

German Greens pledge to uphold state's interests

Peter Schwarz
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Following the failure of Jamaica coalition talks, the Greens are emphasising their readiness to function as a party upholding the interests of the state, even if they end up serving in opposition.

A federal party congress held by the environmentalists in Berlin on Saturday agreed to remain open in the future to participating in government. "We Greens continue to be prepared to assume responsibility, and remain ready for talks," states the main motion, which was adopted by approximately 850 delegates. "This also applies to participation in a minority government."

The congress had originally been intended to pave the way for the Greens' joining a federal government together with the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democrats (FDP). But after the collapse of exploratory talks and the change of course by the SPD, which is now orienting towards a continuation of the grand coalition with the CDU/CSU, the Greens are no longer needed as a governing partner. This has only encouraged the environmental party to stress its role in securing order and stability.

The congress frenetically applauded the 14-member negotiating team, which went "beyond our pain barriers in search of compromise," as the congress's main motion put it, and adopted the CSU's and FDP's right-wing positions on refugee and tax policies in particular. "We thank the negotiating group for their efforts," stated the congress motion.

Parliamentary leader Anton Hofreiter, who participated in the negotiations as a representative of the party's "left" wing, declared to the assembled delegates, "We were convinced that we could have achieved something good for our country if the FDP had not evaded its responsibility."

Several other speakers accused the FDP and its leader, Christian Lindner, of an irresponsible approach to state

affairs. With his decision to break off the exploratory talks, Lindner cost the Greens a role in government they thought was secure. Green Party leader Cem Özdemir accused Lindner of lacking the "necessary humility for tasks that are sometimes bigger than oneself." For the Greens, by contrast, the slogan that appeals is "the country comes first, the party second."

Jürgen Trittin, who bore joint responsibility for the Agenda 2010 as Environment Minister in Gerhard Schröder's government, described the FDP as a "chauvinist welfare party" and a "right-wing bourgeois protest party."

However, the Greens saved their praise for the CDU and even the CSU. *Die Welt* cited public remarks made by Özdemir, who said that what was at stake was "the stability of the Federal Republic of Germany," the assumption of "responsibility for our entire republic" and "patriotism." The newspaper commented cynically that this sounded like "hackneyed black-red and gold ideas from a policy paper authored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation."

Even the friendly "you" offered by the CSU's Alexander Dobrindt was accepted by Özdemir, even though the CSU politician previously described the Green leader as "the political arm of rioters, stone throwers and arsonists," *Die Welt* noted. "The union parties, including the CSU, have never been so close. The Greens are now presenting themselves as the guarantor of a Germany they would not have accepted for years after their founding in the late 1970s."

On the issue of strengthening the domestic state apparatus in particular, the Greens and Bavarian law-and-order party are fully united. Michael Kellner, the federal head of business operations for the Greens, stated that with the failure of Jamaica, the chance had been lost to establish a "new balance between security and constitutionality."

“In the Jamaica talks, a programme for the rule of law was within reach,” said Kellner. “We all wanted to increase the numbers of police, we wanted to invest in the justice apparatus, we had found money to expand the state prosecutors at the state level, who are really working to the limit of their abilities.”

The speakers at the Green Party congress all stressed that the Greens are ready to do anything to prevent social and political upheavals, and new elections in particular. “We are ready to talk with all democratic parties and to compromise so as to bring Europe and Germany further ahead,” stated Özdemir.

At the same time, the Green leader appealed to the FDP’s voters to support his party. The Greens would stand on the side of start-up entrepreneurs, businessmen and artisans still wondering why the FDP left the talks, he said. The Greens are seeking to win FDP supporters who are not anti-European and who don’t want to roll back the state. “I would like to make an offer to this section and say, the liberal party in Germany is Bündnis 90/the Greens,” asserted Özdemir.

Parliamentary leader Katrin Göring-Eckhardt, who together with Özdemir led the Greens negotiating team, offered a Green tinge to this appeal to FDP voters. “In the next four years, we want every bee, every butterfly and every bird in this country to know: we will continue to work for them,” she proclaimed.

Like the CDU and SPD, the Greens want to avoid new elections at all costs, and resolve the government crisis with a conspiracy among the establishment parties. They fear that an open political conflict will enable workers to intervene into political events, bring their interests to bear and find an audience for a socialist programme.

The Greens’ readiness to support a CDU/CSU minority government or serve as a loyal opposition to the grand coalition will only strengthen the right wing in the AfD. The AfD became the third largest party at the election, because the anger at the grand coalition’s anti-social policies was suppressed and found no progressive, socialist outlet.



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