

What would a “Jamaica” coalition in Germany represent?

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The formation of a new government in Germany has been delayed. Eleven days after the federal election, coalition talks have not even begun. While in the past, four to six weeks usually went by between the election and the swearing in of a new government, four years ago it took almost three months. Now it appears as though the organisation of a new government could take until Christmas or even the new year.

The most fundamental reason for the slow progress is the deep gulf between the established parties and the vast majority of the population expressed in the recent election. The so-called “people’s parties,” the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD), achieved their worst results since 1945. Behind this alienation lie the policies of militarism and social cutbacks, which have been met with stiff opposition and have produced a rapid rise in poverty.

As the SPD and Left Party have also pursued such policies, the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) was able to emerge as the main beneficiary of popular dissatisfaction, entering parliament as the third strongest party. As a result, and with the return of the Free Democrats (FDP), six different parliamentary groups will now be represented in the Bundestag (parliament), which presents an additional challenge to the formation of a government.

However, the chief obstacle to forming a government is the need to establish a stable regime capable of continuing the policies of militarism and social cuts, strengthening the repressive state apparatus and suppressing all opposition. All of the parties are agreed on this, including the SPD, which decided to go into opposition, and the Left Party, which is currently not needed to form a majority.

Although all the parties continue to reject an alliance

with the AfD, they are going a long way toward adopting its right-wing policies. The CSU, which is urging that its “right flank” be closed, is doing this most explicitly. Saxony’s Minister President Stanislaw Tillich (CDU), justified the call for his party to shift to the right by saying, “The people want Germany to remain Germany.” Even his predecessor, Kurt Biedenkopf (CDU), accused Tillich of wanting to “end up to the right of them [the AfD].”

But each of these parties, rather than resisting the AfD and the Nazis in their ranks, who are entering parliament for the first time since Hitler’s death, are instead embracing them. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD) did this very clearly in his speech on German Unity Day. “We cannot allow hostility to emerge from our differences—out of disagreements [there must be] no irreconcilability,” argued Steinmeier, who demanded a harder line on refugee policy—one of the AfD’s central demands.

It is already becoming clear that the incoming government—most likely a so-called “Jamaica” coalition (from the three parties’ colours, black, yellow and green, those of the Jamaican flag) composed of the CDU-CSU, FDP and Greens—will be the most right-wing in the history of the German Federal Republic. All proposals in relation to personnel and policy that have been made public thus far underscore this.

It is considered certain that both the Greens and FDP will insist upon leading one key ministry each. For the FDP, this is likely to be the Finance Ministry, which has been left vacant by Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble’s move to assume the post of president of the Bundestag.

With Christian Lindner, the FDP’s 38-year-old leader, an individual could assume responsibility for the federal budget who is associated more than any

other with the continuation of strict austerity policies, tax cuts for the rich and opposition to financial redistribution within Europe. It is likely that the rise in the DAX, Germany's stock exchange, above the record high of 13,000 is connected with the prospect that a party advocating the interests of big business like the FDP will probably be managing the state budget.

Lindner also advocates a hard-right stance on refugee policy. For example, he has called for “an immigration law that clearly distinguishes between permanent migration of qualified people who we will select, and humanitarian protection.” The latter should be time-restricted, according to the FDP leader, so that refugees from civil wars and their children born in Germany could be deported at a later date.

Cem Özdemir is being considered for the post of Foreign Minister. The Green politician, who completed the Atlantic Bridge's Young Leader programme, spent time as Transatlantic fellow of the German Marshall Fund in the United States, and sat on the foreign affairs committees in the European and German parliaments, never misses an opportunity to express his opinion on foreign policy matters.

Özdemir is an outspoken proponent of German military interventions under the pretexts of humanitarian and environmental concerns. He advocates a confrontational policy towards Russia and Turkey, and backs French President Emmanuel Macron's plans for a European Union armed to the teeth.

In an interview with Britain's *Economist*, Özdemir called for Germany to have a global leadership role: “Germany has to step up and take responsibility: we are the country that must show that you can combine growth, prosperity, jobs and the fight against climate crisis.”

Özdemir accused his possible future coalition partner, Lindner, who spoke out in favour of a friendlier approach towards Russia in an interview, of spreading “Putin's propaganda” and stoking “anti-Western resentments in German society.”

“Imagine you're Ukrainian,” continued Özdemir. “You stood up for European values on Maidan Square. In the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 your country got rid of its nuclear weapons in return for a guarantee of its territorial integrity. And now Russia splits off Crimea and along comes Lindner and says ‘we'll have

to live with it’.”

Discussions over who should be given the Interior Ministry are also already well advanced. Consideration is being given to Bavarian Interior Minister Joachim Herrmann (CSU), whose law-and-order policies go even further than the current Interior Minister, Thomas de Maizière. Herrmann is strongly in favour of more police officers, surveillance and stricter border controls. He has nothing to fear regarding objections from the Greens and FDP liberals, who also called for a massive strengthening of the police during the election campaign.

If de Maizière, a close ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU), keeps his post, Herrmann could be considered for the post of Defence Minister. Current Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen has made enemies in the military because following the exposure of a right-wing terrorist cell in the army, she demanded that the traditions of Hitler's Wehrmacht no longer be cultivated. By contrast, Herrmann would be a comrade in arms. He is a lieutenant colonel in the reserves and participated several months ago in a military exercise that tested the deployment of the armed forces domestically.

It remains an open question, however, as to whether the Jamaica coalition will be established. The SPD could have a change of heart, or the AfD—or a split from it—could still be brought into government. Even a new election is not completely out of the question. But this will do nothing to alter the right-wing character of the future government. Its programme will be determined by the global capitalist crisis and intensifying social tensions to which the ruling class has only one answer: militarism and repression.

The brutal crackdown by the Spanish government against the Catalonian independence referendum, and the support for this from the German government and European Union, shows how ruthlessly the ruling class will respond to any sign of opposition.



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