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## **EAST GERMAN STATE IN CRISIS AFTER ACCUSATIONS OF 'NEO-NAZI' SYMPATHIES**

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BERLIN. The Christian Democrats (CDU), Social Democrats (SPD), and Greens have ruled the former East German state of Saxony-Anhalt in a coalition since 2016. However, the coalitions future came into question over the weekend, after the CDU came to the defence of Robert Möriz, a local CDU politician accused of having neo-Nazi sympathies.

The revelations began last week on Twitter. Igor Matviyets, an SPD politician from Halle, asked the CDU why their state party strategy paper explicitly claims that Islam does not belong to Germany, a phrase frequently used by the radical right. Möriz responded, tweeting Islam is incompatible with the Christian values on which Germany is built.

However, it was Möriz Twitter profile photo that kicked off the investigation into his past. In the bottom right corner there was a small sword stuck in a cross, a symbol of the association Uniter, which is suspected of having far-right connections. Later, he admitted being a member of the organisation.

Afterwards, pictures of Möriz at a 2011 neo-Nazi demonstration, which he helped organise, circulated on social media, as well as the revelation that he has a tattoo of a so-called Black Sun, a combination of several swastikas, on his arm.

Möriz told a special session of his chapter of the CDU on Friday (13 December) that his work on that demonstration was a youthful mistake. After the meeting, the local CDU announced that they would not be removing Möriz from his leadership position or the party, kicking off a wave of criticism from their coalition partners.

Tensions have continued to escalate. On Saturday (14 December), the heads of the Saxony-Anhalt Greens demanded that the CDU take a clear stance against right-wing extremism in a press release with the headline how many swastikas have a place in the CDU? The General Secretary of the Saxony-Anhalt CDU demanded an apology, warning that Without an apology \* continuation of the coalition is hardly conceivable.

If the SPD and Greens leave the coalition, the CDU could continue as a minority government, but then would be dependent on cooperation from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).

(Sarah Lawton | EURACTIV.de)

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