

History Internal Assessment

Why did part of the extra-parliamentary movement see the need to form the Greens in 1980 in West Germany?

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Identification and Evaluation of Sources

DIE GRÜNEN, the Green Party of Germany, was the first of its kind. Founded already really early in 1980, it is not hard to draw a parallel to the student movement of the 70's and the later established citizen's initiative movements, short the strong extra-parliamentary opposition in West Germany. This investigation is going to explore the reasons for this shift of an opposition from outside to the inside of the parliament, asking the question:

Why did part of the extra-parliamentary movement see the need to form the Greens in 1980 in West Germany?

Of particular importance in answering this question will be a study by the American Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis published in 1983: *The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies, and Transatlantic Implications*. and *Vom Protest zur Regierungspartei* a German book about the Green Party published in 1984. They are important as they are the two sources that represent best two different perspectives on the topic as one of them is looking very much from the outside, even a foreign country on the topic and the other is very much looking from within.

The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies, and Transatlantic Implications. written by Pfaltzgraff, Holmes, Clemens and Kaltefleiter is a study by the American Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and got published in 1983 in Washington D.C. As the IFPA is an independent, nonpartisan research organization¹ its purpose concerning this study was to inform American policy makers, leaders and other officials about the Green Party in West Germany and its implications for America. The value of this is that this organization is not favoring any party and did not publish this study to entertain the general reader but did serious research and is therefore going in depth with the topic. Its limitation is though that it is American written for American officials and so has a biased view on German politics, especially because the greens and the extra-parliamentary movement from which they evolved had a strong anti American attitude.

Vom Protest zur Regierungspartei (trans.: From Protest to Ruling Party) is a book by Hubert Kleinert published in 1992. As Hubert Kleinert was and still is a member of the Green Party this book tells the history of the greens from his point of view, to inform the general or interested reader. The value is, that this book gives many inside views into the Green Party that one would not be able to find in a book written by an from the outside observing historian. On the other hand the limitations are that this book is an opinion and never had the intention of objectively reporting what happened. It is lacking in political distance, as the author was one of the main characters in a party that he is analyzing. He was part of the wing of the party favoring realpolitik over ideology. The reader needs to

¹ <http://www.ifpa.org> 18.1.2014

² Pfaltzgraff, Robert L.; Holmes, Kim R.; Clemens, Clay; Kaltefleiter, Werner, *The*

be aware of all this and information needs to be carefully selected and treated as an opinion. Also with only being written 12 years after the foundation of the Green Party the distance the book and its author had to the political action taking place is questionable, especially because the author wrote the book just after losing his important political post within the party.

Investigation

Where the need of a Green Party in Germany comes from is very controversial. The American Diplomat Kim R. Holmes thinks that they are heirs of the German tradition of political romanticism, which is to be dated back to the 18th century.^{2,3} A more common German view is that the dissolving of the student movement of the 60's was responsible for this, as after the failure of these peaceful protests, other means of achieving change were discussed. Participation within the existing political system seemed a new option after the extra-parliamentary opposition stayed widely unheard.

When the SDS⁴ dissolved in spring 1970, the end of the heart of the student movement of the 60's was reached.⁵ Reasons for the downfall of the student movement were mainly growing radicalization and the use of violence, which increased exponentially as the protesters did not achieve change. From the early 70's new ways of political participation formed, they were called citizen's initiative movements (Bürgerinitiativbewegungen). The difference was that these new movements were interested in practical problems rather than big ideological theories as the SDS and APO⁶ had been.⁷ Explanations for the

² Pfaltzgraff, Robert L.; Holmes, Kim R.; Clemens, Clay; Kaltefleiter, Werner, *The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies, and Transatlantic Implications* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1983). p.15

³ Political Romanticism: a revolt against the rationalistic French enlightenment and "intended to achieve the triumph of romantic feeling over the tenets of reason". (Holmes, Kim R.; 1983 p.15)

⁴ SDS: Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (= Socialist German Studentassociation), driving engine of the student movement of the 70's in Germany

⁵ Pfaltzgraff, Robert L.; Holmes, Kim R.; Clemens, Clay; Kaltefleiter, Werner, *The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies, and Transatlantic Implications* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1983). p.26

⁶ Außer Parlamentarische Opposition, trans: Outside of Parliament Opposition, another term referring to the protest movement

establishment of the citizen's initiative movements were mainly a change in the perception of politics. As because of the student movement and the new era of reforms from the social-liberal coalition, politics were seen more as being a chance of taking part in decision-making.⁸

With an increasing importance of the environmental issue, the citizen's initiative movements got closer together. The founding of the BBU⁹ in June 1972¹⁰ was a change because now the citizen's initiatives were not focused so much anymore on their own small-scale, local problems but worked together over regionally e.g. for the demonstration of Brockdorf in November 1976 and Grohnde and Gorleben in March 1977¹¹, for the good of the people and against the nuclear lobby that in their opinion wanted to destroy the same.¹² Generally a change in perspective within the population needs to be considered, shown by a survey in 1977, where 60% of the asked were against economical growth, if it is damaging the environment.¹³ At the end of the 70's it got more and more visible that the existing parties did not work with the impulses given by the new environmental movement and the several citizen's initiative movements, an example of this is that in 1977 just after the demonstrations of Grohnde and Gorleben the party congresses of both SPD¹⁴ and FDP¹⁵ form resolutions, which allow the energy program of the government to proceed.¹⁶ This followed in drastic increase in size of the environmental movement, e.g. the BBU included 960 member initiatives and more than 300 000 people by 1978.¹⁷ This mass movement against the

⁷ Pfaltzgraff, Robert L.; Holmes, Kim R.; Clemens, Clay; Kaltefleiter, Werner, *The Greens of West Germany: Origins, Strategies, and Transatlantic Implications* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1983). p.27

⁸ Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p. 15

⁹ own translation: German Association Citizen's Initiatives Environmental Protection

¹⁰ Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p.15

¹¹ Joachim Raschke, *DIE GRÜNEN Wie sie wurden, was sie sind* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1993) p. 894

¹² Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p.16

¹³ Joachim Grupp, *Abschied von den Grundsätzen?* (Berlin: Zehrling, 1986). p.12

¹⁴ SPD: Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (= Social Democratic Party of Germany); one of the two major political parties in Germany, center left

¹⁵ FDP: Freie Demokratische Partei (= Free Democratic Party); classical liberal political party in Germany

¹⁶ Joachim Raschke, *DIE GRÜNEN Wie sie wurden, was sie sind* (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1993). p. 894

¹⁷ Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p.16

building of new nuclear power plants was soon disillusioned. Especially because after the huge demonstration in Grohnde had escalated between the police and the protesters, the limits of the citizen's initiative movements were seemingly reached. If now the struggle against nuclear power was to be continued, then this had to happen inside the parliament, as Jutta Ditfurth, a founding member of the Green Party stated in an interview with DER SPIEGEL in 2011: "After {...} conditions similar to a police state at the demonstrations of Brokdorf, Grohnde and Kalkar, we considered forming a party virtually out of self-defense."¹⁸ But as the existing parties were still in favor of enlarging the nuclear sector for energy production¹⁹, discussions about an own political party started.²⁰

To be successful it was necessary to be big and unified, which is due to the stability of the German party system and that in Germany, it is only possible to be part of the Bundestag with at least 5% of the votes (5% Hürde).²¹ From 1977 on parties of similar kind were formed for federal state elections, as e.g. the GLU/N²², which was a classical party for environmental protection and had energy economic plans concerning the nuclear power plant and nuclear waste disposal in Lower Saxony (Grohnde, Gorleben), as stated in their party program they wanted to begin "the transformation into an ecologically based society"^{23,24}. Only one year after their foundation they won 3.9 % of the votes in the Federal state elections of lower Saxony, which marked a clear success of the movement.²⁵ The first party to enter a federal state government followed soon with the BGL²⁶ in 1979.²⁷ For the European elections in June 1979 the SPV²⁸ was established as a joint party of many small Green Parties and movements. 3.2% of the votes and 900 000 votes in total in the European elections were a huge success for the movement and most importantly let their self-confidence grow.²⁹ Also to get their money for the election campaign back, they had to become a regular party

¹⁸ own translation of: "Nach {...} den Polizeistaatsverhältnissen bei den Anti-AKW-Demonstrationen von Brokdorf, Grohnde und Kalkar haben wir eine Partei quasi aus Notwehr ins Auge gefasst."

¹⁹ Joachim Grupp, *Abschied von den Grundsätzen?* (Berlin: Zehrling, 1986). p.11

²⁰ Hubert Kleinert, *Vom Protest zur Regierungspartei* (Frankfurt am Main : Eichborn, 1992). p.14

²¹ Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p.24

²² own translation: Green List Environmental Protection / Lower Saxony

²³ own translation of : "den Weg in eine ökologisch fundierte Gesellschaft"

²⁴ „Zelle in der Heide,“ *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 5 (1978): 46-51.

²⁵ Berschin, Helmut; Bierett, Ralph; Eisel, Stephan; Schulte, Christoph; Stuth, Reinhard; Thiemer, Gösta; Veen, Hans-Joachim;, *DIE GRÜNEN - Partei wider Willen* (Mainz: v. Hase und Koehler, 1984). p.24

²⁶ own translation: Bremen Green List

²⁷ „BREMEN - Unten gegen oben,“ *DER SPIEGEL*, Nr. 42/1979 (October 1979): 23.

²⁸ Sonstige Politische Vereinigungen, own translation: Other Political Associations

²⁹ Hubert Kleinert, *Vom Protest zur Regierungspartei* (Frankfurt am Main : Eichborn, 1992). p.14

because of the German party law (§19a Abs. 1 PartG).³⁰ This and also that they were supported by important public figures like Rudi Dutschke and Heinrich Böll³¹ now, made 500 delegates of the SPV meet to discuss and prepare the foundation of the German Party. Finally in the beginning of 1980 DIE GRÜNEN were founded in Karlsruhe and had 10 000 members only shortly after.³² Already 3 years later they made it into the Bundestag with 5.6% of the votes 28 representatives.³³

After the downfall of the student movement because of growing radicalization, the new citizen's initiatives were established. Seeming more successful in the beginning because they were less radical and focusing on local seemingly fast to solve small-scale problems, also they soon reached their limits. The new environmental movement under which many of the citizen's initiatives united fought the struggle against nuclear power. The demonstration of Grohnde escalated massively, similar to protests of the earlier student movement. The disillusionment was high and since not heaving been heard by the existing parties, the step towards forming an own party and moving from being the opposition from outside the parliament to being the opposition inside of it was not big. The different small parties focusing on their federal states united for the European elections, which strengthened their self-confidence and most importantly the German Party law pushed them the final bit of now officially establishing the German Green Party.

³⁰ www.bundestag.de, <http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/parteienfinanzierung/> (accessed at 1. February 2014).

³¹ Rudi Dutschke: A sociology student who originally came from the GDR and was the main figure of the student movement and shaped the understanding of politics of the anti authoritarian movement of that time like no one else.

Heinrich Böll: One of the most important German writers of the post-war period.

³² Joachim Grupp, *Abschied von den Grundsätzen?* (Berlin: Zehrling , 1986). p.21

³³ Hubert Kleinert, *Vom Protest zur Regierungspartei* (Frankfurt am Main : Eichborn, 1992). p. 13

Reflection

Working on my investigation showed me that even when researching recent history, a historian could find many limitations. For example interviewing witnesses seems like a great source of information and opinion and is a real advantage when researching recent history as opposed to less recent history where no witnesses are alive anymore. A problem that I came across though is that it is very hard to prove the reliability of such witnesses or in my case there was actually no person that I would have said to be possibly reliable. This is because the Green Party of Germany is still existing and there are basically just people to interview that are either still taking part in political decision making within the party (those do not want to or rather can not really say anything about their party that would make the party stand in a light the party does not want to stand in) or those who left the party because they were and still are not happy with what path the decision making of the party is taking (those like to criticise the party). Doing this investigation has underlined to me how difficult research in history is in general, as differing from other areas of knowledge there is no exact truth. The historian has to strive and try and find what comes closest to what actually happened, but even a single event, even at the time it happened is perceived by different people in very different ways. Maybe in this way the real task of a historian is rather to collect as many perspectives on an issue as possible to so offer every individual to judge himself or herself. Doing my investigation I noticed that this task is much easier to fulfil when researching recent history in a democracy where archives are accessible and one can at least be relatively sure that history in books is not ideologically modified by the ideals of an authoritarian state.

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"Zelle in der Heide." *DER SPIEGEL*, no. 5 (1978): 46-51.