

# The climate change protests at Lützerath and the reactionary face of Germany's Greens

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In recent days and weeks, tens of thousands of climate change activists have tried to prevent the destruction of the village of Lützerath and the excavation of further brown coal, which will pollute the environment with an additional 280 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> over the next eight years. This is about as much carbon dioxide as all cars in Germany emit over the course of two years.

The protesters did not achieve their goal. The village was cleared and destroyed, and the coal excavators are advancing. But the coal opponents were given a lesson from which political conclusions must be drawn. Lützerath has shown the reactionary face of the Greens.

There is no crime they would not be capable of when it comes to defending the interests of the rich and powerful. The party, which once entered the Bundestag (German parliament) with flower wreaths and peace pigeons, not only shouts the loudest for tanks for Ukraine and for the escalation of the war with Russia but is also one of the hardliners on environmental and domestic policy.

The protest participants, including many voters and members of the Greens, were confronted with Green politicians at every level of their struggle. As in the famous fable of the race between the hare and the hedgehog, the Greens always shouted, “We are already here” when the defenders of Lützerath ran up against a new obstacle.

Two green economy ministers – Robert Habeck at the federal level and Mona Neubaur in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) – agreed on the deal, which will allow the energy giant RWE to mine much higher amounts of coal than originally planned and use it to generate energy until 2030. The relationship between RWE and the Christian Democrat/Green state government of NRW is now so close that many only speak of NRW.

Habeck's claim that RWE will shut down its coal-fired power plants as early as 2030, eight years earlier than

originally planned, is false, because the relevant laws and regulations can be changed by future governments at any time. The brown coal-fired power plants in eastern Germany will remain connected to the grid until 2038.

The Greens, together with the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Free Democrats (FDP), also introduced the legislative amendment in the Bundestag that was necessary to expand brown coal mining. It was passed by an overwhelming majority of 523 votes to 92. They have justified the expansion of coal mining with the devastating consequences of the sanctions on Russia, for which they themselves have pushed the hardest. The demolition of Lützerath is therefore the price for the Greens' war policy.

However, the Greens did not stop at setting the political and legal course for additional coal production. They also violently suppressed resistance to it. The Aachen police president Dirk Weinspach, who led the police operation in Lützerath, is a long-standing member of the Greens and owes his office to them.

Weinspach employed thousands of police officers from all over Germany who attacked peaceful demonstrators with pepper spray and batons and injured dozens. Demonstrators spoke of an “incredible level of police violence.” According to a paramedic, “a high two to three-digit number” was injured, including some with life-threatening injuries.

The transformation of the Greens into a war and law-and-order party that suppresses environmental protests in the interests of energy companies cannot be explained by commonplaces such as “power corrupts.” It raises fundamental questions of perspective and class orientation. It shows that the climate crisis—like all the major social problems of the 21st century—can only be solved by a socialist transformation of society.

In 1980, the Greens wrote in their founding program that ecology was not a class question, but a species

question. “Consequently, the crisis of modern capitalism can no longer be conceived only in terms of categories of economic contradictions. It is increasingly conditioned by the natural limits of our environment,” the programme declared.

Five years later, the new head of state of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, took up this slogan. He declared the Marxist doctrine of the class struggle obsolete, dismissed “capitalism” and “imperialism” as propaganda terms, hived off state property to private individuals and threw himself at the imperialist powers in the name of solving “questions of humanity.”

But class struggle and imperialism did not disappear. They returned with a vengeance. The major Western powers, led by the US, lost all restraints and waged wars over oil, markets and power, destroying entire societies in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and elsewhere.

The Russian oligarchs and their political leader, Vladimir Putin, were highly welcomed in the West as long as they bought luxury properties, yachts and football clubs, but the imperialist powers were determined not to leave the vast natural resources of Russia to them. This is the reason for NATO's steady advance to the east, to which Putin responded with his reactionary war against Ukraine.

The war is now being escalated until a regime is in power in Moscow, which is not democratic, but a willing puppet of the imperialist powers. NATO is consciously accepting the risk of a nuclear escalation.

Even socially, the capitalists have lost all inhibitions. The last three decades have been decades of wealth redistribution. Anyone who had money and possessions became richer, while those who had nothing became poorer.

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The latest figures from Oxfam are unprecedented. Since 2020, two-thirds of wealth growth has gone to the richest 1 percent of the world's population; the remaining 99 percent had to make do with one-third. The wealth of billionaires is growing by \$2.7 billion a day, while the wages of 1.7 billion workers are falling due to inflation.

The social base of the Greens, the wealthy urban upper middle class, is one of the winners of this orgy of enrichment. This explains their steady development to the right, which becomes more aggressive the more resistance there is to social inequality and catastrophe from below.

Already when they first entered the federal government

in 1998, the Greens supported the Yugoslav and Afghan wars, and the Agenda 2010, which initiated the largest redistribution of social wealth in favor of the rich in German post-World War II history.

The Greens' war fever now borders on madness. They are ready to conduct the war against Russia to the last Ukrainian soldier. Today they send tanks, tomorrow the German army. The heirs of the 1968 protest movement, which rebelled against old Nazis at the universities, in the judiciary, administration and business, march today in the footsteps of Hitler against Moscow.

There is only one way to stop this madness and stop the war, social inequality and climate crisis: the mobilization of the working class—i.e., the vast majority of the population—for a socialist program to overthrow capitalism.

The objective prerequisites for this are developing rapidly. The number of labour disputes and protests is increasing all over the world. In health care, schools, services and large factories, workers are rebelling against unsustainable conditions of exploitation and low wages.

But they need a political perspective and their own party. This party is the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) and its sister organizations in the International Committee of the Fourth International. The SGP has placed the fight against war at the center of its Berlin state election campaign. Those unwilling to accept a future of war, poverty and environmental disasters should make the decision to join today.



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