

Germany: The Greens declare their allegiance to the bourgeoisie

Peter Schwarz
12 June 2009

The German Greens, who once posed as an alternative to bourgeois politics, have now openly declared their allegiance to the bourgeois camp.

Commenting on the relatively good result for her party in the European elections held last Sunday, the former Green agriculture minister, Renate Künast, stated, “The new bourgeoisie votes Green.” A similar comment was made by Boris Palmer, the Green mayor of the university town of Tübingen, who said, “The constituency of the Greens is becoming increasingly bourgeois.”

The term “bourgeois” is an unmistakable signal to Germany’s leading conservative parties, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU), which are usually described as bourgeois parties in common language. There is now no longer any obstacle to a coalition between the Greens and the Union parties at a federal level.

If the result of the European election were to be repeated at the federal election due to take place on September 26, then such an alliance would have a parliamentary majority. The Greens obtained their best national result last Sunday, with 12.1 percent. They won more votes than the free-market Free Democratic Party (FDP; 11 percent) and the Left Party (7.5 percent) and combined with the vote tally for the CDU and CSU (37.9 percent) totalled exactly 50 percent of the votes cast.

Boris Palmer was the first to speak out openly for a conservative-Green federal government. “We must become stronger than the FDP, to make us the only alternative for the CDU to the grand coalition,” he said. “The Union will then make an offer which we could accept.” The Greens have “similar values” to those of the Union and “clear conceptions of solid budgetary

policy,” he added.

In *Spiegel-Online*, the leading candidate of the French Greens and member of the German Green Party, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, also expressed his support for an alliance with the Union. When asked, “And if an alliance with Angela Merkel makes sense in terms of policy...?” he answered: “... then it will be done. Any other course would be nonsense.”

Following a comment by *Spiegel-Online* that this would break a taboo for many Greens, Cohn-Bendit responded, “Come off it. After the election in September nothing will be the same. The dream is over. The phantom of the Left Party as a third force, for example, will be over, and quite a few other issues will be unwound as well....”

Other leading Greens are rather more circumspect in openly committing themselves to a coalition with the Union. They are afraid it could deter voters. In addition, the Greens are hardly likely to obtain the same result in the federal (Bundestag) election as they did in the European election. Nevertheless, if the opportunity arises, they would not hesitate to join a right-wing bourgeois government.

Künast’s characterisation of the Greens as a party of the new bourgeoisie is not drawn from thin air. There is no other parliamentary party that is so clearly and exclusively based on such a narrow social layer. While on a federal level the Greens can only win the support of a tenth of the electorate, it has become the leading party in the heart of the country’s major cities inhabited by a wealthy and well-educated middle class.

In Berlin, the Greens received nearly a quarter of the votes cast in the European election. They lay only just behind the leading party—the CDU—with the two other parties that share power in city hall—the SPD and Left Party—trailing far behind. In the city district of

Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, the Green share of the vote totaled 43 percent. In other large cities, the situation was similar. In six urban districts of Munich, the Greens emerged the strongest party with results between 25 and 35 percent.

In university towns such as Tübingen and Freiburg, the Greens already lead the town council and fill the post of mayor. In a local election held last Sunday, they became the strongest party in a major city for the first time. With 25 percent of the vote, the Greens overtook the CDU in the southern German city of Stuttgart with an advantage of around 1 percent. A leading factor in the result is the ongoing controversy over a project costing billions for the reconstruction of the city's main station, which the Greens reject.

The Greens have developed into the party of the wealthy urban middle class. They lack any political programme of their own. Their trademarks—environmentalism, ecology and sustainability—have long since become common property of every party, after it became clear that one could make a profit with eco-shops, alternative energies and energy-saving cars. And if environmental protection comes into conflict with economic interests, then the Greens are the first to give way. The Greens had already ditched their anti-militarism and demands for rank-and-file democracy 10 years ago when they entered a federal government coalition with the SPD.

What differentiates the Greens today from other bourgeois parties has less to do with programme than with lifestyle. One could describe them a bourgeois lifestyle party. To call their politics opportunist is to understate the matter. They are the living embodiment of opportunism.

Nobody is a better master of such opportunism than the former star of the '68 protest movement, Daniel Cohn-Bendit. His list "Europe Ecologie" was able to notch up a surprising success in France and won 16 percent of the vote in the European election. His party finished a hair's breadth behind the second-placed Socialist Party. For his list, Cohn-Bendit brought together people who had nothing in common apart from their notoriety. The anti-European Union activist José Bové stood alongside the passionate EU advocate Cohn-Bendit and the public prosecutor Eva Joly, who won celebrity by uncovering the Elf-Aquitaine scandal.

Such a coalition may be able to successfully gather

votes, but it is completely incapable of pursuing political goals because it cannot agree on a single question. It serves at most to manipulate voters and exploit diffuse political moods and tendencies for reactionary purposes. One prime example was the way in which the German Greens cultivated hysteria over brutality in the Yugoslavia war, in order to free up the German army for its first-ever post-war foreign mission.

Many Green voters take a broadminded stance on many political and social issues. They tend to be educated, cultivated, politically informed and often express genuine sympathy for the less well-off and socially disadvantaged. This is why they reject the CDU or the FDP. However, the suppression of open class struggle by the SPD, Left Party and trade unions has served to disorient such layers and makes them susceptible to the policies of the cynical Green politicians who are exploiting their support to prop up a right-wing government.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact