

German Green Party congress adopts election programme

Christoph Dreier**4 May 2013**

The promotion of a coalition between the Green Party and Social Democratic Party (SPD) was the central issue at the congress of the German Green Party last weekend. As the SPD congress had already made clear two weeks earlier, replacing the Merkel government by a “Red-Green” SPD-Green Party coalition in this September’s federal election would mean continuing the same right-wing policies.

Regarding the German army’s participation in future wars, the Greens argue for an even more right-wing policy than the current government. The party’s stance on Europe is virtually identical to that of Chancellor Merkel, whose demands for strict austerity across the continent have produced mass unemployment and abject poverty.

The Green election programme, which was adopted unanimously, states: “In order to permanently resolve the Euro crisis, Europe needs sustainable budgetary consolidation,” as well as “joint economic policies.” These are code words for the budget cuts and social attacks taking place across Europe under pressure from Berlin.

In recent years the Greens have supported the European fiscal pact, the insertion of a debt limit into Germany’s constitution, a series of bank bailouts, and austerity programmes in Greece, Spain and Portugal linked to these measures.

To distance themselves from the Merkel government and accommodate somewhat to widespread social discontent, the Greens placed the question of taxation at the heart of their programme. The Greens called for moderate tax increases for high earners, including an increase in the top tax rate from 45 to 49 percent.

Sections of the party warned against such a move. The premier of the state of Baden-Württemberg, Winfried Kretschmann, sent a letter to the party

leadership on the eve of the congress. Tübingen’s mayor Boris Palmer also appealed at the congress for the increase to be opposed, but was defeated.

This then led to commentary in the media which presented the Greens as a party which was willing to increase even the taxes on its own voters out of a concern for social responsibility.

This is absurd. Firstly, such demands would be opposed by the SPD, the Greens’ desired coalition partner, and quickly scrapped after the election. Secondly, it should be recalled that it was the last SPD-Green party coalition which cut the top rate of income tax from 53 to 42 percent!

The same applies to the party call for a minimum hourly wage of 8.50 euros (US\$11.14), or the demand for an increase in Hartz IV welfare payments adopted at the congress.

The debate at the congress was carefully prepared and orchestrated. The 2,600 proposed changes to the programme were mostly removed through compromise formulations before the debate. What was finally debated by the 800 delegates had nothing to do with major social and political questions, but focused on relatively minor issues.

Greens chairwoman Claudia Roth agitated against Chancellor Merkel, without contradicting her on any major issue. Roth railed against the nepotism of Merkel’s coalition partner, the CSU (Christian Social Union), and spoke of the plan to impose legal quotas for women on the boards of large companies.

She was silent on the preparations for war against Syria and Iran by the government, and the social attacks dictated by Berlin across Europe.

Sigmar Gabriel, chair of the SPD, spoke after Roth and tried to drum up support for a Red-Green coalition, receiving thunderous applause.

A proposal to weaken the preference stated in the programme for a coalition with the SPD was defeated. This was carried only by a narrow margin, as many in the leadership of the Greens have been considering the possibility of a coalition with Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and the CSU, given the SPD's bad poll ratings.

The role of the Greens as determined defenders of the financial elite and of German imperialism was made clearest in the area of foreign policy. The programme called not only for a "European economic government", through which the dominance of Germany over the continent could be expanded, but also spoke of the need for further militarisation.

According to the Greens, the German government should have the right to intervene anywhere around the world to secure its own interests. "The deployment of military force," the programme asserts, can be considered in order to "prevent violent developments," which can come about either through "repression, dictatorship or bad government."

In other words, for the Greens, "bad government" is sufficient reason to launch a military attack against a country. On this basis, virtually any war can be legitimised.

With this formulation, the Greens are enshrining a policy in their programme which they have already pursued in practice for years. A majority of the Green parliamentary group voted for the military interventions in Afghanistan, Somalia, Mali and on the Syrian border. While the government held back on intervening in other wars, it was the Greens who demanded a more aggressive approach. The party's highest committee criticised Merkel for not taking part in the war against Libya.

For former Green leader Joschka Fischer, the sending of Patriot missiles to the Turkish border with Syria does not go far enough. He has called for the creation of a no-fly zone, which in Libya was the prelude to the bombardment of the country.

During their first period in government, the Greens played a leading role in promoting the first German military intervention since the Second World War, the Kosovo War of 1999.

Today, they are fervent proponents of an aggressive German foreign policy and the assault on social spending in Germany and across Europe. Their value

for the ruling class lies in their ability to mobilise formerly liberal sections of the middle class behind the programme of German imperialism.



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