

# Germany's Green Party conference—power at any price

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Twenty years ago, Germany's Green Party held its party conference in Bielefeld. Shortly before, the party had entered the federal government and supported the first combat operations by the Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) since the end of the Second World War, in Yugoslavia. This unleashed a fierce dispute at the conference with Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer being sprayed with red paint.

But this did not alter the political course of the Greens at all. When they left the government seven years later, international combat missions by the German military had become routine. The Greens' coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had initiated an unparalleled social counterrevolution through the Hartz laws, introducing regressive labour and welfare reforms, as well as massive tax handouts to the super-rich.

Last weekend, the sort of conflicts that had been witnessed 20 years earlier were nowhere to be seen in Bielefeld. The Greens want to return to power at any price, not to alter the right-wing course of the grand coalition of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and SPD but in order to more effectively implement its policies of militarism, increasing repressive state power and massive social cuts. Two years ago, the Greens had been on the point of signing up to a coalition with the CDU/CSU and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), which only collapsed at the last minute when the FDP withdrew.

The Greens do not want to miss any such opportunity now. The entire party conference was aimed at demonstrating the reliability of the Greens to the ruling circles in politics, business and the media. Delegates were under orders to demonstrate harmony and accord. The leadership duo of Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck were confirmed in office by votes of 97 and 90

percent respectively. Those running the conference stifled anything that might lead to controversial debates.

Party leaders did not tire of stressing their appetite for power. Hardly a speech did not employ the term "responsibility." Habeck called the Greens a "quasi government party on hold," the quarrels in the party had turned into an "almost sometimes passionate desire to shape the future." The state premier of Baden-Württemberg, Winifried Kretschmann, proclaimed that the Greens were growing into the role "not just of helping shape things but of providing leadership." And the party's parliamentary leader, Anton Hofreiter, stressed, "We want to govern, we must govern."

The decline of the SPD and the Christian Democrats, as well as the continuing climate protests, have seen the Greens returning higher polling scores in recent months. They currently stand well in front of the SPD, in second place behind the Christian Democrats, whom they have sometimes beaten. For this reason, there is now speculation about a Green Chancellor.

To keep its prosperous urban electorate on board, the debate on climate change was placed at the centre of the party conference. After voting on 277 amendments, the delegates agreed a programme that only differs quantitatively from that of the government. They proposed to tax CO2 emissions more highly, and somewhat accelerate the move to sustainable energy—goals which usually evaporate during coalition negotiations or upon entering office. The party resolutely defends the hegemony of the profit system, the banks and corporations, which precludes any solution to the climate crisis from the start.

For example, in her crowd-pleasing conference address, Baerbock stressed that the old convictions about the irreconcilability of ecology and economy

were a thing of the past. A change in climate policy could not be achieved “without the force of the markets.”

The green currents in which the party conference swam hide numerous highly toxic elements. For example, the theme of militarism and increasing the powers of the repressive state were hardly mentioned, so as not to cloud the harmonious idyll on show. In both areas, the Greens advocate an extremely right-wing programme.

In her speech, Baerbock mentioned only in passing that she believed the construction of a highly armed European army was a “sensible perspective.” In an interview with broadcaster Deutschlandfunk before the conference Habeck was even more explicit. He made it unmistakably clear where the party stands on these matters. Behind the slick image of the cool politician with rolled-up sleeves and a three-day beard lies an ice-cold militarist.

Asked about the keynote speech in Munich by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer—currently defence minister and tipped to replace Angela Merkel at the head of the CDU—which heralded a massive expansion of German combat missions, Habeck responded by saying Germany must uphold “the promises of protection to the Baltic states, Poland, the eastern European states,” in other words, further militarise the Russian border, increasing the danger of sparking a war with Moscow.

He also fundamentally supports the demand by Kramp-Karrenbauer to double defence spending, only insisting that first a “strategy for the Bundeswehr” be debated and then the scale of the defence budget be determined. If “it emerges in this strategy that we need more money for the effective functioning of the Bundeswehr, then we won’t stand in the way of that.”

Habeck was in full agreement with the construction of cyber-weapons, a key technology in future wars. “That we need cyber-weapons and to be able to defend systems against virtual attacks ... that there are also military aspects here, I think this is urgently necessary. If that costs money, then we will have to spend it.”

Twenty years after they first entered the German government, the Greens have confirmed that they are a right-wing bourgeois party, which will not only form coalitions and collaborate with the Christian Democrats, FDP, SPD and the Left Party, but like

them, are moving further to the right. This is the balance sheet of the Green Party conference in Bielefeld.



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