

# German Greens negotiate to form coalition with right-wing CDU

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25 April 2016

The Greens and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) are currently negotiating the terms of a coalition government in the state of Baden-Württemberg. With the Greens having won an unprecedented 30.3 percent of the vote in the state elections in March, Green leader Winfried Kretschmann is now leading the negotiations.

Kretschmann, the first Green Party state minister president in German history, has led a coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Baden-Württemberg for the past five years. However, the Green-Red coalition cannot continue because the SPD suffered dramatic losses at the polls. With only 12.7 percent of the vote, it fell behind the anti-immigrant, racist Alternative for Germany (AfD), which received 15 percent.

CDU regional head Thomas Strobl is heading up his party's negotiations. After controlling the state for 58 years, the CDU suffered heavy losses in March, slipping to a record low of 27 percent and falling behind the Greens.

Thomas Strobl is the son-in-law of Federal Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and works closely with him.

Both Kretschmann and Strobl say the coalition negotiations are going well. Both are making an effort to calm critics in their own ranks.

Much of the opposition comes from the side of the CDU, which in Baden-Württemberg is extremely conservative. In the years following the Second World War, it was built and shaped by two former Nazi party members, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, who later became chancellor, and the former Nazi judge Hans Filbinger.

Filbinger, who resigned as minister president in 1978 after the details of his Nazi past became known, then founded the right-wing Weikersheim Student Center, which he led until 1997. Several reactionary state politicians, including Lothar Späth, Erwin Teufel and Günther Öttinger, were part of this milieu. Filbinger is still officially an honorary chairman of the CDU in

Baden-Württemberg, as is Lothar Späth, who died a short time ago.

An alliance with the Greens at the state level is a new departure for the CDU, many of whose functionaries are unwilling to accept the role of junior partner in a coalition with the Greens. However, Strobl and Schäuble are working to convince their fellow party members to support the project.

What is currently being negotiated in Stuttgart is much more than a temporary, stop-gap solution to a complicated state election result. Finance Minister Schäuble has the national election in the coming year in view. Nationwide polls predict dramatic losses for the SPD that would place it under the 20 percent mark. In view of this situation, Schäuble is preparing for collaboration with the Greens at the national level.

Schäuble is an experienced political strategist for the ruling elite. Since 1972, he has been a member of parliament, and is now the longest-sitting representative there. He has been party president, parliamentary fraction president, head of the chancellor's office and interior minister. He negotiated the German unification agreement.

He sees collaboration between the CDU and the Greens as a way of responding to mounting economic and political crises—the euro crisis, the refugee crisis, growing poverty and popular opposition to militarism and war.

Kretschmann offers himself and the Green Party as reliable partners in government. Over the past five years, as the first Green minister president, he has been maneuvering for an alliance with the CDU and has made an effort to portray the Greens as better and more modern conservatives. During the election, he praised Chancellor Angela Merkel to the skies and emphasized that he stood much more firmly behind her refugee policy than many CDU members.

Kretschmann appeals to conservative voters at election

events when he says that, as a devout Catholic, he prays every day that Merkel will not buckle under to the critics of her EU policy within her own party. Kretschmann knows that, from the very beginning, the aim of Merkel's refugee policy was to seal off Europe's outer borders and restrict the right to asylum. In 2014, he voted in the Federal Council for the tightening of restrictions on the right to asylum.

The formerly liberal weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* has gushed with enthusiasm over the "steadfastness of the Moses of Sigmaringen."

Kretschmann is guiding the coalition discussions with one eye towards Finance Minister Schäuble, who pulls the strings behind the scenes. It is not an accident that he discussed economic and financial policy at the start of the negotiations and announced last week that the first point of agreement concerned the strict maintenance of the debt ceiling.

In alliance with the CDU, the Greens are taking the initiative in forming a right-wing government. This says a great deal about the character and evolution of the party, which came into existence 35 years ago from a variety of citizens' initiatives against atomic energy, the stationing of US weapons, and the destruction of the environment.

Kretschmann personifies the evolution of an entire layer of former petty-bourgeois radicals who today are politically indistinguishable from the extremely conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union politicians. He is one of the founding members of the Greens, many of whose originators took to the streets in the late 1960s to protest the educational crisis, the Vietnam War, and the stench of the Adenauer era. At the beginning of the 1970s he became a member of a Maoist group called the Communist Federation of West Germany (KBW).

What attracted him to the Greens was its rejection of the working class and the class struggle. Other founding members of the Greens also brought with them the conception of the working class as an apathetic mass that had been integrated into the system and was steeped in reactionary ideas.

This animosity toward the working class formed the ideological basis for a rapid movement of the Greens to the right. In 1998, they entered into power as junior partners in the federal coalition government of SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, where they supported the anti-working class Hartz laws and agreed to the participation of the German military in the NATO war against Yugoslavia. Since then, the Greens have been

consistent proponents of German militarism. They demand the building of a professional army and call for new military deployments abroad.

Kretschmann played a significant role in this development, first as undersecretary in the state government of Hesse, under former environment minister Joschka Fischer, then as a member of the party council, and afterwards as minister president in Stuttgart. Now he emphasizes his close and friendly relations with leading corporations, above all Daimler and Porsche, the auto manufacturers in Baden-Württemberg, and with the trade associations.

"I visit a factory every 14 days on average," said Kretschmann in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* last Tuesday. He said the employers had great respect for the Greens, who for many years have worked not against the corporations, but with them. Declaring that many corporations strive on their own initiative "to develop products that save resources and energy," Kretschmann added, "We are a business party of a modern character."

In the same interview, he demanded that the "old Green taboos" be abandoned. Among other things, this concerns the separation of the parliamentary fraction leadership from the party leadership. In earlier years, this was acceptable for feminist reasons, he said. Today, however, a "right-left relationship" had developed. This "realist-left partnership" had to be ended, Kretschmann declared, leaving no doubt that he was speaking in favor of a right-wing "realist" course.

The Green minister president stressed he was not daunted by charges that he held conservative views, since "the preservation of creation has always been a conservative issue."

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