symbols on their homes, burning one of their cars. There was more news of pro-Nazi elements in the armed forces. Of down-pedaled connections or even collusion between serial murderers of immigrants and police agents supposedly observing them, with evidence locked away (for 120 years) by a top CDU leader. Of year-long attempts to cover up the burning to death of an African immigrant while shackled in a jail cell. Or the friendly relationship between the ex-head of the FBI-equivalent Constitutional Protection Agency with AfD leaders. Or current attempts to remove vital tax exemption from the Victims of Fascism-Anti-Fascist Union (VVN-BdA). All are causes for alarm in a country which, after Brexit, exercises a dominant role in European Union rearmament, military maneuvering and expansion, both within and outside NATO.

And some history buffs recall that the very first Nazi Party cabinet ministers were appointed in Thuringia – in 1931, two years before Hitler took over all of Germany.

I regret writing such a worrisome Bulletin. And there is also good news – a majority in Germany – and Thuringia – oppose such tendencies. Many are fighting back – vigorously in the field of climate change, against rent increases with a key new law in Berlin, plus a referendum now gaining strength to confiscate the worst of the giant real estate moguls. And many, especially young people, fighting back against the fascists. Which side will grow faster? I will have to put that question off to my next dispatch from Berlin.

LATE NOTE. The anger of so many people, demonstrating all over Germany, plus many politicians, even Angela Merkel, repudiating Thuringian members of her party, caused Kemmerich to step down after one day. He called for special new elections in Thuringia.

CounterPunch 07.02.2020