

German Greens seek power—at any price

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The Green Party held its official congress in Berlin last weekend. The congress slogan, “The future is made of courage,” was aimed at boosting the confidence of delegates that the party could return to power in the September federal elections. After twelve years of opposition following the end of the Social Democratic Party–Green Party federal government (1998–2005), the Greens are desperate to take part in government, irrespective of the politics of any potential partner.

The Greens, however, have a problem. The party is hovering around 5 percent in opinion polls and could fail to reach the 5 percent threshold necessary for entry into the Bundestag (German federal parliament). At the moment, the party is polling at around 6th or 7th place in the rankings, behind the two conservative parties (Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Left Party and the xenophobic Alternative for Germany (AfD).

Green Party lead election candidate Cem Özdemir told delegates on Friday, “We are ready to take responsibility and help shape the country.” The election program, adopted by a large majority, includes the sentence: “We already successfully governed our republic in a coalition with the SPD for seven years. We would like to take over from where we left off.”

The red-green federal government led by SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer oversaw the first-ever foreign military intervention by the Bundeswehr (the post-World War II German military) as well as the biggest attack on the German welfare state in its post-war history. The red-green government’s introduction of Hartz IV social policies and a two-tier health care system, together with pension cuts and the massive growth of a low-wage sector, condemned millions to poverty.

At the other pole, the rich profited immensely, including the prosperous clientele of the Greens. In its early phase during the 1980s and 1990s, the party was generally seen as progressive and somewhat leftist. Since then, it has become thoroughly conservative. It responds to growing social

inequality and international tensions by supporting the buildup of state forces at home and military deployments abroad.

The Greens currently share power with the SPD, the Left Party and the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) in a number of state governments. Shortly before the congress, the party in the state of Schleswig-Holstein agreed to participate in a coalition with the CDU and the FDP, the two parties the SPD and Greens replaced at the federal level in 1998.

The right-wing policies and political opportunism of the Greens have resulted in its slump in opinion polls. The congress sought to cover up this decline with all sorts of theatrical stunts. It was staged as a sort of pop event, with lifestyle issues such as the demand for “marriage for all” playing a central role.

The Greens regard all other parties as potential coalition partners. The party’s new great hope, Robert Habeck, called out to the assembled delegates: “You have joined a horny party!” Habeck had previously sealed the Green’s participation in a coalition with the CDU and FDP in Kiel.

The congress rejected a proposal aimed at preventing the party from entering a coalition with the most right-wing of the conservative parties, the Christian Social Union. Former party chairman Reinhard Bütikofer, now chairman of the European Green Party, made it clear that agreeing such a proposal would effectively prevent the party from forming a coalition with the CDU. “Exclusion doesn’t get us anywhere,” he said.

The issue of climate change was used by all of the party leaders to promote an independent great power policy for Germany and Europe, directed particularly against the US. Katrin Göring-Eckardt, the party’s second leading election candidate, declared that in the struggle against climate change the party would “take up the fight against the climate change deniers, nationalists and egoists!” She then announced the “fight” to be carried out by the Greens in a tweet sent directly to Donald Trump.

Prior to her contribution, Özdemir roared out: “The ice in the Arctic is not interested in whether it melts because of American stupidity or German inertia.” Anton Hofreiter,

chairman of the Green fraction in the Bundestag, stated that the US withdrawal from the world climate treaty was a “crime against the future of all humanity.”

The party’s 10-point plan for the Bundestag election campaign, which was adopted by a large majority, prioritizes climate protection. In addition to “marriage for all,” the Greens declare that the immediate shutdown of the country’s 20 “dirtiest” coal-fired power plants is an indispensable condition for its participation in government.

The congress cynically sought to portray the party as a protagonist of the right to asylum and an opposition force against the deportation of refugees. The party election program states: “With us in government, there will be no deportations to crisis regions as insecure as is currently the case in Afghanistan.”

In power, however, the Greens adopt a very different course. The secret star of the party congress was the premier of the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Winfried Kretschmann, who has deported refugees back to Afghanistan. The SPD-Green state government of North Rhine-Westphalia, voted out of office last month, deported more refugees than any other state government, including sending many back to Afghanistan.

The party program remains silent on the international drive toward war and the role of the German army, apart from one mention of “a law regarding weapons exports.” A motion calling for an international campaign opposing the use of military drones was ruled out by congress agenda chair Michael Kellner, who declared that the condemnation of drones internationally was not a realistic demand for a 10-point plan.

The silence of the Greens on Germany’s preparations for war is intended as a signal to the ruling elite that the party is serious when it says it wants to continue where it left off after losing power in 2005.

The Greens also vehemently defend the European Union, which they regard as an instrument to pursue imperialist interests all over the world. “We want to strengthen the EU parliament,” they write.

With the help of the EU, they want to gain a foothold in Africa, where German imperialism has greatly increased its political, economic and military influence over the last ten years. The Greens propose “a green Marshall Plan for Africa” to “open up new perspectives and effectively combat the causes forcing people to flee.”

When in power, the Greens supported the US-led campaign against Afghanistan and then attacked the successor CDU-CSU-FDP coalition for not taking part in the bombing of Libya. In the Syrian conflict, the Greens demanded a military deployment on the part of Germany, and now they are turning their attention to Africa.

A further central plank of the program of the former “party of human rights” is a comprehensive upgrade of the state apparatus. Evidently, the Greens anticipate fierce social and political resistance.

“We will ensure that the police are well equipped and effectively protected to fulfill their growing tasks,” the program declares. “We will intensify collaboration between the security agencies.” The program also states that video monitoring could be a “complementary measure” at “centres of risk.”

Özdemir said it was a “fairy tale” and insult to imply that the Greens had a problem with the police. He expressly thanked the police officers in attendance.

The Greens are also calling for the German intelligence agency (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) to be replaced by a new federal office for the prevention of danger and espionage, which is to operate independently of the police.

A further proposal made by the Green interior policy experts Irene Mihalic and Konstantin von Notz at the recent Dresden conference of interior ministers was carried in amended form. The two Green politicians had called for the centralization and strengthening of the entire intelligence service. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution was to become the central espionage and surveillance authority with four to a maximum of six external posts, involving all of the existing separate state agencies.

The ruthlessness with which the Greens promote the imperialist interests of Germany has its roots in the social and political composition of the party, which evolved 40 years ago from petty-bourgeois peace and protest movements and, like no other party, represents the interests of the upper-middle class.

In his elaborately staged guest appearance, the head of the Dutch Greens, Jesse Klaver, said: “We are witnessing the end of the era of the established parties.” He hit the nail on the head, but failed to note that this also applies to the Greens.



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