

## German Green Party, Main Geographical Bases



○ ————— 100 miles



Länder and city-states where the Green Party has obtained an average of more than 10 per cent of the vote since 2002

JOACHIM JACHNOW

## WHAT'S BECOME OF THE GERMAN GREENS?

ON 24 MARCH 1999 the first bombs fell on Belgrade's power plants and water supply, knocking out the city's electricity and destroying vital infrastructure, factories, railways, bridges.<sup>1</sup> The German Luftwaffe was back in the Balkans, 58 years almost to the day after the last bombardment of the Yugoslav capital in 1941, its strikes uncannily repeating General Löhner's infamous strategy of destroying the administrative and logistical centres of an already open city—now described, in the NATO jargon of the day, as targets of 'dual purpose'. Germany's military resurgence could hardly have been more thunderously announced. Its Air Force flew almost five hundred raids in Operation Allied Force, against what remained of Yugoslavia, already sapped by economic decay, Western intervention and ethnic nationalism—often externally promoted, with Austro-German diplomacy to the fore. NATO bombardment not only left dead civilians, burnt hospitals and ruined schools in its wake, but also served to escalate the tragedy it was allegedly intended to prevent, pouring petrol on the fire, intensifying civil-war crimes and provoking the mass flight of civilians. The Green Party leader Joschka Fischer had been right when he declared in 1994 that the engagement of German forces in countries 'where Hitler's troops had stormed during the Second World War' would only fan the flames of conflict.<sup>2</sup>

But Fischer was now Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor of Germany's first Red-Green Federal government. His predictions forgotten, Fischer and the Green Party leadership saw it as Germany's moral obligation, if not to storm across Yugoslavia once more, then to drop bombs on its territory from a safe height—and, naturally, for humanitarian ends. The

Green rank and file were more reluctant: no Western European party had been so clearly identified with the demands of the peace movement for nuclear disarmament and the abolition of NATO. The German Greens had deep historical roots in the opposition to West German militarization and in solidarity movements with anti-imperialist struggles. But after long internal battles, the party had become an established player within the German parliamentary system. That entering the Federal government involved endorsing both NATO and the 'market economy' was tacitly understood. Green MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a long-term associate of Fischer, had been preparing the ground for military intervention since the start of the Yugoslav wars of secession and was now calling for ground troops—a land invasion. Nevertheless, the 1998 Green election manifesto stated that the German Greens would oppose both 'military peace enforcement and combat missions'; it looked forward to the roll-back, not the expansion, of NATO.

These manifesto commitments were abandoned a few months later when the Greens, with a mere 6.7 per cent of the vote in the September 1998 election, signed up to a coalition agreement with Schröder's SPD that gave NATO pride of place. Fischer himself had been briefed on the Clinton Administration's plans for Yugoslavia even before entering office, during a trip to Washington with Schröder and Lafontaine.<sup>3</sup> As with every step in Fischer's career, self-advancement was marketed as a painful realization of higher truths, whose acceptance did not mean betraying but rather, more perfectly fulfilling, one's ideals for a better society. The German media almost unanimously promoted the Schröder–Fischer line for military intervention, backed up by intellectuals like Günter Grass and Jürgen Habermas; critics such as Peter Handke

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Friedrich Heilmann and Frieder Otto Wolf for taking the time to share their political insights into the Green Party's trajectory with me.

<sup>2</sup> 'Ich bin der festen Überzeugung, daß deutsche Soldaten dort, wo im Zweiten Weltkrieg die Hitler-Soldateska gewütet hat, den Konflikt anheizen und nicht deeskalieren würden': *Die Tageszeitung*, 30 December 1994.

<sup>3</sup> The German media continues to reproduce the legend that the Schröder–Fischer government was caught unawares by the developments in Yugoslavia; it remains unclear to what extent the FRG government—under both Kohl and Schröder—was itself a force behind the Balkan war. On the other hand it has been suggested that the US, concerned that the EU might become more independent under strengthened German hegemony, seized the opportunity to embed the FRG's remilitarization within a refounded NATO. See Richard Holbrooke, 'America, A European Power', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 2, March–April 1995.

were anathematized as friends of Serbian war criminals. Nevertheless, a large part of the German public was reluctant to condone the use of arms in the name of 'human rights', the Greens' electoral base very much included; resistance grew rapidly. Anti-war Greens demanded that the party convene an extraordinary congress, held at the height of the NATO bombing, with a massive police presence to 'protect' the meeting from the rank-and-file members. For a brief moment it seemed as though the Greens might split and the government fall. Outdoing even Blair's rhetoric, Fischer told the congress that Serbian repression of the Kosovars would be 'another Auschwitz'; anyone who opposed NATO intervention would thereby be responsible for a second holocaust. At the end of the dramatic, at times violent gathering, the federal committee's compromise resolution, effectively a fudge that gave the Green ministers *carte blanche*, was passed by 444 to 318. Thus the German military's return to offensive warfare, explicitly outlawed by the Constitution because of Nazi war crimes, was legitimated through the moral exploitation of the very same.

After the party had renounced this foundation stone of Green politics, everything else was up for sale. In the aftermath of the Yugoslav war around a third of the membership left and was replaced by a new intake, more amenable to the leadership's orientation. Formerly defenders of the welfare state and proponents of economic redistribution, the Greens became enthusiastic supporters of Schröder's neoliberal Agenda 2010, which led to a tremendous plundering of public assets, social insurance and pension funds, while repressing wages and granting tax cuts to business worth billions of euros—effectively, a redistribution of wealth from poor to rich. Even more startling was the Greens' complete surrender to Germany's nuclear industry; the struggle for the phase-out of nuclear plants had been the party's core issue, surviving as the *sine qua non* of Green electoral promises through long years of parliamentary compromise. Now the Greens were in government, worn-out reactors received an extended life for at least ten years, while hazardous storage dumps for nuclear waste and a debt guarantee for the entire industry were pushed through by Green Environment Minister Jürgen Trittin, who remained indifferent to the further criminalization of anti-nuclear protests under the Schröder–Fischer government. In a similar vein, the Greens approved new surveillance laws, restrictions on civil rights, discrimination against foreigners and militarization of the police, making the emergency legislation of 1968 which had then provoked so much

unrest seem almost trivial in hindsight. It was the achievement of the SPD and its Green partner to force through legislative projects which they had successfully obstructed themselves during the long years of opposition in the Kohl era.<sup>4</sup>

### *Grey flannel suits*

But was this political conversion of a formerly dissident party really so unexpected? The phenomenon of the Green *volte-face* is usually depicted in the German media as the final steps in a slow progress towards maturity rather than a perversion: long-haired hippies in Birkenstocks finally discarding their utopian fantasies in order to become mature statesmen in grey flannel suits, willingly shouldering the burden of responsibility. In this, many of the media chorus were narcissistically celebrating their own 'maturity', as they had once been part of the same movements. Acclaim for the new-model Greens reflected the degree to which the dissident layers of post-68 German society had reconciled themselves to prevailing conditions; press sympathizers were often former comrades who had themselves undergone striking transformations. The paradigmatic case is Thomas Schmid, a boon companion of Fischer and Cohn-Bendit in the 1970s Frankfurt squatter milieu, briefly sharing its generally sympathetic attitude towards the Red Army Fraction, converted into a proponent of 'pragmatic politics' by 1983 and now editor-in-chief of Springer's *Die Welt*, the publication which, along with the *Bildzeitung*, embodied the spirit of the Adenauer restoration *par excellence*, with its editorial board adorned with former Nazis. More significantly, erstwhile organs of the alternative press such as Berlin's *tageszeitung* have long since assumed a 'statesmanlike' role, permitting the bare minimum of non-conformist thought required to make *la pensée unique* easier to swallow.

He who pays the piper . . . ? Vulgar corruption is a common reproach from the left, and some recently retired Greens have indeed shamelessly prostituted themselves to their former foes in the nuclear or pharmaceutical industries, for prices that earlier politicians, receiving their comparably modest bribes from industrial barons like Flick in darkened

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<sup>4</sup> Anger at the Red-Green betrayal soon found trenchant voice on the streets: protesters took up a cry from the Weimar years—*Wer hat uns verraten? Sozialdemokraten!* ('Who betrayed us? The Social Democrats!')—and added an extra line: *Wer war mit dabei? Die Grüne Partei!* ('Who was with them? The Green Party!')

backrooms, could only have dreamed of.<sup>5</sup> It can certainly be argued that some of the Realos grouped around Fischer and Cohn-Bendit, who had called for reformist politics and participation in government from the early 1980s, aimed to seize the party as a vehicle for their own personal ambitions with an eye to parliamentarism's golden troughs, as they entered middle age with their dreams of revolutionary change behind them. Christian Schmidt, a freelance journalist on the non-aligned left, active in the squatters' movement in the 80s, provides a detailed, not to say repugnant, account of the Frankfurt *Spontis* and their role in the Green Party during the 1980s and 90s in his 1998 *Wir sind die Wahnsinnigen* (We Are the Crazyies); more recently Jutta Ditfurth, a central figure in the party in the 1980s who was thrown off the federal committee by the parliamentary-roaders in 1989, has published a scathing *ad hominem* attack.<sup>6</sup>

Yet it would be too glib to assign exclusive blame to a chauvinistic clique among the Frankfurt squatters, whose members proved to be eminently corruptible, or to suggest the leading Realos had always intended to take the party so far to the right. That would be to mistake a symptom for a cause. The rise of a certain personality type inside the party apparatus is a widespread phenomenon with which the left has been confronted for a long time. It would also mean overlooking the broader co-option of social movements—from second-wave feminism to environmentalism—within which the Green deformation took place; the capacity of contemporary capitalism to absorb vital aspects of new

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<sup>5</sup> In 2009 Joschka Fischer was taken on as advisor to the Nabucco pipeline project, on a six-figure salary; he serves as 'senior strategic counsel' to the (Madeleine) Albright Stonebridge group and is on the payroll of BMW, Siemens, et al., as consultant and lobbyist; Andrea Fischer, former Green Minister of Health, is a lobbyist for the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries; former Green spokesperson Gunda Röstel joined the management of Gelsenwasser/EON, which naturally has a nuclear wing; Margareta Wolf, Green principal secretary (Staatssekretärin) to Jürgen Trittin at the Federal Ministry of the Environment, became a paid lobbyist for the nuclear industry; Matthias Berninger, Green principal secretary to Renate Künast at the Federal Ministry for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, now works for Mars, Inc.; Green anti-nuclear activist Marianne Tritz is now a lobbyist for the tobacco industry; Green MEP Cohn-Bendit works for a lobby financed by Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Yahoo, Ebay and Facebook to influence EU legislation in their favour; and so on.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Schmidt: *Wir sind die Wahnsinnigen*, Düsseldorf 1998; Jutta Ditfurth, *Krieg, Atom, Armut, Was sie reden, was sie tun: Die Grünen*, Berlin 2011.

social movements' critiques, in order to rejuvenate its own processes of reproduction, has been explored by Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello and Nancy Fraser, among others.<sup>7</sup>

At the opposite extreme to Schmidt and Ditfurth, Paul Tiefenbach's 1998 *Die Grünen: Verstaatlichung einer Partei* ('Statization of a Party') offers a more complex, sociological account, inspired by Robert Michels's 'Iron Law of Oligarchy', which suggests that parties will inevitably adapt to, and be absorbed by, the existing state-political system.<sup>8</sup> But this fatalistic functionalism serves to downplay not only the real struggles and choices that have determined the party's trajectory, but also the specificities of the German—and international—political and economic developments which have helped shape its course over the past three decades. A more satisfactory account would need to examine the interplay of both subjective and objective factors. The experience of the German Greens remains particularly instructive as a rare example of a party-building project which attempted to distill much of the thinking associated with the anti-nuclear, ecological and feminist movements, and whose protagonists anticipated the danger of incorporation and sought very consciously to implement counter-measures; their failure raises the question of what strategies should be adopted for emancipatory politics in the future.<sup>9</sup> But as Gramsci once said, the history of a party is the history of a nation, in monographic form. The past decades have brought not just the reunification of Germany but its resurgence as the predominant power in Europe. What has the Green Party now become and what functions does it perform in the new Germany?

### *Movement and party*

The seedbeds from which the Green Party sprang, in the dark years of the late 1970s and early 80s under Helmut Schmidt's leaden chancellorship, were the citizens' action groups—*Bürgerinitiativen*—mobilized against the SPD's stepped-up nuclear-power programme, and against the industrial pollution and acid rain that were killing rivers and forests.

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<sup>7</sup> Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London 2007; Nancy Fraser, 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History', NLR 56, March–April 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Tiefenbach, *Die Grünen: Verstaatlichung einer Partei*, Köln 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Frieder Otto Wolf tackles the question of whether party-building should be on the agenda at all in his essay, 'Party-Building for Eco-Socialists', *Socialist Register* 2007.

Ecologists, feminists, students and counter-cultural networks joined with farmers and housewives in mass protests that brought nuclear-plant construction sites to a halt in Wyhl (Baden-Württemberg), Grohnde (Lower Saxony) and Brokdorf (Schleswig-Holstein). Critique of the industrial policy embraced by all three establishment parties was the decisive starting-point for this heteroclitic movement, which drew its impetus not only from the civil unrest of 1968 and after but also from more conservative layers, similarly alienated from modern capitalist society and its state, who defended allegedly traditional ways of life against the 'big machine'. It was a natural step for these groups to put up 'green' alternative lists against the governing parties in local elections, but the majority were averse—through a lively experiential culture, rather than for any deeper theoretical reasons—to any form of political centralization. An early attempt by conservative ecologists around former CDU deputy Herbert Gruhl to unite the various regional green lists and environmental groups into a single party was doomed to fail, as it was incompatible with the anti-authoritarian, decentralized nature of the local action groups.

They did, however, agree to put up an SPV–Die Grünen list in the first European Parliament elections in October 1979, headed by Petra Kelly, a 32-year-old environmentalist working for the European Commission in Brussels. The list won 3.2 per cent of the vote and a handsome reimbursement for the Greens' campaign costs. This proved a turning point. Rudolf Bahro, the East German eco-Marxist dissident, newly arrived in West Germany after a prison sentence in the GDR, issued an appeal for a new politics to meet the existential challenge of environmental catastrophe, in which the needs of the species would trump those of class; he called for an alliance that would stretch from Herbert Gruhl to Rudi Dutschke. At two stormy conferences in 1980 a thousand delegates from the local campaigns, as well as several hundred more from left, feminist and counter-cultural groups, agreed to constitute what Petra Kelly would describe as an 'anti-party party'. Gruhl's conservatives and the *völkisch* blood-and-soil grouping led by Baldur Springmann fought fiercely to bar the far-left and Maoist organizations but were defeated by the majority, which rejected on principle any form of censorship or political exclusion. Highly conscious of the danger of parliamentarist co-option, the Greens set in place radical safeguards against it: members elected to state or Federal assemblies would step down halfway through their terms, to be replaced by the next Green on the election list; contrary to the German



Constitution's strictures on the 'freedom' of elected representatives to be accountable to their consciences rather than their party's programme, Green deputies were to be mandated by party conferences. A strong feminist presence ensured rigorous gender equality: 50 per cent of party positions would be occupied by women; men's and women's names would alternate on electoral lists (the 'zipper' principle). A federal committee with a three-person leadership was directly elected by the annual conference. Formal membership was not a condition of participation: all party meetings and votes were open to the public.

Membership expanded dramatically, from 16,000 in the spring of 1980 to over 30,000 four years later. While more conservative Greens remained strong in the southern Länder, above all Baden-Württemberg, in the northern cities—Hamburg, Bremen, Frankfurt, West Berlin—the radical left soon became hegemonic. Here, numerous heterodox left groupings, along with the doctrinaire Maoists of the Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland (KBW) and the Frankfurt *Spontis* associated with Fischer and Cohn-Bendit, flocked to join the party-building project. Indeed for much of the German left, the Greens became a kind of last refuge. Since the Communists had lost their foothold in the Bundestag in 1953, and then been (needlessly) outlawed by the Constitutional Court, every attempt to launch a party to the left of the SPD had failed. State repression against left-wing dissidents—notoriously renewed in the early 70s by Willy Brandt's *Radikalenerlaß* and the *Berufsverbot*—made it even harder to construct a new formation. On the other side of the Cold War border, a bureaucratic-dictatorial *Realsozialismus* caused further divisions within the West German left, ranging from doctrinaire endorsement to virulent disapproval. Nevertheless, the far left as such never predominated in the party, not least because important components of the Greens' membership and core electorate espoused essentially liberal positions on socio-political questions or embraced a more conservative understanding of environmentalism. Nor were the leftist newcomers able to draw up a common theoretical framework for the Greens.

In the long run, their triumph may have been a pyrrhic one. While the gathering of so many currents under the Green umbrella seemed at first to have unified West Germany's shattered left, it arguably contributed further to the splintering and co-option of those elements. Many

former sectarians—especially from the KBW—underwent rapid political conversions, emerging by the mid-80s as free-market eco-libertarians.<sup>10</sup> There are obvious parallels here with the French *nouveaux philosophes* of the late 70s, or the much smaller number of ex-leftist neo-conservatives in the US. But though hardly a new phenomenon in history, the form in which these collective renegacies occur has some bearing on their outcomes. The political-science literature generally fails to discuss this conversion, preferring to repeat the myth of today's party establishment which depicts the Greens as a successful outgrowth of the new social movements, which helped to modernize German society by breaking up its 'encrusted structures'. Yet the Green Party was in good measure a response to the decline of the social movements: it bore the legacy of defeat, and of the frustrated deviations—towards sectarianism, immediatism, the 'armed struggle' culminating in the German Autumn of 1977, or simply into apathy—which that failure had precipitated. It represented not the triumph of a generation over the established order, but rather the blockage of earlier emancipatory struggles.

The inherent contradictions of the Greens could also be seen as symptomatic of the postmodern intellectual and political culture in which the party developed. This eclecticism did not merely reflect the Greens' origins as a 'gathering place'—*Sammelbecken*, to quote its leaders—of diverse political tendencies who wanted to secure entry to parliament. All attempts to forge a coherent theoretical outlook from these currents proved to be impossible due to their ideological antinomies; eco-libertarians embracing hedonistic individualism, or the radical ecologists' instinct-driven forms of pastiche socialism, were in the end expressions of the absence of a larger narrative. Its place was filled by the perceived threat of an endangered nature and mankind, abstract enough to be as inclusive as possible; the priority was to clean up the mess which modernity had created, without developing a new horizon of emancipation. That minimalism, combined with maximum openness to different world-outlooks, was the condition of the party's very existence, as it was the only way to integrate the heterogeneous fragments of ecologists, leftists, pacifists, conservationists, anthroposophists, organic

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<sup>10</sup> In its heyday the KBW had a fortune of millions, possessing real estate in Frankfurt's new banking skyline, dozens of brand new vehicles and an up-to-date printing press; some of this went to support the Greens. A number of its former cadres made their way through other state and business institutions, as well as the Green Party. 'Die Beerdigung war "eher heiter"', *Die Tageszeitung*, 18 February 1985.

farmers or Christians. Like Bahro, Petra Kelly would make a virtue of this incoherence:

The variety of currents enriches our party, even in the absence of a common consensus in the analysis of society. I don't want to exclude communists or conservatives, and I don't have to. One current learns from the other. There is no mutual destruction, but a convergence of views. That's what is new about our movement.<sup>11</sup>

A majority shared the fervent belief that 'something must be done' about the environmental crisis, but their proposed solutions were incompatible.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the SPD government's commitment in the early 80s to install Pershing II nuclear missiles on German soil, under NATO—i.e., US—command, mobilized over a million people against the intensification of the Cold War. Yet while the Greens were in agreement on their opposition to nuclear weapons and to 'civil' nuclear energy, there was never any broader consensus about the deeper underlying causes of these symptoms. The upshot was a 'strategy of addition', a process of accommodation that at one stage resulted in a 500-page programme for the North Rhine–Westphalia Greens.

### *Dialectic of partial success*

In the 1983 Federal elections at the beginning of Helmut Kohl's 16-year reign as German Chancellor, the Greens scraped the 5 per cent hurdle with two million votes, winning 27 seats in the now CDU-dominated Bundestag; they had already been entering Land and city-state assemblies.<sup>13</sup> Electoral successes brought new strains: the need to fill positions and staff offices threatened to overwhelm the membership pool, which by German standards was minute in comparison to the Greens'

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<sup>11</sup> Werner Hülsberg, *The German Greens: A Social and Political Profile*, London 1988, p. 124.

<sup>12</sup> Some newcomers did not even share the concern about environmental issues. As Fischer put it: 'Let's be honest for once: which of us is interested in the water crisis in Vogelsberg, motorways in Frankfurt or nuclear-power plants anywhere, because they feel personally concerned?' See Ditfurth, *Krieg, Atom, Armut*, p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> In 1980, the Greens entered the Baden-Württemberg assembly with 5.3 per cent; in 1981, Berlin with 7.2 per cent; in 1982, Hamburg with 7.7 per cent, Lower Saxony with 6.5 per cent and Hesse with 8 per cent; in 1983, Bremen with 5.4 per cent. In 1984 they began to make strong gains in conservative university towns—Heidelberg, Freiburg, Tübingen—coming second to the CDU with 14–20 per cent.

electorate.<sup>14</sup> Despite the principles of half-term rotation—respected by nearly all the Greens, with the exception of Kelly—and party mandates, a parliamentarist *Bundestagsfraktion*, with a full-time staff ten times the size of the party headquarters, now began to crystallize against the more radical federal committee, while differences also opened up over ‘coalition’ or ‘tolerance’ tactics towards the SPD in the Land and city assemblies. These divisions overlapped with—indeed, often constituted the grounds for—the formation of four inner-party groupings that were frequently separated from each other only by tactical nuances, above all regarding the SPD.

The largest yet most ill-defined of these tendencies was that of the radical ecologists, dubbed ‘fundamentalists’ or Fundis by their party antagonists, and so by the latter’s media allies. Radical ecologists largely dominated the federal committee up till 1988, with Jutta Ditfurth their best-known leader. They clung to the idea of a new environmental politics as a means to total systemic change, bringing an end to industrial-military society and its state. In this perspective, the Bundestag was merely an arena that would permit social-movement activists to reach a wider audience, with a hazy idea of creating a general crisis in the political system; they were therefore opposed on principle to entering coalition governments with the SPD. Under their leadership, early Green congresses laid down unmeetable conditions for coalition negotiations: the immediate shut-down of all nuclear plants, no NATO nuclear missiles on German soil, etc.

The eco-socialists, mainly concentrated in the northern cities, were a smaller force, but their intellectual contribution was more substantial. Theoretical debates in the eco-socialist journal *Moderne Zeiten*, edited from Hanover, analysed the ecological disaster as an outcome of the destructive forces, both ‘civil’ and military, of the capitalist mode of

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<sup>14</sup> In the 1980s the Greens had 30,000–40,000 members to 2m–3m voters, whereas the SPD had 1m members to 14m–15m voters. The ratios in 1983 were 87 Green voters for every party member; by comparison, those for the SPD and the Christian Democrats were 16:1 and 20:1 respectively: Hülsberg, *The German Greens*, p. 108. A 1989 survey of the 5,000 Greens in Hesse revealed that 4,000 were functionaries or mandate holders. Pressures on women were particularly acute, given the 50 per cent quota, since women comprised only 30–35 per cent of the membership. See Margrit Mayer and John Ely, eds, *The German Greens: Paradox Between Movement and Party*, Philadelphia 1998, p. 10.

production.<sup>15</sup> In their 1984 *The Future of the Greens*, Thomas Ebermann and Rainer Trampert envisaged an alliance of working-class and social movements, arguing that processes of production could not be transformed without the agency of the workers. Though hostile to the state apparatus and to any thorough-going reformist project, they were prepared to see parliamentary politics as a way of advancing certain legislative projects and obstructing others; hence the idea of ‘tolerating’ a minority SPD government—supporting or opposing, issue by issue—was widely discussed in these circles.

By contrast the reformists, such as Fischer, Cohn-Bendit and Hubert Kleinert—styled as ‘realists’ or, cooler, ‘Realos’ by an approving media—saw the Greens as a minority coalition partner of the SPD and were prepared to make drastic compromises in order to get into government and implement ‘small changes for the better’. Not for nothing were they dubbed ‘Koalos’ by their radical-ecologist opponents, who saw them as trying to social-democratize the Greens. Their base lay in Hesse and the ‘Realo south’, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. In their contributions to the internal debate, Realos argued that the 1982 change of Federal government, with the switch of the FDP ‘kingmakers’ from SPD to CDU, opened up the possibility of a Red–Green coalition as a ‘new hope’; criticizing the radical-ecologist majority’s position of ‘fundamental opposition to the system’, they called for ‘a politics of ecological reform’.<sup>16</sup> As Kleinert explained to *Stern* magazine in 1988, this entailed ‘a mixture of regulative policies mediated by the state as well as an ecological economy with market elements’. Fischer was clearer still in his 1989 book, *Der Umbau der Industriegesellschaft*: ‘ecological reform of the industrial system will be determined by the existing economic mode of Western capitalism’; market forces were a better means to reshape the economy and the environment than political intervention.<sup>17</sup> In this, Fischer’s

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<sup>15</sup> See also Frieder Otto Wolf, ‘Eco-Socialist Transition on the Threshold of the 21st Century’, NLR 1/158, July–August 1985.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Ehmke, Joschka Fischer, Jo Müller et al, ‘Verantwortung und Aufgabe der Grünen’, *Grüner basis-dienst*, no. 1, 1985, p. 15, cited in Roland Roth and Detlef Murphy, ‘From Competing Factions to the Rise of the Realos’, in Mayer and Ely, *German Greens*, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> *Stern*, 4 April 1988, and Joschka Fischer, *Der Umbau der Industriegesellschaft: Plädoyer wider die herrschende Umweltlüge*, Frankfurt-am-Main 1989, pp. 59–61. Fischer had hijacked the title of the Greens’ 1986 programme which had had a strong working-class orientation, calling for the banks and means of production to be socialized.

views had come into alignment with those of the fourth tendency, the eco-libertarians. Initially a small minority of well-connected individuals, these free-market Greens would come to exercise an increasing influence in the party through their alliance with the Realos.

### *Watershed*

Differences over coalition policy were temporarily patched over by a 1984 conference agreement that these should be decided at local level. But they erupted again in 1985 when the Hesse Greens entered a Land government with the SPD, despite the latter's notoriously cosy relations with 'dirty' nuclear-power and pharmaceutical companies. With Fischer presiding as the first Green state minister for the environment, the party proceeded to break virtually every pledge it had ever made, including allowing nuclear plants to continue at full blast after the explosion at Chernobyl, flatly against the Greens' official position, until Fischer was finally sacked by the SPD's Holger Börner. This debacle led to furious denunciations at the Greens' conference, and Fischer's chief critic, Jutta Ditfurth, was re-elected to the federal committee with a two-thirds majority. In the Federal elections of 1987 the Greens won 8.3 per cent, with 3 million votes. They now formed a block of 42 MPs in the Bundestag, with enlarged entitlements to full-time office staff and research funds.

But the gathering weight of the parliamentarians was now turning against the radicals, helped by the structural majorities in favour of reformism and coalition-building among the community-based *Bürgerinitiativen* and the Greens' electoral base. They received external sustenance from the political establishment and its media allies, worried by the prospect of 'instability' and anti-NATO politics in the Bundestag, at a moment when Gorbachev was pushing for a new European settlement. Internally, fierce arguments over a Mothers' Manifesto, which savaged Green feminists for inadvertently privileging women without children, served to confuse and demoralize the radical ecologists and the left. A new faction—Grüner Aufbruch, led by Bundestag member Antje Vollmer and ex-KBW Bremen parliamentarian, Ralf Fücks—which claimed to want to put an end to the ceaseless internal quarrels between Realos and Fundis, rallied the 1988 Karlsruhe conference to purge Ditfurth and the radical ecologists from the federal committee, and install the Realos and themselves in power. The conference also saw the emergence of the Linkes Forum, formed by Ludger Volmer and others:

another 'realist' faction which saw itself as 'undogmatic' and pushed for participation in government. A bitter fight-back ensued, but the radicals and eco-socialists had been decisively sidelined.

The Greens were still reeling from the internal blood-letting that followed these conflicts when the Berlin Wall came down in the autumn of 1989. The extent to which the party and its electorate had made themselves at home in the political culture of West Germany became apparent with the implosion of *Realsozialismus* in the East. The Greens reacted in bewilderment to the prospect of unification, chasing after developments shaped by others. The party was divided between indifference and paralysis. The weakened left expressed its deep concerns about the likely consequences of economic annexation for the people of the GDR, and the expansionist thrust of a new *Großdeutschland*, and thus opposed the push for unification. Though the Western Greens were virtually the only FRG political formation to have had some direct contact with a segment of the East German opposition, the Realos' dominance of the Bundestagsfraktion made it impossible to use this to articulate alternatives from both sides of the fallen wall. The Eastern Grüne Partei had grown out of the environmentalist dissident movement in the GDR; it had positioned itself as an internal opposition to the SED regime's emulation of Western industrial growth and had always fought for the idea of collective—not just individual—civil rights. It thus differed quite profoundly from the three liberal civil-rights groups which came together in early 1990, with Western backing, to form the electoral alliance of Bündnis 90.<sup>18</sup> The Realo leadership now wielded its power to provide unilateral support, money and equipment for Bündnis 90 in the March 1990 Volkskammer elections, while abandoning the Eastern Greens. It was in this context of social and political rollback, with the colonization by the West of the life-worlds and economy of the East amid rising racist violence, and with the further marginalization of any alternative politics in both East and West, that many of the eco-socialists—Ebermann, Trampert and others—finally left the party in the spring of 1990, denouncing its conversion into a pillar of the establishment.

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, little has been published about Green dissidents in the GDR. An early account that remains valuable can be found in Carlo Jordan and Hans Michael Kloth, *Arche Nova*, Berlin 1995. Friedrich Heilmann offered a short retrospective on the reunification debate in 'Green Environmental Politics: Basic Values and Recent Strategies', in Ingolfur Blühdorn, ed., *The Green Agenda: Environmental Politics and Policy in Germany*, Keele 1995, pp. 143–66.

## *Counterfactuals*

Could things have turned out otherwise? The environmental crises of the 70s and 80s arguably offered a broader opportunity for a renewed critique of industrial capitalism that would foreground ecological disaster as a necessary consequence of the destructive forces—both ‘civil’ and military—of that mode of production. Valiant attempts by eco-socialists to arrive at a deeper understanding of the lethal threat it poses to the limited resources of the natural world have remained embryonic. Yet a nascent environmentalism offered the chance to reconstitute the working class as a political subject, both practically and theoretically—a genuine collectivity of labour. Far from being ‘post-material’ concerns, fear of pollution, radioactivity and other life-threatening hazards of industrial society brought together workers in the chemical industry with salaried middle-class people. To be sure, the greater part of the working class continued to favour industrial expansion, viewing this as the condition of its own prosperity. But the crisis of Fordism made a growing number of workers—usually those who were more highly skilled—susceptible to environmental demands. Nevertheless, the left currents within the Greens failed to develop a consistent long-term strategy aimed at integrating the wage-earning class into a renewed conception of eco-socialism.

The radical ecologists, even if they made use of socialist phraseology, showed little interest in any deeper theorization—indeed, often displayed a stark aversion to it. Their priority was the gut-instinct activism of the social movements, which they struggled to sustain even as they began to fall into decline. Their efforts were not without success: they used the Bundestag to raise public awareness of the worst forms of industrial pollution, strengthened the alliance against the building of fresh nuclear plants and unmasked the ugly face of the political establishment’s industrial lobbying. But without deeper alliances that went beyond the milieu of the Green politicians, their strategy was doomed to failure in the long run. Successful partnerships with organized labour were sometimes formed locally, but they were never developed by the federal leadership as part of a coherent plan.

Nor did the mechanisms that were intended to stop a party oligarchy from emerging prove ultimately effective. Despite their strong awareness of the dangers of hierarchicalization and their stress on participatory democracy, the Greens depended on media celebrities from the start.



The Realos knew best how to play that card, as they not only had networks of sympathetic journalists but could offer themselves to the media as dynamic figures, best placed to domesticate the party as a whole. Early principles of rotation and party mandates, borrowed from the Paris Commune and Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, proved ineffective against this layer of power-seeking personalities. From an early stage, the party showed symptoms of a double life: while majorities still voted for a radical agenda at Green assemblies, the parliamentary fraction—dominated by reformists—tacitly ignored them, until the party finally gave way. Underlying this shift were the regressive trends of the 1980s: the gathering forces of neoliberal reaction in the West, the stagnation of welfare capitalism, the renewed Cold War, the slow implosion of the Comecon bloc. A large part of the Green electorate not only came of age during this period but managed to shore up a place for itself in the upper realms of state employment, the media, service industries or the expanding ‘alternative’ or ‘bio’ business sector; and thus helped to shape the party as a lobby for this rather complacent middle-class layer.

### *The war party*

In the first Federal elections of the reunited Germany in December 1990, however, the triumphant Realos saw the cup of victory dashed from their lips. In the Western Länder the Green Party won only 4.8 per cent, below the minimum threshold; its 44 seats and Federal resources were wiped out and its grandees excluded from the Bundestag. It was only the East German Greens, now in a forced marriage with Bündnis 90, who passed the 5 per cent hurdle with 6.1 per cent. Fischer’s response was to blame the electoral humiliation on residual radical elements. At the Greens’ 1991 conference in Neumünster, the Realos set about cleansing the party: principles of participatory democracy were abolished, individual leadership roles and ‘professionalization’ embraced. The Linkes Forum’s Ludger Volmer was elected party spokesperson and a list of exceedingly modest reforms was drawn up as the basis for future Red–Green coalitions. This conference saw the departure of the radical ecologists around Ditfurth from what they saw as an ‘authoritarian, dogmatic and hierarchical’ party. In 1993 Fischer delivered an ideological blueprint for ‘the left after socialism’ that was as eclectic as it was intellectually barren.<sup>19</sup> The subject of Green liberal-reformism—the

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<sup>19</sup> Joschka Fischer, *Die Linke nach dem Sozialismus*, Hamburg 1993.

'urban liberal consumer-citizen', defined by 'individual lifestyle' while 'protesting against nuclear power' and empathizing with 'the poor and marginalized'—had now come into his own.<sup>20</sup>

With enthusiastic backing for the new 'reformed' Greens from the media, the party recovered its foothold in the Bundestag in 1994, with 7.3 per cent of the vote and 49 seats. The remaining left wing of the party, now represented by the Linkes Forum and their co-thinkers in the Babelsberg circle, had become trapped in the dynamics of Realpolitik, with ever-weaker reform proposals as their basis for government participation, despite further lowering experiences in the Länder—Lower Saxony, Hesse, North Rhine–Westphalia, Berlin. If the Linkes Forum–Babelsberg grouping stemmed the party's neoliberalization for a while, it was at the price of perpetual compromise with the Realos, whose final victory was only deferred until the moment of the 1998 Red–Green federal coalition. In the end foreign policy was the crucial test, with the dismemberment of Yugoslavia offering a proving ground for the unilateral military interventionism of the New World Order. As noted above, Cohn-Bendit and Fischer had been preparing the ground for Germany's remilitarization, though even they still considered a fig-leaf mandate from the UN essential for any Luftwaffe operation. The big swing to the SPD in 1998 brought the Greens into office as coalition partners, though their own share of the vote had fallen to 6.7 per cent. Few expected, though, that the new government would be banging the drum for the war of NATO's expansion in Yugoslavia, or that leading Greens would soon be outflanking the Pentagon in their calls for a land invasion.

The Linkes Forum now staged its own capitulation. Ludger Volmer, by this stage state secretary to Fischer, was the most prominent defector, breaking former pledges to rally to the 'need' for war. He and others would become spearheads of the new outlook. Deprived of powerful allies on the federal committee who would challenge the Realos directly, and with the media almost unanimously promoting the Schröder–Fischer line, the remaining dissidents were easily outvoted. A few idealists have held out to the present day inside the party, mainly grouped around the Grüne Emanzipatorische Linke network, but their continued presence has done more to provide the leadership with a certain 'left' cover

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<sup>20</sup> See the Realo manifesto by Joschka Fischer, Hubert Kleinert, Udo Knapp and Jo Müller, 'Sein oder Nicht-sein: Entwurf für ein Manifest grüner Realpolitik', 1988.

than to advance their own projects. Others have returned to the social movements, got involved in new political networks such as ATTAC, or joined the PDS and, after 2007, Die Linke.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of Fischer's role in bringing not just the Greens, but a much larger 'dissident' layer of post-68 German society into line with Allied requirements should not be underestimated; the former self-styled anti-imperialist was well placed to assure a doubtful public that the Luftwaffe was serving no other purpose in the Balkans than preventing an alleged genocide—thus helping to make a reunified Germany fit for the wars of the new century. Even the usually staid *Frankfurter Allgemeine* would claim that 'without Fischer and his biography, this war might have led to a domestic emergency, a civil-war-style emergency'. 'If we had lost public support in Germany, we would have lost it throughout the alliance', noted NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, describing Fischer as an example of a political leader who did not just 'run behind public opinion, but knew how to shape it'.<sup>22</sup> Veterans of 1968 and the rhetorical invocation of Nazism were required to sanctify Germany's bombing of Belgrade.

Once blooded, the Greens proved some of the most enthusiastic warmongers in the Bundestag. While the Green Party USA resolutely opposed the Bush Administration's decision to launch the war on Afghanistan in 2001, Fischer pulled out all the stops to ensure Schröder would have Green support for dispatching German troops. As the American Greens wrote in an open letter:

Most Greens worldwide recognize that this is a war for oil and political domination and will do nothing to protect US citizens or any people from terrorism. Joschka Fischer and the Greens who are propping up the German government have put power before principle. Their claim that

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<sup>21</sup> This is no guarantee, of course, that Die Linke will not in time emulate the Greens. According to a leaked cable, party leader Gregor Gysi gave private assurances to the US ambassador about Die Linke's policy towards NATO: his demand for a new security pact that would embrace Russia was a mere tactical manoeuvre designed to assuage the party's radical wing, as it might otherwise insist that Germany leave NATO unilaterally.

<sup>22</sup> See Frank Schirrmacher, 'Der lange Weg zu sich selbst: Wofür Joschka Fischer haftet', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 October 2001; Jamie Shea: interview for the Westdeutscher Rundfunk TV documentary, 'Es begann mit einer Lüge', February 2001.

they must participate in the war effort in order to make it more humane is obscene. They seem to be saying that by keeping themselves part of the government they can make 'humanitarian' cluster bombs or 'cancer-free' depleted uranium casings. This is nonsense.<sup>23</sup>

The response from Fischer and Schröder was a grotesque attempt to portray opposition to the war as analogous to Nazi-era 'German unilateralism'—that is, to military aggression. In a joint letter to Bundestag deputies, they claimed:

The alternative to participating would be a German unilateralism that runs counter to the decisive lesson from our past: multilateral ties, not renationalization. A 'new German unilateralism'—whatever its justification—would cause misunderstanding and mistrust among our partners and neighbours.<sup>24</sup>

In 2002, electoral expediency proved more telling than such lessons from history, and Schröder opted against supporting the invasion of Iraq. But this stance, successful as it was in keeping the SPD–Green coalition in office, owed nothing to Fischer's influence. As he himself has since explained, Schröder was entirely responsible for the government's line. Now the most reliably Atlanticist of Germany's parties, the Greens sanctioned the dispatch of 'our troops'—to quote the Green defence spokesperson Angelika Beer, a former Maoist and co-founder of the party—to the ever-expanding 'war on terror' and of the German Navy to patrol the East African coast. According to a 2011 opinion poll, no segment of the German population supports military engagement more enthusiastically than the Green electorate.<sup>25</sup> When the Merkel–Westerwelle government decided not to join the Anglo-Franco-American war on Libya, its harshest critics were to be found in the Green Party: while NATO aircraft dropped depleted uranium shells on Tripoli, the former peace party was decrying the 'irresponsible attitude' of those who had kept the Luftwaffe grounded. Apparently sensing that the Auschwitz analogy was starting to suffer from over-use, Green MP Tom Koenigs instead argued that Germany should join the bombardment in order to make up for the fact that it had sold so many weapons

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<sup>23</sup> Open Letter to the German Greens, 7 November 2001, cited in Jim Green, 'German Greens Off to War Again', *Synthesis/Regeneration* 27, Winter 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Green, 'German Greens Off to War Again'.

<sup>25</sup> *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 22 April 2011.

to Gaddafi's criminal dictatorship—Schröder and Fischer having lifted the arms embargo.

### *Eco-marketeers*

The Green Party as a whole had never really grappled with the contradiction between environmental sustainability and the economic expansionism that is inherent to capitalist accumulation; nor did the majority develop a consistent critique of what was at first a small group of eco-libertarians in their midst, who preached the 'gospel of eco-efficiency'; in favour of free markets and opposed to state intervention, this was initially directed against the 'big machine' of industrialism and statism alike.<sup>26</sup> Pro-market policies began to be foregrounded once the Realos had taken firm control of the party in the late 80s; with rising fiscal deficits now ruling out the marginal Keynesian spending necessary for green social-democratic policies, neoliberal thinking became increasingly predominant, as the only possible solution to the deepening crisis of Modell Deutschland. But the eco-libertarians also underwent a transformation: talk of a decentralized economy and of civic individualism freed from excessive bureaucracy has given way to enthusiasm for the technocracy of globalized corporations and state apparatuses, lighting the way towards an allegedly 'green capitalism' in full concordance with the diktats of the IMF and World Bank, relying on market mechanisms and technological solutions.

With the Schröder–Fischer government, the Greens emerged as the most dynamic proponents of Germany's neoliberal shock-therapy programme, Agenda 2010, once Lafontaine's short-lived attempt to revive Rhenish social Keynesianism had been defeated. Wages and unemployment benefit were screwed down, corporate taxes slashed; fuelled by the international credit expansion, Germany's post-2005 export boom took off amid rising levels of inequality and social deprivation. Protests against Agenda 2010 split the SPD, with the dissenters later helping to found Die

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<sup>26</sup> I borrow the term 'gospel of eco-efficiency', which sums up perfectly the chimeras of an 'eco-friendly' capitalism, from the ground-breaking study by Juan Martínez Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*, Cheltenham 2002. This delusional, 'market-friendly' brand of environmentalism is especially popular in Baden-Württemberg: heartland of the German car industry and eco-libertarianism alike, and the first Land to spawn a Green-led government in 2011.

Linke, and the Red–Green coalition was evicted in the 2005 election. But the new-model Green Party membership showed no qualms. Having internalized the idea that ‘all other systems are worse than capitalism’, the Greens now find the idea of zero—let alone ‘negative’—growth unthinkable. They have become strident lobbyists on behalf of corporations hoping to profit from the transition to ‘green’ energy sources, as for those selling ‘ecological’ commodities. The party now derives much of its political capital as a modernizing force from this sector, supplying the kind of pseudo-environmentalism which itself promises to become a lucrative commodity in the face of global disaster, preparing fresh fields for capital accumulation.<sup>27</sup> From e-cars to Desertec, they are actively promoting so-called ‘green technologies’ which have already proved to be neither peaceful nor ecological in their repercussions.<sup>28</sup>

Although Fischer dismissed the idea of the Greens entering a CDU-led Federal coalition after the 2005 election, such alliances were soon being reached at state level (indeed they had been promoted by eco-libertarians like Thomas Schmid since the early 80s). In 2008 the rise of Die Linke offered the possibility of a Red–Red–Green coalition in Hamburg; the Greens scuttled it by entering a coalition with the CDU. In Saarland the following year, a strong swing to Die Linke again left the Greens as king-makers; they vetoed a left coalition with the SPD and Lafontaine’s Die Linke and entered office with the CDU and FDP. In staunchly conservative Baden-Württemberg, a series of mass protests against far-reaching plans pushed by the ruling CDU to rebuild Stuttgart’s station at massive cost led to the election in 2011 of the Greens’ first Land Minister-President, Winfried Kretschmann. A former KBW veteran, Kretschmann could not have been more cocky and conceited about presenting himself to the electorate as a provincial Catholic of good petty-bourgeois stock. Once in office, he began to backtrack on cancelling the new station, declaring that a further referendum would have to be held. The Greens are currently presiding over its construction.

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<sup>27</sup> Green representatives are now very welcome to expound their views before shareholders of old fossil-fuel giants such as RWE or EON, where they can warn them that it is ‘not only the planet but your shareholder value which is at risk’—as MEP Sven Giegold did recently.

<sup>28</sup> Ozzie Zehner has written a compelling critique of the use of ‘eco-friendly’ technology to green-wash an unsustainable economic model of ceaseless growth with catastrophic implications for nature and mankind: Zehner, *Green Illusions: The Dirty Secrets of Clean Energy and the Future of Environmentalism*, Lincoln, NE 2012.

The Greens have paid strikingly little in electoral terms for their political mutation. The Green electorate has not expanded much over the years— inching up from 8.3 per cent in 1987 to 10.7 per cent in 2009—but it has got older, richer and more conservative, in tandem with the party's leaders. Green support has grown among college-educated and professional voters, while it has done ever-worse in terms of working-class and (especially) trade-union votes. In 1987, 60 per cent of Green voters were under 35; in 2009, 60 per cent were over 40. Nevertheless, the party has a significant new following among better-off 'millennials', especially young women: in 2009, its vote share among 18–25 year-olds was 15.4 per cent, rising to almost 19 per cent of female voters in that cohort.<sup>29</sup> In April 2013, one poll suggested that 54 per cent of Green voters would back a Federal coalition with the CDU this September, while 64 per cent of CDU voters would be happy with a Black–Green government in Berlin.<sup>30</sup> Cohn-Bendit told *Bild* (25 April 2013) that a CDU–Green alliance would be a 'realistic option', on condition that the Greens got the Finance and Energy ministries. Nevertheless, at the Greens' April 2013 party conference in Berlin, Jürgen Trittin, Renate Künast and Claudia Roth led a pro-SPD rebellion, voting for a rise in the top tax rate as party policy, to the chagrin of Kretschmann and the Green Mayor of Tübingen, Boris Palmer.<sup>31</sup>

Whether that position will survive the September 2013 election results remains to be seen. The Greens may still play king (or queen)-maker in

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<sup>29</sup> See Lutz Mez, 'Who Votes Green?', in Mayer and Ely, *German Greens*, p. 82; Bernard Wessels, Jan Engels and Gero Maas, 'Demographic Change and Progressive Political Strategy in Germany', Centre for American Progress, Washington, DC 2011; Federal Returning Officer, *Wahl zum 17 Deutschen Bundestag am 27 September 2009*, ch. 4, 'Wahlbeteiligung und Stimmabgabe der Männer und Frauen nach Altersgruppen', Wiesbaden 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Forsa poll, cited in Derek Scally, 'Greens contemplate a post-election future with Merkel', *Irish Times*, 26 April 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Trittin's experience as Environment Minister in the Red–Green federal coalition should have been instructive: 'In key areas, Trittin was forced to implement Schröder's directives but carry the political responsibility. For example, in June 1999, Schröder ordered Trittin to veto the passage of a new EU directive on the recycling of old cars, apparently directly following interventions by the German car industry to the Chancellor.' Rüdiger, 'Germany', in Ferdinand Müller-Rommel and Thomas Poguntke, eds, *Green Parties in National Governments*, London 2002, p. 98. Trittin's journey from Babelsberg to Bilderberg—he attended the group's 2012 conference in Chantilly, Virginia—is almost as impressive as the path followed by Joschka Fischer.

Berlin. There was a time when that prospect might have caused anxiety in Washington, but the Greens are the American Embassy's favourite German party nowadays. And why not? The Green Party has reduced the struggle for universal emancipation to the small change of 'organic' and 'fair trade' consumerism. The harmless memory of a dissident past now serves as an inexhaustible source of legitimacy, not just for their own actions, but for German power and the state apparatus itself. Reality is turned upside down: it is not the Greens who have changed, apparently, but the world—making yesterday's opposition to war the moral source for 'humanitarian intervention' today. NATO now figures as the key instrument for disarmament in the party's policy papers, while the Lisbon Treaty, the EU's *de facto* charter for a technocratic oligarchy, becomes a major step towards democracy and transparency, and economic domination over Greece is exerted in the name of European solidarity. Let the conservatives wage war under the banner of national interests; the Greens will dispatch the army in the name of a just and righteous 'world government of the enlightened'. This is not to imply that the Greens deliberately do the opposite of what they pretend; on the contrary—and much more chilling—they may mean it.