

Liberal Democrats and Greens begin exploratory talks to form right-wing German government

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A few days after Germany's general election, the outlines of the future federal government are beginning to emerge.

The Greens and the Liberal Democrats (FDP) have taken the initiative to hold initial talks. Green Party leaders Annalena Baerbock and Robert Habeck met with FDP leader Christian Lindner and FDP Secretary-General Volker Wissing as early as Tuesday evening for confidential talks, the location and content of which remained top secret.

All four participants in the talks subsequently posted a selfie on Instagram showing the former election campaign opponents as trusted friends. It bears the text: "In the search for a new government, we sound out common ground and bridges over divisions. And even find some. Exciting times."

On Friday, the Greens and FDP consulted further. "The first substantive issues are to be deepened," as FDP Secretary General Wissing announced. Only after that, do the two parties each want to talk separately with the Social Democrats (SPD) and Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU). On Sunday, the Greens will meet with the SPD, and the FDP with the CDU/CSU.

Since all parties have so far ruled out a government coalition with the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), both the Greens and FDP will be needed to form a government majority. The only alternative to a "traffic light" (SPD, Greens, FDP) or a "Jamaica" coalition (CDU/CSU, Greens, FDP)—named after the respective party colours—would be a continuation of the current grand coalition between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats. However, neither the CDU/CSU nor the SPD want that.

Olaf Scholz of the SPD, which emerged from the election as the strongest party, with a 1.6 percentage point

lead over the CDU/CSU, is considered the most likely next chancellor. Despite his party's devastating losses, however, CDU leader Armin Laschet is still seeking the chancellorship.

CSU leader Markus Söder could also try to become chancellor of a Jamaica coalition, as *FAZ* editor Berthold Kohler writes. He may have lost out to Laschet in the election to become the CDU/CSU's candidate for chancellor, but that has no legal standing. The Bundestag (federal parliament) can elect any German citizen as chancellor; he or she does not even have to be a member of parliament.

Regardless of who ultimately becomes chancellor, the closing of ranks between the FDP and the Greens shows the character of the coming government. It will be a class warfare government, pushing through massive social cuts, mass layoffs in the auto industry, herd immunity policies, the building of a police state and an accelerated military build-up in the face of growing opposition.

Economically, the FDP is a neo-liberal party that shamelessly represents the interests of the financial oligarchy. The principles from which it will not deviate under any circumstances are: tax cuts for the rich and adherence to the debt ceiling—which can only be realized through further social cuts.

It is a law-and-order party that is close to the AfD on many issues. A year and a half ago, Thomas Kemmerich, a member of the FDP in Thuringia, had himself elected minister president by the AfD—with the knowledge of FDP leader Lindner, who only called him to order after much hesitation.

During the general election campaign, the Greens had tried to lend themselves a more social, democratic and, above all, climate-friendly image. But no sooner is the election over than they have dropped the mask and

embraced the FDP. This shows their real role. Like the FDP, they represent wealthy social layers determined to defend their privileges against the demands of the working class.

Newsweekly *Der Spiegel* has explained in detail how the “fundamental convictions of the big business and ecological parties, long considered irreconcilable,” can be reconciled with some verbal sleight of hand. The cash gifts to the rich are renamed “investments” and “instruments for unleashing the economy.” The debt ceiling, which forces the federal, state and local governments to pursue a strict austerity policy, will remain in place. Green Party Chairman Robert Habeck is a master of such manoeuvres.

On foreign policy and military issues, as well as stepping up the powers of the state at home, the FDP and Greens have long pulled in the same direction. Both advocate a more aggressive foreign policy course and accelerated rearmament.

Both Scholz and Laschet are pursuing the same course. Most representatives of the ruling class, however, are more confident that Scholz can push it through than Laschet, who has been badly battered by the CDU’s election defeat.

The SPD’s candidate for chancellor is urgently promoting an alliance with the FDP and the Greens. “Something fits together if you want to bring it together,” he said Tuesday. The three parties have “different but overlapping ideas of progress,” he said. Adding, that also applied to the FDP.

Scholz is on the far right of the SPD. He is a law-and-order politician and a lobbyist for business. He also has close ties to the trade unions, which play a key role in suppressing the class struggle.

In 2001, Scholz gained notoriety for his role as Hamburg’s state interior minister, when he introduced the forced administration of vomit-inducing agents to gather evidence from suspected drug dealers. From 2002 to 2004, as secretary-general of the SPD, he backed the Schröder government in introducing its Agenda 2010 welfare cuts and labour reforms. From 2007 to 2009, he further developed Agenda 2010 as federal labour minister.

From 2011 to 2018, as Mayor of Hamburg, Scholz enjoyed the trust of the notorious “pfeffersäcke” (moneybags), the business elite of the Hanseatic city. In this capacity, he organized the brutal police operation during the G20 summit in 2017. Hundreds of youths were beaten up, legally persecuted and sentenced to draconian punishments for protesting against a gathering of heads of

state and government with the blood of numerous crimes on their hands.

For the past four years, Scholz has been finance minister of the grand coalition, where he continued the austerity policies of his predecessor Wolfgang Schäuble, only to give away the billions he saved to corporations in the coronavirus pandemic.

The supposed “left” in the SPD are fully behind Scholz. Norbert Walter-Borjans, who had defeated him in the 2019 election for party chair, immediately distanced himself from the demand for a relaxation of the debt ceiling, which he had advocated during the election campaign. Since this would require a two-thirds majority and the CDU/CSU would not agree, it was unnecessary to fight over this with the Greens and FDP in the coalition talks, he told the *Rheinische Post*.

Laschet hardly differs from Scholz politically. But after the CDU’s election defeat, many do not trust him with the necessary authority to push through the right-wing course against all odds.

He does not even have the unqualified support of his own party. Anger is boiling, especially in the eastern German states, where numerous CDU deputies lost their direct mandates to the AfD or the SPD. “No one in eastern Germany wants a chancellor Armin Laschet,” *Spiegel* quotes a CDU candidate who lost to the AfD. But calls for Laschet’s resignation and a “renewal” of the CDU/CSU are also piling up in other parts of the party.

After the election, what had become apparent during the campaign was confirmed: the interests and concerns of the vast majority of working people find no expression in the bourgeois party system. Only the independent intervention of the working class can put an end to the ruthless policies of militarism and austerity.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) participated in the election to provide a socialist orientation and perspective to such a movement.



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