

GREEN IDENTITY IN A CHANGING EUROPE



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Heinrich Böll Stiftung

Published by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung EU Regional Office Brussels

Printed in Belgium, October 2008

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English proof-reading and language editing: Cheryllyn Humphries, Sebastian Duwe, Sebastian Seiffert

Translations from German: Margaret Cameron

Translations from Dutch and French: www.oneliner.be

Translation from Polish: Katarzyna Nowakowska

Final editing: Marianne Ebertowski

Production: Micheline Gutman

Cover picture: Vladislav Susoy © shutterstock / Skocko © shutterstock

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This publication can be ordered at:

Heinrich Böll Stiftung EU Regional Office Brussels

15 Rue d'Arlon

B-1050 Brussels

Belgium

P (+32) 2 743 41 00

F (+32) 2 743 41 09

E Brussels@boell.be

W www.boell.be

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FOREWORD

The Greens, a Force for Europe

The German Greens first fielded candidates nation-wide in the 1979 European Parliament elections. The *Sonstige Politische Vereinigung DIE GRÜNEN*, polling 3.25% of the vote, surprised everybody and this was a decisive factor in the founding of a national party, *Die Grünen*, the following year. Five years later history was made as a colourful mixture of Belgians, Germans, Italians and Dutch, known as the *Green Alternative European Link* (GRAEL) formed the first Green group in the European Parliament.

Since then a lot has happened. An increasing number of countries have seen Green parties gain parliamentary experience, in the course of which they have moved from being a protest party to one pursuing concrete change based on targeted reform. Then there was 1989 and the collapse of the communist system. Barely one year later, German reunification became a reality and by 2004, with the entry of Central European and Baltic states into the European Union (EU), the East-West division of the continent had essentially disappeared. The political landscape had fundamentally changed – for the Greens as well.

In Western Europe, green ideas have now found their way into the political and social mainstream. New political identities have emerged and in many countries there have been tectonic political shifts as the Greens have moved from being an anti-establishment party to one ready and able to take on the responsibility of government.

The new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe are still undergoing a transition process and struggle for political identities. They have broken with their communist past and are trying to align themselves with the political movements in the “old democracies,” but in many cases the party system is still fragile and poorly anchored in society. The Green parties, still a new element in the political landscape of these countries, are finding

it hard to position themselves within the political spectrum and gain the trust of the electorates. For the most part, Green parties play only a marginal role in the new democracies insofar they exist at all. In contrast, however, the Greens are part of centre-right governments in the Czech Republic and Latvia, as is the case in Finland and Ireland.

In Western Europe, especially in Germany, France, Belgium and Italy the Greens have already participated in centre-left coalitions. While the Italian Greens are currently experiencing a crisis and need to redefine themselves, the German Greens have new options that transcend the old political camps. They can join: a “traffic light” coalition with the Social Democrats or Liberals; a “Jamaican flag” coalition with the Christian Democrats and Liberals; a coalition with the Christian Democrats, as in Hamburg; or a left leaning alliance with Social Democrats and left wing socialists as aspired to in Hesse. The political spectrum has taken on a new pattern and the Greens are now able to form varied political alliances but this has brought with it the challenge of having to hone a sharper political profile.

Green parties in many countries find themselves in a process of reorientation. They are searching for independent and credible answers to the challenges of globalisation, climate change and the energy crisis.

The European Parliament elections in June 2009 will be a new litmus test for the Greens. Given the different positions of the various Green parties in the European Union member states, it will be difficult, in the short term, for the movement to blossom into a thriving Europe wide force. There is, however, a glimmer of hope. The establishment of the *European Green Party* in February 2004 marked an important milestone for the green movement. With their common European Parliament election campaign in 2004, they entered new political territory. This cooperation needs to be continued in the run up to the 2009 European

Parliament elections. The continuing problem of failure to agree EU reform as proposed in the Lisbon Treaty has slowed the Union in its tracks. The Greens will need to make it clear to their electorates why it is so important to support the European project.

One major European initiative could be the proposal of former EU Commissioner, Michaele Schreyer for a *European Community for Renewable Energy* (ERENE). There are other issues, however, that could also form an important part of the Green political agenda: the expansion of the EU's enlargement process; the democratisation of the European institutions; migration policy; the protection of civil rights as well as the role of foreign and security policy in international affairs. The Heinrich Böll Foundation wishes to play a part in this process. The attainment of green ambitions is not possible without the European Union but the European project also needs the Greens if it is to forge a closer and more lasting relationship with its citizens.

We have invited authors from eight European countries to write about the identity and ambitions of the Green parties in their countries. What factors have influenced individual Green party development? How have they adapted to these influences and what are their future prospects? We have also asked for contributions from some of the original Euro-Greens, who were part of the first "chaotic" Green group that entered the European Parliament in 1984. What did Green politics mean at that time and how do they now perceive the results and future prospects of their policies? Finally, we asked some of the younger generation how they view this record and what they would like to see in the future. The answers to these questions can be found in this publication.

Ralf Fücks
Berlin, October 2008



Ralf Fücks studied social sciences, economics and political science in Heidelberg and Bremen. He joined *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* in 1982. After completing his studies he worked as lecturer at the University of Bremen and as an editor for the two magazines *Moderne Zeiten* and *hefte für demokratie und sozialismus*. He served as senator for urban development and environmental protection in Bremen from 1991 to 1995. Since 1996 he has been a member of the executive board of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.



PART ONE

Between Struggle for Existence and Ministerial Posts:
the National Tales



MELANIE HAAS

The German Greens: Past, Present and Future

In 2009, exactly 30 years after the first direct elections to the European Parliament the people of the European Union will go to the polls for the seventh time. But it is not just the European Parliament that will celebrate this anniversary. The German Greens will also be reflecting on 30 years of electoral participation. It was in 1979 that they, as Europe's largest Green Party, first put together a list for the German elections to the European Parliament. Their *Sonstige Politische Vereinigung DIE GRÜNEN* list included names from various green and citizens' movements and achieved unexpected success with 3.2% of the vote. This success was the impetus that led to the setting up of the formal organisation of the German Green Party in 1980.

Beginnings: the Establishment of the Greens in the Federal Republic

Looking back, it is difficult to remember just how far the Greens have come since their beginning as a movement encompassing a variety of groups. They are now an established part of the German political system with a professional party organisation and capable of forming governing coalitions with different partners. At the time of their founding, however, the German Greens had neither a common identity nor a coherent ideology. Rather they were a collection of different movements from all over Germany, who in the 1970s saw themselves as an alternative to the established political parties, in particular the governing Social Democrats (SPD) and the Liberals (FDP). These alternative groups all had their roots in the wave of political protest that began with the German student movement at the end of the 1960s demanding a new form of politics. In contrast to the old form of politics based on economic, financial and security issues, this "new politics" was based on post-materialist values and expressed in a desire for self-determination,

emancipation, peace, environmental protection and women's rights. As none of the established political parties bothered about these topics they became the political motor for diverse social movements: the radical left, communists and ad hoc splinter groups; emancipation groups for social minorities and third world supporters; the emerging ecological movement and finally the peace movement working for disarmament of both sides in the Cold War. It was, however, the ecologists, working on initiatives to meet local environmental concerns and stop large industrial projects, who first had the idea at the end of the 1970s to take their protests from the street and into parliament. To this end they set up an electoral list that encompassed a wide variety of political groupings.

The Green Party had its origins in the anti-nuclear movement in Lower Saxony, a fact that was to influence its future identity. The first Federal German Green List was in 1977 and went under the name of *Umweltschutzpartei Niedersachsen* (Environmental Protection Party of Lower Saxony). Subsequently, starting in northern Germany and then spreading throughout the whole country, assorted social movements banded together to create common organisations to fight local and state elections. It was the Bremen Green List in 1979 that was the first to succeed in getting members into a state parliament. There was fierce debate in almost all of the states as to whether there should be electoral cooperation or clear lines drawn between the ecologically often conservative "greens" and the more radical left leaning "alternative" or "multi coloured" lists. In fact this did lead to separate electoral lists in state elections in Hesse 1978, Hamburg 1978 and Bremen, 1979.

After the initial successes at local and state level there was a desire, above all among the more conservative ecological groups, to cooperate and

have common lists for national elections. Calls for such cooperation came from the GLU (the Green List for Environmental Protection) in Lower Saxony; the AUD (Action Committee of Independent Germans) predominantly successful in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg; the GAZ (Green Action Future) in Hesse associated with Herbert Gruhl, a former Christian Democrat and member of the Bundestag; the Green List in Schleswig-Holstein that in 1979 founded the SPV (Other Party Federation) with a number of other action groups in order to fight the European Parliament elections of the same year. After their respectable showing of 3.2% in these elections and benefiting from the payment of their electoral expenses the spotlight was now on participating in the Bundestag elections of 1980. In contrast to European elections, those taking part in elections to the Bundestag are legally required to have a formal party organisation. The January 1980 decision of the SPV to transform itself into a national party called the Greens was meant to exclude representatives of other groups including the "alternative" lists from the planning stage. But the members of the left leaning groups were not prepared to be kept out and many of them actually joined the SPV before the founding congress was held. The resulting German Green Party came into being on 12/13 January 1980 in Karlsruhe. It was a conglomeration of Christian conservatives, nationalists, professional and moderate middle class ecologists, communist splinter groups, the independent women's movement, third world activists and members of the mass movement for peace.¹ The new party elected Petra Kelly (peace activist), August Haussleitner (former member of AUD) and Norbert Mann (former member of GLU) as spokespeople.

At the national meeting in Saarbrücken in March 1980 the party's varied interest groups debated long and hard over a new political manifesto. The Greens were to provide "an alternative to the usual political parties"² with policies "taking a long term view" based on ecological, so-

cial, democratic and non-violent principles. The Greens' understanding of ecological policy was a break from the human centric view; they viewed man and the environment as equals in nature, both bound into the ecosystem. In this manner human beings exploiting human beings, and human beings exploiting nature, were both viewed as destructive attacks on the natural environment that needed to be countered by a change in government. The basis of social policy was, above all, self-determination, workers' and minorities' rights and how this could best be achieved in the context of the current system. Grass roots democracy was defined as a "strengthened system of decentralised and direct democracy" in which "decisions made at the lowest level had to be given priority." For this reason the Green Party, in accordance with its stated ideals, represented a new type of party organisation in which the ordinary members were able to exercise permanent control over party officials, members and institutions. All internal party decision-making had to take into account that officials could be dismissed at any time. All this could be found in regulations as to periods of office for senior positions, the separation of party office and parliamentary mandate, the principle of collective leadership, public committee meetings and the rotation rule for members of the Bundestag who had to pass on their mandate after two years.

The Saarbrücken guidelines on non-violence alluded in part to illegitimate use of violence in social protests – the violent riots protesting against new nuclear power stations had had a shattering effect on the environmental movement – and also to the relations between people and ethnic groups thus implying an international peace policy.

For Herbert Kleinert, a former member of the realist wing, the agreed party programme for 1980 incorporated the "definitive breakthrough of the alternative leftists"³ in the fight between the left wing alternatives and the middle class environmentalist. Just as the environmentalists

1 The NATO-Twin Track decision of 1979 led to a massive expansion of the peace movement.

2 Die Grünen (1980): Das Bundesprogramm Saarbrücken

3 Hubert Kleinert (1992): Aufstieg und Fall der Grünen. Analyse einer alternativen Partei, Bonn, p. 29

had feared at the end of 1979, the massive influx of members especially around the time the party was founded had tipped the balance in favour of socialist policies. In June 1981, the former CDU Bundestag member, Herbert Gruhl failed to be re-elected to the post of party speaker and thereupon departed the Green Party taking with him most of the conservative environmental wing. In October 1981 Gruhl and his followers founded the ÖDP (Democratic Ecological Party) in opposition to the Greens.

Early Days in Parliament: Internal Party Battles of the 1980s

The departure of the conservative environmentalists so soon after the founding of the party did little to still the internal conflicts as to what direction the Greens should take. The results of the Greens' first participation in a national election in 1980 were well under expectation, obtaining only 1.5% of second votes, but they had more success in the state elections that followed with candidates elected in Baden-Württemberg in March 1980, Lower Saxony in March 1982, in Hesse in September 1982, in Berlin in May 1981 and Hamburg in 1982. In the national elections brought forward to 1983 the Greens, with 5.6% of the vote, for the first time got 27 members elected to the Bundestag. On the one hand the Greens were founded to a considerable extent on a platform differentiated from the SPD that, as the ruling party under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, had become increasingly conservative in foreign, security and domestic policy and completely ignored the civil liberty and environmental issues supported by the new social movement. On the other hand, it was the change from the social liberal to the conservative CDU/FDP coalition in 1983 that gave the Greens the necessary push to make themselves a viable political alternative, capable of appealing to a wide range of voters. Their journey from parliamentary outsider to part of the government in 1998 took place during the 16-year rule of the CDU under Chancellor Helmut Kohl. These years of opposition together with the SPD influenced the party's development and brought them closer to the SPD not just in policy but also structurally. Furthermore it made clear what political repercussion

there would be if the cord between the Greens and the Social Democrats were severed.

At the beginning of the Greens' participation in the various parliaments their position was not without controversy: in the wake of the Greens' success in Hesse in 1982 when they got eight per cent of second votes and the first real opportunity to build a coalition with the Social Democrats, fierce in-fighting broke out between the various factions that not only lasted for the whole decade but drove the party to the brink of break up. Up until this time the Greens had failed to discuss the nature of their role in the parliaments where they now had members: should they do as those who came from the former alternative and other lists (later to be known as the "fundamentalists") demanded which was to use the parliamentary stage to publicise the fight of the social movements, while non-parliamentary actors of the social movements continue to dominate the development of Green Party policy? Or should they instead use the entry of the Greens into the national and state parliaments to establish the ecological movement in parliamentary democracy with the medium term aim of not only developing their own policy in a ruling coalition with the SPD but of also getting it implemented? Would it even be possible to develop a sustainable common project with an SPD geared to technical progress and materialism?

The departure of the conservative followers of Herbert Gruhl removed the majority of the founding members of the Green Party and as a result it was the so-called "eco-socialists" who gained the upper hand in the national organisation. So it was the linking of ecology with the question about the political system (capitalism or socialism) that came to be central to Green identity, thus making it difficult to have any working relationship with the German system of representative democracy and impossible to participate in government. Three declared members of this fundamentalist wing, Jutta Ditfurth, Rainer Trampert and Lukas Beckmann, were elected party spokespeople in 1984. At the same time, starting in Hesse, the so-called realist wing of the Green Party was established with the aim

of developing an ecology policy and participating in government.

As early as 1984, the Greens in Hesse “tolerated” an alliance⁴ with the Social Democrats and just one year later, against the overwhelming view of the national party the state party formed the first formal governing coalition with the SPD. To the outsider this showed that the Greens had arrived as a serious player in Germany’s party political system but it also meant that the ongoing conflict between the realists’ strategy of participating in government and the “total opposition” strategy of the national party meant that there was no clear policy as to what the Greens should do in parliament. When in 1986 the Chernobyl nuclear disaster resulted in a radical environment policy that would never achieve a parliamentary majority and in 1987 the first governing coalition between the Greens and the SPD in Hesse collapsed over differences on nuclear energy, bitter infighting almost broke up the Green Party.

At the end of the 1980s, when it was clear to everyone that neither faction was sufficiently strong to survive on its own, there were many crisis meetings about the future as newly formed groups searched for a way out of this dilemma. With the creation of the internal party group “Left Forum” a programme was developed that saw the Greens ready to take on the responsibility of government and in this manner it became possible to break open the hard line fronts put up by the “fundamentalists” (fundis) and the “realists” (realos). When, at the end of 1988, financial impropriety led to the resignation of the party’s left leaning national executive board, this was a clear sign that the fundamentalists were losing their grip on the party organisation. In January 1989, the West Berlin Greens, still going by the name of the *Alternative List* and who could be regarded as belonging to the fundamentalist camp of the national party, joined the second red-green coalition in a state parliament. It would seem that this had finally settled the dispute about the legitimacy of participating in government.

The End of the Greens in Germany? The Break-Up of 1990

Following the end of the strategy debate and events in the GDR in the autumn of 1989 the Greens once more began to focus on inner-party policy conflicts. Of major importance was the question of how to deal with two German states and the possibility of reunification as well as the relationship with the East German PDS (successor to the communist party SED) and the various civil liberty groups in the east. In the wake of the short but hard debate as to the direction the Greens should take for the 1990 Bundestag elections (for the reunified country) a number of important members of the eco-socialists and the Left Forum left the party and joined up with the PDS. The debate had made clear that their demands for a left leaning alliance would not be accepted.

The majority of Green Party members were rather sceptical of reunification as they were concerned about the resurgence of German nationalism and as a result entered the 1990 Bundestag campaign without any proper concept for the reunification, except for a demand for a referendum on the new constitution. A special clause in the electoral law for the first all German Bundestag elections (two months after the formal reunification of the country on 3 October 1990) said that the five percent hurdle for entry into parliament would be counted separately in the two parts of the country. The Greens in West Germany only managed 4.8% of the vote thus failing to clear the five percent hurdle. This was a major handicap for the further development of the Green Party. In the eastern part, however, the East German Green Party together with *Bündnis 90* (a civil liberties group) got 6.1% of the votes. The first elections to a reunified Bundestag resulted in the Greens being represented by two East German Greens and six from *Bündnis 90*. As the western and eastern green parties did not actually join together until one day after the election, the West Greens had, de facto, no representation in the Bundestag.

4 A “tolerated” alliance means that a minority government “is tolerated” by at least one opposition party and thus has support. This kind of alliance is less than a coalition but does commit the partners to formal negotiations and a written agreement on parliamentary cooperation.

This unexpected failure in western Germany was the inglorious end to the first decade of Green Party politics. During this period they had managed to establish themselves in the whole of (West-)Germany⁵ obtaining good results in both state and national elections but policy development had been hindered by exhausting internal debates over strategy. Even after ten years of the Greens, the vast majority of people still had no idea as to what the party's position on economic and social issues was and why they should vote for them other than on environmental issues. The crisis in 1990 together with the new situation of a reunited country that threatened the very existence of the Greens also offered them the chance of a new beginning that would clarify their position. Now that the collapse of the GDR had weakened the position of the utopian left and the radical elements had departed, the time was ripe to develop a common basis for future political action. The first evidence of this new beginning took place at the party conference in Neumünster in April 1991. In its greatest ever reform, the party unmistakably defined itself as an "ecological reform party" and in this fashion the question as to whether the Greens were "in" or "out" of the political system was finally laid to rest. In addition, the Greens ended the two yearly rotation of Members of Parliament, replaced the three spokespeople with two and the administration of the party was immediately given to a political director. These first steps in the direction of proper professional organisation did, however, lead to further departures from those on the left of the party. This time it was the radical ecologist group led by Jutta Ditfurth.

In order to have any chance of success in a reunified Germany the Greens had to get a proper party structure up and running in the eastern part of the country quickly. After they had fully inte-

grated with the small East German Green Party in 1990, they needed to think about working with the former GDR civil rights movement *Bündnis 90*, the parliamentary party colleagues of the East German Greens in the Bundestag. It was for rational reasons and to their mutual electoral advantage rather than any real sense of common purpose and ideology that the two parties came together to form a new party, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, in 1993. Despite the party's name, the much smaller *Bündnis 90* was unable in the following years to exercise much influence in the party either on appointment of officers or in policy formulation. Essentially the Greens have remained a party of western Germany as weak membership, low level of organisation and continuing lack of electoral success in the eastern part of the country have demonstrated.⁶

Nevertheless the arrival of the environmentalists and civil rights activists from the East confirmed a trend that became fully evident after the 1990 electoral setback and was to mark the Greens' second decade: the inner party power dynamics shifted in favour of the "realos" (realists). This was because the experiences of those coming from the East German movements had made them highly sceptical of socialist ideas. In addition many were active in the Protestant churches and were therefore highly Christian and conservative and favoured a more consensual and pragmatic political style. Their participation in the round table discussions held as the GDR disappeared gave them an understanding and insight into the workings of democracy that was miles away from the hard line polarising debates of the factions within the western Greens. As a result, in the deep crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, the party developed a pragmatic and goal orientated programme that allowed them to participate in state

5 But not in the Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein. The Greens entered these state parliaments in 1994 and 1996 respectively.

6 In 2007 *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* could mobilise on average about 3746 members in each of the West German state associations but only 1144 members in the East German (incl. Berlin) states. (Membership figures from Oskar Niedermayer (2008): *Parteimitgliedschaften im Jahre 2007*, in: *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, Vol. 39, Issue 2, P. 382). In the eastern states, incl. Berlin, the Greens had active party organisation on average in around 15 local chapters, compared to 33 in the western states. In the six East German state parliaments, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* are currently only represented in Berlin and Saxony but in the nine West German states the only parliament they are not represented is the one in Rhineland Palatinate.

governing coalitions⁷ and finally in 1994 they succeeded in getting 49 members and returned to the Bundestag.

If we view 1990-94 as the period in which internal party organisation was revamped, it was the legislative period of 1994-98 that saw a retreat from radical ideas and the development of a more strategic programme: the parliamentary party, freed from the two year rotation system and now more professionally organised was properly able to steer green policy. The result was that in 1998 they became part of the national government ruling coalition.

The Greens Enter Government – the Red-Green Coalition 1998-2005

The parliamentary Greens worked without any great controversy from 1994 and even became known, along with their rather self-obsessed SPD partner as a “kind of leading opposition party.”⁸ But as approval was being sought in the autumn of 1998 for the upcoming Bundestag election programme the old infighting that had been so damaging in the first ten years and was thought to be dead, again reared its head. The demand that the long-term price for petrol should rise to five marks per litre as part of environmental tax reform and that NATO should be disbanded rekindled the old doubts as to their fitness to rule. The party stood in the full glare of public scrutiny as, for the first time, they had a realistic chance, in coalition with the SPD, of breaking the 16-year hold on power of the Christian Democrat/Liberal coalition. Despite their relatively modest showing at the polls (6.7%) Bündnis 90/Die Grünen were, for the first time, part of a red-green majority at national level and they joined the government with three ministerial portfolios: Foreign affairs (and Vice Chancellor); Environment and Health. Thus, after only 18 years of existence, the Greens had their hands on the decisive levers of political power.

Within the coalition, however, the relationship was very much in favour of the SPD - not surprising given the modest electoral showing of the Greens and the major success of the SPD, who beat the CDU/CSU by 40.9% to 35.1%. The SPD's clear popular mandate gave them an excellent strategic position vis à vis the Greens that can best be described as one between “cook and waiter.”⁹ Theoretically and in fact the SPD could also have considered both the FDP and the CDU as potential coalition partners. For this reason the SPD was able to water down the more sweeping changes demanded by the Greens during the coalition negotiations and keep constant pressure on its junior partner. At the beginning of the legislative period there were two green themes on the political agenda: the reform of citizenship law and the exit from nuclear energy. When, during coalition negotiations, the Greens had to give up their demand for an immediate exit from nuclear energy and accept an “indemnity free exit”, the writing was on the wall for the first major conflict between the parliamentary party and the grass roots. For the majority of Green Party members the whole justification and purpose of the Greens participating in government was to put an immediate end to nuclear energy. The proposal that the exit should be done in negotiation with the industry meant that, in reality, the disengagement would last several decades.

The citizenship law reform, including the right of dual nationality, also ended in outright disaster: the SPD/Green proposal was especially used by the CDU in Hesse during the 1999 state parliament elections as part of a campaign that did not shrink from inciting xenophobia. The resulting ignominious defeat of the red-green coalition in Hesse in February 1999 therefore forced the national government to water down its original proposals.

So it was that the Greens' first months in the unfamiliar role of government provided a rapid

7 1991 in Hesse with the SPD, 1991 in Bremen with the SPD and the FDP and 1994 in Saxony-Anhalt with the SPD.

8 See Thomas Poguntke (1999): Die Bündnisgrünen in der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der SPD?, in: Oskar Niedermayer (Ed.): Die Parteien nach der Bundestagswahl 1998, Wiesbaden, P. 85.

9 During the 1998 election campaign, SPD-leader, Gerhard Schröder so described the possible coalition relationship between the SPD and the Greens.



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"My heart belongs to you", election poster Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen, elections European Parliament 1999.

course in the realities of power and a strategy lesson as to how to navigate the system. As in 1983 with the Greens' first entry into the Bundestag, they once more had the painful experience of recognising that they had neither the necessary organisation nor the policies for participation in national government. There were a number of other lessons to be learned in this first legislative period before they were able to construct appropriate structures and define competences.

Six months after entering government the party was confronted by the next critical situation: NATO had decided to use air strikes to stop the Albanian minority from being driven out of Kosovo. For the first time since 1945, Germany had to decide whether to send its troops to fight in a foreign country. The Green parliamentary party, as junior partner in government, was therefore confronted by the dilemma of supporting a NATO intervention proposal (in other words backing an organisation that their political programme had not long before wished to dissolve) or to leave a government they had just joined. In the mid-1990s the party had already debated the issue of

the German army participating in foreign peace-keeping or peace-making missions but it was the pacifists who had come from the peace movement who were able to define the party's position. It was now up to Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer to convince his party of the necessity of military intervention in Kosovo.

The conflict over the question of war and peace in the Green Party was an important awakening for many, who had thought that merely stating alternative ideas could change the world. The significance of what is meant to take responsibility for decisions in government became shockingly clear to many when the social movements suddenly began to protest against the Greens. The parliamentary party held a turbulent special conference during which there was a heated debate that at one point seemed to be leading to a party split but in the end came out in support of the military mission. The grass root party members, however, were highly critical of their parliamentary colleagues, viewing them as part of the state apparatus. Many Greens were unable to make the leap from being a political movement to a responsible party of government and left the party after the Kosovo decision.

Time and again there were similar confrontations between the protest movements, from which the Green Party had originally sprung and who had been responsible for a significant part of their electoral success, and the Green members of the government. A couple of examples were the renewed nuclear transports in the spring of 2001 and the German military mission to Afghanistan post the 9/11 terrorist attacks. German participation in the war in Afghanistan was condemned not just by the Green Party grass roots but also by parts of the parliamentary party. A government majority for this mission was only achieved by making it a motion of confidence in the Chancellor and with Joschka Fischer threatening resignation.

With their party stalwarts experiencing such disappointment it was hardly surprising that the Greens had little electoral success during this first period in office. Between 1998 and 2002, the Greens suffered heavy losses in all 15 state elections and

red-green coalitions disappeared in Hesse (1999), Hamburg and Berlin¹⁰ (both in 2001). The Greens lost 5.3% of the vote in Hamburg in September 2001 and 4.4% in Baden-Württemberg in March of the same year. The EP elections in 1999, the only German-wide test since their entry into national government showed their share of the vote was down by 3.8% on the 1994 result. Of all things it was the forced resignation of Andrea Fischer, the Green Minister for Health in the wake of the 2001 BSE crisis that marked the beginning of a more stable period for the Greens in government. The cabinet reshuffle following Fischer's departure resulted in the Greens receiving the portfolios for agriculture and consumer affairs and this led to an electoral breakthrough. It still took another one and half years for the Greens to regain lost votes but the appointment of Renate Künast as Minister for Consumer Affairs marked the beginning of a new and dynamic policy area. Similarly Green demands for a more environmentally friendly agriculture brought in new voters and this was to prove its worth in their second period of office.

Taking stock of this first red-green national government it is clear that, despite the apparent dominance of the SPD, many of the successful reforms passed between 1998 and 2001 had their origins in Green ideas. Indeed the credit side of the government's account included some of the Greens' primary projects. Despite the setback on the nuclear energy project, positive achievements included the new citizenship law, the eco tax, the recognition of homosexual partnerships, and the new orientations in agricultural and consumer policies.

At the same time, however, we need to recognise that the decisions on nuclear energy and the military missions represented failure. They resulted in the painful alienation of the parliamentary party from the peace movement and perhaps more significantly the anti-nuclear energy movement both of which had been part of Green identity. In their first four years in government, the Greens did not manage to bring their grass roots members with them when tackling the practical

difficulties of day-to-day government and as a result they suffered bitter electoral losses.

The transformation from a left wing movement to a pragmatic civil liberties party, expedited by participation in government, had already begun after the electoral setback in 1990 and with the amalgamation with Bündnis 90. It took place in full public view as Green ministers and the party organisation dealt with day-to-day political matters. It was also evident in the changing pattern of voters it attracted and party membership. This transformation, however, had not been matched by a change in party programme. The party programme of 1980 with its lack of clarity as to the importance of the different factions was a totally unsatisfactory basis for coalition negotiations. The Greens entered government with the SPD with no clear idea as to what they should be aiming for or what was in fact attainable. They therefore began a debate in 1999 that culminated in March 2002 at the party conference in Berlin with the approval of a second Green Party manifesto.

This new party programme particularly reflected the new pragmatism, the changes already gone through and a desire for policy renewal. The manifesto's reference to a wider concept of justice, transcending the usual redistribution of material wealth, to include education, gender, ethnic origin and style of life was not only enlightened humanism but also appealing to the weaker members of society and capable of winning votes from the middle class. In addition, the many inner party battles that had been fought during the first two years in office as they struggled to deal with the realities of power meant that they now had policies on foreign, economic and environmental affairs capable of attracting the political middle ground. As in 1980, the 2002 document defined the Greens' identity in terms of basic values rather than by means of ideology. When Bündnis 90 amalgamated with the party in 1993 they added "human rights and equality of men and women" to the Green values of "environment, society, democracy and non-violence." At the beginning of

10 In Berlin this was a red-green interim senate coalition from June-October 2001 that came into being after the grand CDU/SPD coalition fell as the result of a banking scandal.

the 1990s, however, the East German citizens' movement, conscious of their recent experience in the GDR, succeeded in having human rights replace environment at the top of the list of values.

The 2002 document reinterpreted and reordered the list of basic values: "We link environment, self-determination, enhanced justice and active democracy. With equal effort we support non-violence and human rights."¹¹ With this, environment was back at the top of the list of Green values and the principle of self-determination¹² had been restated. Freedom from violence, however, lost its status as a specific value, but the party debate on participation in military missions led to a later additional clause as the unavailability of "legitimate force to uphold constitutional and international law" in specific situations.

All in all the programme changes made by the Greens in their first 20 years can best be described as a retreat from the radical desire for total change. The 1980 programme was a clear criticism of the German political system, but by 1993 the official position of the amalgamated party was equidistant from the socialist and capitalist camps. By the 2002 manifesto, however, the party was clearly reconciled with the (environmental) and social market economy in a fashion some observers viewed as way beyond what was required and appeared neo-liberal in economic, financial and social policy.¹³

Their new manifesto documented not only the Greens' experience of government but also their development since the beginning of the 1990s and their total adaptation to the needs of parliamentary democracy. They went into the 2002 Bundestag election with a completely new

profile as a responsible party fit for government. Poor economic data published during the campaign made it look like the red-green coalition might be dismissed after only one period in office. In the dying days of the campaign, however, the governing coalition pulled out a last minute effort and squeaked back into office. The coalition was able to profit from the good support obtained by the Greens, who with 8.6% had their best ever national election result. The SPD lost 2.4% of their vote (while the CDU/CSU got 38.5% of second votes). The Greens were able to profit above all from the fact that the SPD had made it clear that they would be their coalition partners. In 1998 this had not been clear. Indeed the highlight of the red-green campaign effort was a joint rally with Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer. Support from the Greens gave the SPD a clear majority and the joint campaign offered the SPD supporters the tactical opportunity of using their second vote for the Greens.¹⁴

Even so, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* were unable to influence this second period of government 2002-2005 as they had during the first four years of coalition. The major reason for this was Germany's weak economy and high unemployment. Although the new Green manifesto had eliminated their previous policy deficit areas and given them their own reform proposals, these issues touched on the very *raison d'être* of the social democrats. It was therefore hardly surprising that the Greens failed to win support for their position amongst the SPD. In addition, it was hard to mobilise Green voters on social and economic issues. The classic Green supporter saw and still sees social issues as of secondary importance. In most cases social structures cause them no problem and even with

11 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (2002): Die Zukunft ist grün. Grundsatzprogramm von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Berlin

12 According to Christoph Egle the value of "freedom" should be adopted as the central theme of the party programme. After protests, above all from the left wing, "freedom" was replaced by "self-determination". See Christoph Egle (2003): Lernen unter Stress: Politik und Programmatik von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, in: Christoph Egle/Tobias Ostheim/Reimut Zohlnhöfer (Ed.): Das rot-grüne Projekt. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Schröder 1998-2002, Wiesbaden, P. 108.

13 See Wolfgang Rüdig (2002): Germany, in: Ferdinand Müller-Rommel/Thomas Poguntke (Ed.): Green Parties in National Governments. Special Issue „Environmental Politics“, Vol. 11, Issue 1, P. 103.

14 In German elections, voters have two ballots. The first vote is to choose between constituency candidates on a first past the post system and the second vote is cast for a party. Each party has a list but the number of members elected from the list depends on the percentage of the vote the party polls overall. This system allows for tactical voting. Voters can use their two votes for different parties and so indicate a preferred coalition.

an updated manifesto their major values concern the problems of a post-materialist society.

Gerhard Schröder's social reform package of March 2003, *Agenda 2010*, marked the beginning of a painful time for the SPD as they took heavy losses in state and EP election between 2003 and 2005. Representation in the Bundesrat (the house of the state parliaments) moved ever more clearly in favour of the CDU. For this reason until 2005 the Greens had little influence on legislative proposals and frequently their role in the coalition was that of a film extra.¹⁵ All the important decisions concerning the exact nature of *Agenda 2010* and the new immigrant legislation were de facto agreed between the SPD majority in the Bundestag and the CDU majority in the Bundesrat. All the major debates during the red-green coalition government actually took place without much input from *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, which turned out to be something of an electoral blessing. In contrast to the Social Democrats, the resentment caused by cuts in social security did not result in loss of votes for the Greens. On the contrary: while the party had suffered losses in all the state and EP elections during their first period in government, they made substantial gains in the state elections of 2003-2004 and in the EP elections of 2004. The European elections saw them achieve their best ever result at national level with 11.9% of the votes. They also made double figures in state parliament elections; 10.1% in Hesse and 13.5% in Bremen in 2003 and 12.3% in Hamburg in 2004. During this period they also managed to return to state parliaments in the Saarland and Saxony.

The Greens' successes were predominantly gained at the expense of the SPD but were also the result of the party and its supporters being better prepared for government the second time round. They had become accustomed to the opportuni-

ties and demands of participating in government and expectations as to what the Greens could achieve in office were much reduced compared to their first time. In addition, the party had, since 1998, worked continuously at ensuring that its organisation was in keeping with the demands of office and capable of getting legislative proposals and strategy accepted. In the spring of 2003 the previously non-negotiable separation of party and parliamentary office was partly abandoned. They also benefited from the fact that the electoral pact between the PDS and the newly reconstituted WASG¹⁶ (an alternative party for employment and social justice) was not yet sufficiently effective to attract disaffected red-green voters. Indeed the Greens, with their liberal statements, new party manifesto and the market orientated finance and budget policies of the parliamentary party, could present themselves as a modernising driver for reform in contrast to the traditional ranks of the trade union movement in the SPD.

The enormous changes in Green policy and party structure did, however, have consequences for their supporters: In the Bundestag elections of 2002 the former so-called "anti party party" was able to garner support from parts of the electorate they had previously been unable to reach. Their consumer and child policies had given them the programme and profile of a dependable, reform orientated party capable of government. In this manner the Greens began to pick up support from the traditional, conservative urban middle class in the more affluent areas of Hamburg, Berlin and Bremen. It was not that the Greens won over CDU voters but rather that they created their own voter base in these social circles. There were many groups in this social milieu, for example women between 18 and 44 years of age, who had had only minimum contact with the traditional middle class parties of CDU and FDP.

15 Germany's two-chamber system of government requires laws that concern state matters or alter the constitution be approved by the Bundestag (where the government has a majority) and the Bundesrat (where the majority is determined by the political colour of the 16 state parliaments).

16 In June 2007 a new nationwide party, the Left was founded. It had its roots in the alliance between the East German PDS and the WASG, a new movement founded in 2004 against the social reforms of the red-green government. This alliance first appeared in the national elections in 2005 and subsequently became a rallying point for all those opposed the red-green *Agenda 2010*.

The „Fischer Factor“

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer also continued to play an important role for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen post 2002. From the time of his entry into government in 1998 he had fascinated the public. On taking up office as Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor the public had a ringside seat as he transformed himself from a brilliant rebel in jeans and trainers into a serious and responsible German representative on the world stage. His chequered past mirrored the history of the Federal Republic, his predilection for regularly changing his wives and his ability to change his physical appearance brought an air of glamour to the political scene that had been sorely missed in the long years of the Kohl government. In opinion surveys his personal popularity rating was way above those of other politicians and this gave the Greens a significant advantage at election time.

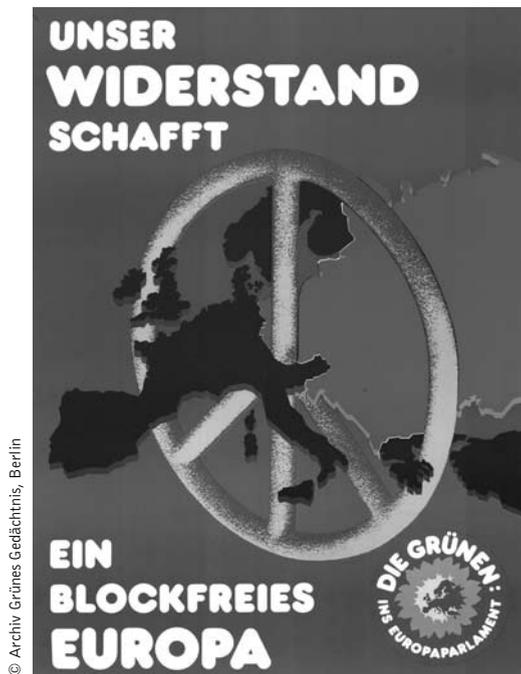
There was, however, a downside for the Greens to Fischer's enormous popularity: if their leading personality decided to leave politics or should his popularity vanish, there was no other person to take his place. With Fischer in the party it was impossible for anyone else to project such a high profile or present him/herself as a possible successor. Only Renate Künast when she became Minister for Consumer Affairs in 2001 managed for a short time to achieve such star status but this had vanished by their second term in office. Only in the Bundestag elections in 2009 when she will top the party list with Jürgen Trittin, former Green Environment Minister, will we see if this star status can be reactivated.

Fears that Joschka Fischer might leave proved accurate at the beginning of 2005: Fischer reacted too late and too arrogantly to the accusations of the opposition in the wake of the visa malpractice in German embassies in eastern Europe and this led to a dramatic fall in his popularity ratings that cost him his place as the most important German politician at the end of February 2005. For Fischer the affair marked the end of his public unassailability. For the Greens it meant the demystification of their most powerful personality and an abrupt end to their high flyer status: with 6.2% of the vote

in the Schleswig-Holstein state elections in February 2005 they failed to gain additional support as they had done in previous elections and in North Rhine-Westphalia in May they slipped from 7.1% to 6.2%, their first loss of electoral support since the 2002 Bundestag elections. It was certainly not just the visa affair that was responsible for the Greens' poor electoral showing. There was also the effect of the general anti red-green feeling. The results clearly demonstrated that from now on the Greens could no longer distance themselves from the negative image of the SPD.

In the wake of the SPD electoral disaster in North Rhine-Westphalia in May 2005 and the Bundestag elections being brought forward to the autumn, the political writing was on the wall. It was not just loss of votes due to the unpopularity of the red-green coalition and the visa affair they feared but the fact that they once more found themselves in an extremely uncomfortable strategic position: they had used their years in office to develop their image as a national party capable of government but they had not achieved a strategy for power independent of the SPD. This was painfully demonstrated when the SPD leadership, without consulting the Greens, announced new elections, de facto ending the coalition.

This left the Greens with no partner and no strategic option for the coming election: if the red-green coalition had already been written off and a coalition between SPD, the Greens and the FDP appeared only marginal given the Liberals early negative response, even if the Greens had a good electoral showing there was no way they could remain in government. A coalition with the Union parties at state and national level had long been excluded as an option. The challenge of the 2005 election was therefore to convince the voters that the streamlined Green Party could be an effective opposition even though the election would be fought for the most part on social and economic issues and the alternatives offered by the SPD, the Union and the PDS/WASG pact. In other words: the Greens did not have much chance, but what they had they knew how to use, and with 8.1% of the votes were only 0.5% down on their highly successful 2002 re-



"Our resistance creates a non-aligned Europe - Elect the Greens into the European Parliament". Elections European Parliament 2004.

sult. As expected, they had lost their position in government and were now the smallest party in the Bundestag behind the PDS grouping and the FDP but they had comfortably avoided the worst – not clearing the five percent hurdle.

The Greens in Germany's New Five Party System Since 2005

Since the 2005 Bundestag election the German political system has been undergoing a change. That was already clear on election night. The poor showing of the two major parties SPD (34.2%) and CDU/CSU (35.2%) as well as the strength of the three smaller parties FDP (9.8%), PDS grouping (8.7%) and the Greens (8.1%) meant that none of the traditional coalitions, the Union¹⁷ and FDP or SPD and the Greens was able to command a majority. The only possibilities were three way coalitions such as SPD/the

Greens/FDP or the Union/FDP/the Greens or what in fact finally happened: a grand coalition of the Union and SPD. A coalition between SPD, the Greens and PDS/WASG was impossible due to the latter's origin as a party against the policies of the social democrats.

Post the 2005 election the Greens not only had to face the task of carving out a role in opposition but they also found themselves in the middle of a new political system that included a strong fifth party on the left that theoretically could be considered as a possible partner for coalitions other than the grand variety. The Greens had used their years in office to revamp and modernise their policies and values and take steps to attract new voters, but they now needed a new strategy to deal with being in opposition. In order to make the most of their new role in the five party system, they needed to detach themselves from the SPD and explore medium term opportunities for cooperation with the CDU and FDP. With the departure of Joschka Fischer (who had more than any other pushed for coalition with the SPD) soon after the election the way was now clear for the Greens to reposition themselves politically.

However strategically desirable this repositioning of the Green Party towards the political middle ground was and is, it is dangerous. It might make them attractive as partners in coalitions with both the SPD and the CDU but the price to be paid might well be loss of Green identity and the danger of wishy-washy policies. The FDP offers the large parties a neoliberal partnership and the Linke the alternative of a socialist state interventionist partner. The Greens should have made it absolutely clear after the 2005 election where they stood in the new political order. Their ecological/environmental credentials that had brought them into the red-green coalition were no longer sufficient to define them as a party of the middle. It was therefore necessary for the party to agree a political programme for their time in opposition.

¹⁷ The term „Union“ refers to the Christian Democrats and the Bavarian “Christsoziale Union”, which form a joint parliamentary party in the Bundestag.

A new policy offensive was required to bring together the parliamentary party and ordinary members. The Greens in the Bundestag favoured a middle ground strategy of moderate family, economic and integration policies. The party conferences of 2006 and 2007 wanted a much sharper political profile. They agreed environmental policies free of the compromises they had had to make during their time in government and more left leaning social policies. The Greens' ecological/environmental ambitions were geared towards a new "radical realism"¹⁸ that clearly differentiated their policy from those of the other parties. They proposed fundamental changes for a "solar energy society"¹⁹ and put human dignity at the heart of their social policies.²⁰ In this fashion they put the controlling restrictions of the red-green Agenda 2010 policy behind them. The Greens therefore established a profile based on protecting the environment and self-determination that would make them a suitable partner for both left and right coalition building.

The Greens can offer a number of options to the builders of coalitions: in a pact with the Union and possibly the FDP, the Greens could provide the necessary socio-ecological profile; for the SPD and the left parties they could provide principles of middle class self-determination, individual action and libertarian values.²¹

In the nine state elections that have taken place since the autumn of 2005, this new image has allowed the Greens to win additional votes on six occasions and lose support on three. With

the exception of the Rhineland Palatinate, where in March 2006 they failed to clear the five per cent hurdle (due to specific local conditions), the losses in Hesse and Hamburg at the beginning of 2008 were in line with the good performance of the new Left party in the five Party constellation now active at state level. Meanwhile, however, despite losses to the Left, who enjoyed electoral successes in Bremen (May 2007) and Lower Saxony (January 2008), the Greens were able to increase their votes in both state elections.

The fusion of the PDS and the WASG in June 2007 and their success in state elections²² in Bremen, Hesse, Lower Saxony and Hamburg did not just disrupt the existing power relationship in German politics but altered the policy agenda to complete the changes begun in the 1990s and emphasise the issues of security and justice. As they had already been doing since the 1990s, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* now had to deal with the situation that their post-materialist and libertarian policies were not viewed favourably by the majority of an unsettled society.²³ The Greens' role can therefore be seen as both political and one in the avant-garde of lifestyle, able to foresee future problems and tackle them more efficiently than other parties. If they succeed in meeting this challenge in either a red-(red-) green or a black-(yellow-)green governing coalition, as currently in Bremen and Hamburg,²⁴ without tying themselves up in policy contradictions, the Greens will have justified their strategically important position in the German political system as the "party of reason" and an "ideas factory for the future."

18 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (2006): „Für einen radikalen Realismus in der Ökologiepolitik.“ Beschluss der 26. Ordentlichen Bundesdelegiertenkonferenz in Köln.

19 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (2007): „Klimaschutz ohne wenn und aber – auf dem Weg zur solaren Gesellschaft.“ Beschluss der 27. Ordentlichen Bundesdelegiertenkonferenz in Nürnberg.

20 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (2007): „Aufbruch zu neuer Gerechtigkeit!“ Beschluss der 27. Ordentlichen Bundesdelegiertenkonferenz in Nürnberg.

21 In both cases they were tempted to the extremes, particularly obvious in the liberal market tendencies of the parliamentary party in the red-green years.

22 After the merger with the WASG, the PDS finally managed, after 17 years, to make the breakthrough in the western part of the country. Until May 2007 the PDS had only managed to get elected in the territory of the old GDR.

23 For more details see Ingolfur Blühdorn's evaluation of the German Greens: „Reinventing Green Politics: On the Strategic Repositioning of the German Green Party“, in *German Politics*, Issue 1/2009.

24 Since June 2007 Bremen has been ruled by an SPD/ Bündnis 90/Die Grünen coalition. In May 2008 the first state government coalition of CDU and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen took office in Hamburg.

The German Greens and Europe

The history of the German Greens is one of profound and frequent change. Compared to other European countries they have been the most successful in elections and in government have been able to put important legislation on the statute book. Even after their departure from government they have been able to continue to play an important role in the national party system. More than other European green parties they have had to reinvent themselves and their goals. At each important turning point – foundation in 1980, entry into the Bundestag in 1983, loss of parliamentary mandate in 1990, the pact with Bündnis 90 in 1993, entry into government in 1998, departure from government in 2005, the first coalition at state level with the Christian Democrats in Hamburg in 2008 – they have had to redefine their identity.

The 28 years of the Green Party have not only profoundly changed German politics with new ideas, values and ways of consensus building, the German political system has also forced them to adapt their demands, strategies and structures. The German Greens have had enough experience of crisis and change management to be able to help guide like-minded parties in the de-

velopment of a European green idea. The Green Party's policy development has taken it from a socialist environmental protection party to one in favour of peace, ecology, social security and civil liberties. It has given it expertise in exactly those areas that will be at the top of the European green agenda.

The German Greens have pledged that post the 2009 EP elections, the European Greens will guarantee more democracy in the EU structures, a more reasonable enlargement policy, better civil and consumer protection, better climate and environmental protection, a sustainable and humanitarian migration policy, a more open and tolerant society, more equitable globalisation and a common European foreign and security policy orientated towards peace building and civil society. What other party could push through this whole agenda better than the Greens? Their libertarian values and cosmopolitan outlook provide the ideal basis for supranational cooperation and a European way of thinking, detached from nationality. Given their close cooperation with the Greens in the European Parliament that extends to the highest level, the outlook for a decisive role for the German Greens in 2009 could hardly be better.



Melanie Haas, born in 1975, holds a Master's degree in political science. Since 2002, she has been working as research assistant at the *Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politikwissenschaft*, Free University, Berlin. She became member of the *Grüne Akademie* (scientific advisory board) of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2008.

SERGIO ANDREIS

Have We Created a Monster? The Rise and Fall of the Italian Greens

The Beginnings

In the mid-1980s in Italy, the Greens emerged at national level in the shape of the *Liste Verdi* – Green electoral lists – as a decentralised, local, non-party challenge to established politics and as an attempt to bring alternative non-institutional experiences into the institutions. We called the phenomena *L'arcipelago verde*, the Green Archipelago, to symbolise how we perceived ourselves: islands with strong identities reflecting the various sectors we were involved in, but interdependent and interacting among each other. Over time there developed a loose and informal co-ordination among various local groupings, the embryo of future green organisational structures. It consisted of groups and movements that dealt with anti-nuclear and environmental issues, animal rights, peace and gender (women and gay, lesbian, bi- and transsexual) as well as of individuals who had been active in the student and extra-parliamentary protests of the 1970s. The youth component was strong and we were the first non-violent political grassroots movement in Italy since the years of terrorism.²⁵ The safeguarding of the environment was at that time a rather marginal issue in the Italian public debate.

Our theoretical environmental framework had many mothers and fathers: the scientific committee of *Legambiente* – at the time *Lega per l'ambiente* – Laura Conti, Marcello Cini, Antonio Cederna, Maria Giulia Mozzoni Crespi, all forerunners in Italian environmental thinking, and *Italia Nostra*, Italy's oldest NGO dedicated to defending the country's

heritage and landscape. Fulco Pratesi and his *WWF Italia* also played a crucial role. From outside of Italy our main influences included the *Limits to Growth* report and The Ecologist's *A Blueprint for Survival*. Our practical work was inspired by the so-called *università verdi* (green universities), i.e. local popular education experiments, the feminist and peace movements which in the first part of the 1980s had mobilised thousands of people, and by *Greenpeace's* direct actions. The German Greens provided inspiration and Alexander Langer tirelessly spread green ideas from Germany and Austria.

Although ecological lists, using various names and symbols, had run in a few municipal elections in the first half of the 1980s, Green lists did not attract national attention before the 1985 local elections. Using the smiling-sun-symbol originating from the Danish anti-nuclear movement, the Greens were elected into eight regional parliaments:²⁶ Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Toscana and Lazio. On average we scored between two and three percent, with higher percentages – due to the cultural proximity with the German-speaking world – in South-Tyrol. Essentially, the best results were registered in the North, a trend which changed in the course of time.

The Rise

The Italian political system in the 1980s can only be characterised as a blocked gerontocracy. Access was limited to traditional parties rooted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The electoral success of

25 The *Partito Radicale* had preceded us, but, though some of the political priorities were shared, we felt that the radicals underestimated the environmental variable in their political struggle. We, on the other hand, were convinced of the importance of what we called *ecologia della politica* – political ecology – or as we would say today: active citizenship / participatory democracy / transparent power management. This, however, clashed with the *Partito Radicale's* strongly centralised one-man leadership structure. *Democrazia Proletaria*, at the extreme left, was the other political point of reference for some of the early Italian ecologists.

26 Regions in Italy – similarly to the German "Länder" – have legislative powers.

the Greens, which was based on a self-funded, creative, grassroots campaign with a central role played by young people, was looked at with curiosity by the media and with concern by the political establishment. The media started covering our initiatives on a regular basis. Mainstream politics did not understand what we meant by saying that Greens are neither right- nor left-wing but beyond traditional political schemes and that our institutional representatives would vote not on the basis of an ideology, but on environmentally friendly content. In a country where parties with one to two percent were part of national coalition governments and often even determined the duration not only of governments, but also of legislative terms, a political force coming out of the blue did not remain unnoticed by the traditional parties.

In an attempt to show that established parties and institutions also cared about the environment, and, implicitly, to send the message that green votes were useless, the Ministry of Environment was created in 1986 and local environmental departments blossomed. This actually proved that green political priorities were relevant, and provided good publicity for the Greens.

On 16 November 1986 the national *Federazione delle Liste Verdi* (Federation of Green Lists) was founded. This was still not a party, as we still considered parties as power structures that prevented citizens' participation in the management of the *res publica*, favoured corporate instead of general interests; that were linked with organised crime and nurtured corruption and that were unable to deal with the environmental and the other global problems facing the planet. The Federation brought all the existing Italian Green lists together under a common statute, rules of procedures, executive bodies and a symbol – the anti-nuclear smiling sun.

The relations between the Federation and environmental NGOs were close, especially those with *Lega per l'Ambiente*, *WWF Italia*, *Greenpeace*

Italia, Amici della Terra (Friends of the Earth) *Italia, Lega Antivivisezione* (the Anti-Vivisection League) and other smaller animal rights organisations. The work and campaigning priorities were co-ordinated and shared. This proved to be one of the great strengths of the Greens because, though formally not Green members, the environmental NGOs acted substantially as such. Their nationwide networks functioned as antennae on the environmental state of the country even in its remotest corners. Thanks to this win-win relationship, the Greens could grow electorally, and environmental NGOs enormously increased their membership, budgets, activities and campaigns.

In 1987 Greens ran for the first time in national political elections and improved on their success in the 1985 local elections with 2.6% at national level, 13 MPs, and one senator. Among them were Gianni Mattioli and Massimo Scalia, two Rome university physics professors and recognised leaders of the anti-nuclear movement.

To give the full picture of the Green success in those elections and of the magnetic force of Green ideas, one should add that:

A. environmentalists were not only elected on Green lists; the communists had recruited leading environmentalists for their lists as well, and we worked closely with them during the 1987-1992 legislative term.

B. in the course of this legislative period we were subsequently joined by parliamentarians elected within the *Partito radicale* and *Democrazia proletaria*, who later formed the *Verdi arcobaleno* – the Rainbow Greens.

The Anti-Nuclear Victory²⁷

Obtaining alternative, renewable energies was from the very beginning among our political

27 Other victories following green initiatives included the first Italian laws on protected areas, hunting restrictions and animal rights, waste management, environmental impact assessment, funding for biological agriculture, arms trade, hydro-geological defence, major hazzard industrial sites, citizens' environmental information rights – with existing European legislation helping us in requesting the update of the Italian normative framework. Details of what Greens have obtained since 1987, either in Parliament or in government, are available on the Italian Greens' web site: <http://www.verdi.it/apps/presentazione.php?pagina=verdistoria2>.

priorities.²⁸ At the time Italy had four nuclear power plants and a heated public debate was under way on the government's proposal to develop a new national energy plan which was, following the French model, strongly based on nuclear power.

The 26 April 1986 Chernobyl disaster came as a shock and turned out to be a milestone for the growth of the Greens: the nuclear issue divided political parties, economic and civil society organisations and the Catholic Church. Environmentalist, anti-nuclear university researchers and activists were given an unprecedented media audience.

Right after Chernobyl, NGOs together with the Greens and environmentalists in different parties launched a campaign to collect the necessary 500,000 signatures for a national referendum to ban nuclear energy. Once again with an extraordinary grassroots mobilisation and the biggest parties finally giving the indication to vote against nuclear energy, the campaign was a success, and on November 8 and 9, 1987, Italians were called to vote. Around 65% of those entitled turned out to vote with about 80% of them voting in favour of the ban. The ban was formally adopted the following year with the government's national energy plan, together with the first Italian laws fostering the use of renewable energies. The anti-nuclear victory consecrated green issues as central to the country's public debate. They became fashionable, "in".

6.2% Nationally and the Beginning of the End

In 1989 the *Green Lists* and the *Rainbow Greens* ran separately for the European Parliament's elections.²⁹ The *Green Lists* obtained 3.8% of the

vote, resulting in three seats in the EP. The *Rainbow Greens* got 2.4% and had two MEPs elected. With a total of 6.2% the Greens became the fourth political force in the country - a success which, as it turned out, we were unable to handle.

In December 1990, after the defeat in the referendum for stricter hunting restrictions and against the use of pesticides,³⁰ *Green Lists* and the *Rainbow Greens* joined forces and created what is today the *Federazione dei Verdi* (Federation of Greens). Through subsequent statutory changes, the previous loose and non-party organisation was abandoned and became more and more centralised over the years. Also, due to the changes in the electoral system of the 1990s and 2000s,³¹ the party became increasingly identified with a single leader.

More importantly green politics turned increasingly into power politics: a government-posts-at-all-costs-approach, from local municipalities to the national level, took over.

It is clear that in order to transform our societies and economies ecologically parties have to be part of decision-making processes, i.e. they need to be in power. But, in order to avoid the risk of the Greens playing a purely cosmetic role, they should involve themselves in governing under only two conditions:

1. quantitatively: election results should be substantial enough, i.e. indispensable, to enable the Party to have a real impact on the coalition negotiations as well as in the in the following decision-making and implementation phase.

2. qualitatively: the people negotiating and those taking on government positions must be

28 *Lega per l'ambiente* had already produced an alternative national energy plan that showed how Italy could very well make it with energy saving, efficiency and renewable sources.

29 Prominent *Partito Radicale* and *Democrazia Proletaria* politicians left their parties and wanted to join the Greens. Many Greens resisted out of fear that this would imply adjusting to traditional minoritarian party mechanisms.

30 Although ca. 80% of voters were in favour of environmentalist requests, the referendum did not reach the necessary quorum. This was the first major political defeat the Greens, who were among the referendum promoters, had to deal with.

31 Following *Tangentopoli*, i.e. the wave of trials and arrests on bribery charges of top national politicians, the 1993 electoral reform forced parties into declaring their coalitions before the elections took place. This seriously weakened the Greens: our voters were both right- and left-wing, so this versatility was lost – and our autonomy with it. In spite of this the Greens entered the national government for the first time in 1996.

up to the challenge. They have to be competent, respected, authoritative, and able to think ahead and educate future generations of activists, politicians and administrators.

The Italian Greens ignored both conditions.

Constantly scoring between two and three percent on average³² nationally has meant: little impact in negotiations and decision-making with political allies, usually centre-left coalitions, who knew very well that the Greens could be kept quiet with posts. Personal careers became increasingly more important than coherence, or were even traded against environmentalist principles. This resulted in five disastrous effects:

A. those who had joined the Greens for idealistic reasons slowly left. Calculating the turnover of people who have been members of the Italian Greens since 1985 would be interesting. My guess would be several thousands. This also meant losing the support of most environmental NGO-activists, and of the NGOs themselves, which continued their growth despite the developments within the Green Party. Sometimes they even publicly distanced themselves from Green party positions;

B. those excluded from the limited number of government posts – two to three percent of the votes means two to three percent of the posts – also left;

C. the *Federazione dei Verdi* attracted careerists, either excluded from other parties or new to politics, who saw career opportunities within the

Greens. Some who kept the original green spirit remained and in some cases they were elected as Members of Parliament. Cynics interpreted this as window-dressing. But, probably, it is more correct to say that, in spite of the DNA changes the Italian Greens experienced, parts of the party have been able to stick to their green identity.

D. the Greens lost their innovative energy because they did not invest in research and training. As a consequence media coverage has decreased dramatically and the Greens – like any other party – are now forced to rely on studies carried out by environmental NGOs³³ even if it is just to deal with the ideas, technologies and plans put forward by the most enlightened private or public sector economic enterprises in the environmental sector.

E. having become basically exclusive and self-centred, the Greens have been unable to recruit new activists and so the leadership has remained basically the same for the last 15 years. Currently, only few young people are active within the Greens, although they constitute a substantial percentage of those volunteering and working with the environmental NGOs. Furthermore, the Greens have been unable to intercept new social forces which have emerged in the third sector, which involves tens of thousands of people. It also represents the liveliest component of Italian society, e.g. groups and associations against organised crime and for the rule of law, those active in the field of international co-operation and humanitarian aid, organic agriculture and fair trade, civil society advocacy, as well as new organisations working on specific environmental aspects.³⁴

32 All electoral results are available on <http://www.verdi.it/apps/presentazione.php?pagina=verdistoria>.

33 The environmental NGOs have seriously expanded. *WWF Italia* – www.wwf.it – manages over 30,000 hectares of protected areas and has today 300,000 members and 400,000 supporters; *Legambiente* – www.legambiente.eu – over 115,000, has founded *Ambiente Italia*, a leading environmental research institute, created the *ecomafia* concept and campaigns for environmental rule of law and each year organises the measuring of pollution level in cities through the *Treno verde* – green train and of the Mediterranean with the *Goletta verde* – green scooter; LAV – the Anti-Vivisection League – www.infolav.org – has grown into the largest Italian animal rights NGO with campaigns involving the whole political spectrum.

34 *Libera* – www.libera.it; *Emergency* – www.emergency.it; *AIAB* – the Italian Association for Bio Agriculture – <http://www.aiab.it/intro>; *Sbilanciamoci!* – www.sbilanciamoci.org; ; *Ambiente e Lavoro* – Environment and Work – www.amblav.it; *Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano* – the Italian Environment Fund – www.fondoambiente.it

2008: Annus Horribilis

Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio³⁵ was Green Agriculture Minister in 2000 and 2001 and has been party president since December 2001. In the media he has been the personification of the Italian Greens for years. His political career started in Salerno which is in Campania near Naples. In Campania the Greens have consistently scored higher electoral results than in the rest of Italy. They have participated in coalition governments in the Naples municipality and in the Campania regional government for over ten years. During the same period the president of the Naples province³⁶ has been a member of the Greens.

When the Campania waste scandal broke out and the pictures of the thousands of tons of waste in the streets of Naples and the nearby towns were broadcast all over the world, Alfonso was Environment Minister. Unsurprisingly he was at the centre of unprecedented political attacks, even from inside the centre-left majority which supported the Prodi government. Since he was the personification of the Italian Greens, the party came under fire for months. Alfonso was accused of having turned down any solution that could have prevented the Campania waste disaster.

Though it is obvious that no single person or party may be blamed for the Campania waste emergency, the effect has been devastating, for him and for the Greens, before and during the 2008 electoral campaign. Needless to say that when early political elections were announced, the Greens were in a weakened bargaining position with respect to the other political forces with which they had decided to jointly present a *Sinistra Arcobaleno* (Left Rainbow) list.

The Italian Greens decided not to run alone as Greens for the 2008 elections, as under the current electoral law they would have had no chance of winning parliamentary seats.³⁷ In spite of critical voices inside the party against a red-green list, the reasoning behind the decision to be part of the *Sinistra Arcobaleno* – of which all parties together had over ten percent of the vote at national level in the previous elections – was that it would result in winning seats for MPs and possibly also for senators. It ended with a meagre 3.084% for the House of Parliament³⁸ and with a national average of 3.213%.³⁹ In no region was the threshold of eight percent reached. The whole thing turned into another political catastrophe!

Possibly even worse was that during the campaign news broke out that Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, together with other people inside the party and the Environment Ministry was being accused of *associazione a delinquere e corruzione* (criminal association and corruption) in connection with his management of the ministry. The accusations were later confirmed by the judiciary. Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio rejected them and defended himself by stating that he was attacked because of his ministerial decisions at the expense of environment-unfriendly interest groups. Obviously, we all hope he will be able to prove that the accusations were groundless. Still, political devastation has been building up.

The Future

Under the Damocles' sword of new electoral reforms which have been announced and will include national, administrative and European elections, and on which the Berlusconi government and the opposition's *Partito Democratico*

35 His predecessors were Luigi Manconi, now in the *Partito Democratico*, former EU Environment Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana – now flirting with the centre-right – and former WWF chairperson Grazia Francescato.

36 Provinces are the intermediate governing level between municipalities and regions and all these institutions, as well as the Environment Ministry, have specific powers in waste management. This makes it impossible to argue that Greens have no responsibilities in the Campania waste disaster.

37 It foresees a minimum of four percent of the votes nationally in order to have elected MPs, and in order to have elected senators a minimum of eight percent on a regional basis in at least one region.

38 <http://politiche.interno.it/politiche/camera080413/C000000000.htm>

39 <http://politiche.interno.it/politiche/senato080413/S000000000.htm>

– around 90% of the actual parliamentarians – seem to have agreed, there are now four possible scenarios for the Italian Greens which still have institutional representation in most regional parliaments and in many local councils:

1. to dissolve – which seems unlikely, if only because the party will still get public funding, quantified by the party treasurer in a recent national council meeting as 1.2 million euros a year for the coming three years;

2. to join the *Ecodem* environmentalist stream within the *Partito Democratico*, which is what some former Greens in several parts of the country have already done;

3. to re-organise as Greens;

4. to work together with those in the *Sinistra Arcobaleno* who argue that *red* and *green* in Italy belong to the past and that *red-green*, rooted locally and involving social movements, is the answer.

At this moment in time, there are too many variables at play to make any credible forecasts. My guess is that the first option can be excluded. The question of whether Italian Green MEPs will sit in the European Parliament after the 2009 elections remains open.

The world has been changing and Greens in many countries – 88 represented in Sao Paulo on the 1-4 May 2008 *Global Greens* conference – have been able to stay tuned with the changes, often, in the best green tradition, anticipating them. Green challenges are now globally recognised, by both left and right, as unavoidable.

In Italy the need for credible environmental policies and solutions is stronger than ever. Italian Greens may have a future, but only if they change and open up to the future-oriented civil society organisations this country is richly endowed with. Good old *gattopardo* tactics, i.e. to-change-everything-in-order-to-change-nothing,⁴⁰ will not help. They are doomed to fail because the ruins are everywhere.



Sergio Andreis, 1952, is international activities co-ordinator of Lunaria, www.lunaria.org, and advisor to Monica Frassoni, MEP, Co-president of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament. A graduate in literature and philosophy at Milan State University, he has studied in Stockton, California and at Berlin's Free University and has worked with intercultural exchanges NGOs in Rome, Berlin and Leuven (Belgium). An Amnesty International adopted total conscientious objector for 15 months in military jails and co-founder of the Italian Greens, he has served as Green member of Lombardy's regional parliament (1985-1987), of the national parliament (1987-1992) and as advisor to the Italian Minister for EU policies (2000-2001).

40 In the 1800s when Piemonte unified Italy the big landowners in Sicily theorised that in order to keep their power intact they had to change everything: welcome the new rulers from Turin, become senators in the newly formed Italian senate and in this way avoid any change in Sicilian power relations. Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel *Il Gattopardo* describes this situation and Visconti turned the novel into the movie *Gattopardo* (The Leopard).

BENOÎT LECHAT

Ecolo, an Evergreen Story at the Heart of Europe

When on 8 March 1980, a few dozen ecological activists from Wallonia and Brussels, who had come together at Opheylissem, a village in Walloon Brabant, wrote the founding text for *Ecolo*, they completed the first step in an emerging green identity movement in French-speaking Belgium which had started slightly less than ten years earlier. They also inaugurated a long period of political commitment, which saw Ecolo achieve record electoral results (as much as about 20% of the French-speaking Belgian voters in 1999¹), participate in several governments and actively contribute to building the European Green Party. Understanding the specific nature of political ecology in Belgium requires placing oneself within the historical context of its emergence, which includes features common to all industrialised western societies, as well as those specific to Belgian society in the second half of the 20th century.

It is not possible in the space allocated here to provide a detailed account of this venture. However, we can try to understand the green identity by focusing on the initial ideas of the Ecolo movement and by outlining the main changes it underwent. The first lines in the statutes of the “Ecolo movement” offer a summary of its project and state its objective as being to “organise a permanent structure for political intervention based on a *self-managed* and *federalist* model in order to introduce ecological concerns into the political debate on the management of society.”² Federalism, self-management, ecology: Ecolo’s introductory

preamble highlights three major ideas. Describing their origin, the road they have followed and their life should help to characterise, in a summarised manner, the green identity in Wallonia and in Brussels.

A Federalist Movement

The concept of federalism has a wealth of meanings. In 1980, in a still unitary Belgium, it had a very precise meaning in the eyes of the Walloon proto-ecologists. At the time, their region was undergoing a major economic crisis which had been brewing since the end of the Second World War. The leap in energy prices, triggered by the Arab-Israeli War, had plunged Wallonia’s heavy industry into an unprecedented economic slump, with this inheritance from the first industrial revolution not having been sufficiently modernised. The number of plant closures rose and unemployment soared. However, the crisis was not only economic, but shook the entire way of life, culture and social structure, despite the fact that during the same period, the Flemish economy was experiencing full growth, thus providing the Flemish political class with an increasingly favourable position in the power struggle between the two regions. Wallonia’s left movement demanded federalism to provide Walloons – a minority in the Belgian State – with political instruments enabling them to deliver an economic rescue plan for their region.

1 This contribution will only concern the Green party active in this political area formed within Belgium by the region of Brussels and Wallonia, and which includes the German-speaking Belgian community. It only makes indirect reference to the Flemish Greens of Agalev and Groen!, although the two Belgian Green parties have always aimed to develop close links. For a complete account of the Flemish Greens’ history see the following contribution by Johan Malcorps.

2 First statutes of the Ecolo movement.

For the first green activists in Wallonia, federalism had a different meaning. The activists from *Démocratie Nouvelle*³ and later of the *Friends of the Earth*, the political organisations out of which Ecolo emerged at the end of the 1970s, did not see federalism, firstly, as a means to put Wallonia back on an even keel by following a time-worn tradition of kick-starting industry with public money. Their initial concern was more democratic than economic. For them, there was a need to reply to the crisis of confidence facing the political system, at that time dominated by the traditional Social Christian, Liberal and Socialist parties which were tearing each other apart for control of a state weakened as much by the rise in Flemish community demands as by economic and budgetary difficulties. Eleven different governments succeeded each other at a dizzying pace between 1974 and 1989. From the point of view of the federalists, who later jointly founded Ecolo, the divide between citizens and politics should be overcome by radically involving citizens in decision-making. *Démocratie Nouvelle*'s⁴ 1973 project drew its inspiration from the so-called trend of "integral federalism" (in particular represented in France by Guy Héraud). This combined a defence of the regions and a criticism of nationalism in a European perspective inspired by the principle of subsidiarity.

Integral federalism was later found in *Friends of the Earth*'s 1977 Manifesto and, above all, in Ecolo's statutes. "The principle of integral federalism assumes the independence and federation of the grassroots groups, it is from them that proposals for actions and ideas should come", stated Ecolo's very first statutes. These explained that "all of the movement's decisions should be the expression of a debate in which all the groups express themselves". These principles should apply as much to society's functioning as to the or-

ganisation of the new political formation, which, at the outset, advocated a five-level institutional structure: the neighbourhood, the municipality, the country (designed to replace the provinces), the region, Europe. However, in the Europe of the regions of the first Belgian ecologists, there was no room for a national level and, therefore, for the unified Belgium of the time.

A Self-Managed Movement

At the outset, Ecolo employed a very developed form of direct democracy which involved each of its grassroots groups in decision-making. Although at the start of the 1980s, the movement only counted a few hundred members, this obligation was already a hindrance to quick decision-making, especially since it was paralleled by a requirement for "permanent monitoring of delegates" which aimed to protect the new formation from the bureaucratic complications encountered by the other parties. Fortunately, Belgium's small size facilitated meetings which enabled Ecolo to develop a genuine "religion of debate", the virtues of which were disputed by the activists during many long meetings. Hot on the heels of May 1968, the 1970s were marked by a new wave of militancy and a desire for passionate debate.

Everything happened rather as if the May 1968 generation was rediscovering what the liberal thinker Benjamin Constant called at the start of the 19th century "the liberty of ancients" compared to "the liberty of moderns". Whereas in the first case, citizens were obliged to participate in public life, the second case was marked by the right to not take part in politics and to delegate the exercise of it to duly elected representatives. In the spirit of the upholders of integral federalism, citizens must re-appropriate a power confiscated by central government or bureaucracies by

3 In 1972, Paul Lannoye was elected President of the Namur section of the *Rassemblement Wallon* (Wallonian Assembly) party. But the party apparatus refused his appointment. He left RW along with several other activists and founded *Démocratie Nouvelle* (New Democracy). He was one of the joint founders of Ecolo in 1980, served as a Green Member of the European Parliament and was President of the Green Group, before leaving the party following a disagreement over its political orientation.

4 "Manifeste pour une Démocratie Nouvelle", February 1973. May be consulted at the Fonds d'histoire du Mouvement Wallon (History Collection of the Wallonia Movement) and at the Etopia Archives Centre.

participating as directly as possible in all the decisions affecting them.

However, self-management was not just a political concept to be defended in the public sphere. In the 1970s, it was also (and above all) an economic and social project. At the time, it was presented as an alternative to capitalism, whether of the state or of the market, because it entrusted workers with ownership of their companies as well as the responsibility to manage them themselves. Faced with the failure of “real socialism”, personified by the Prague Spring’s brutal repression in August 1968, the alternative left (namely those who did not obey the orders of the Socialist and Communist parties) saw the self-management model as being THE project to defend, even though experiences in the field were either marginal (such as the case of the Lipp company⁵), or were also branded with bureaucracy, as was the case in communist Yugoslavia.

An Ecologist Movement

In Belgium, as elsewhere in the world, the 1970s were also marked by the awakening of the ecological conscience and the environment became an increasingly important theme.

The media debated the report by the *Club of Rome* on the limits to growth. In Wallonia, as in Brussels, an increasing number of associations were created to protect the environment, obtain protection for animal species under threat from hunting and trapping and oppose real estate projects, the building of motorways or holiday centres. Nuclear power stations were a catalyst for these protests which aimed to defend nature and question industrial development. A few hundred kilometres from Paris, the example of René Dumont, the first “ecology candidate” in the 1974 French Presidential election, set the example. Two years later, in Namur, *Démocratie Nouvelle* activists launched an appeal to organisations (a number of which were linked to the Christian Worker’s Movement and the local section of Am-

nesty International) to prepare a list of candidates for the local Elections of 10 October 1976 which would take the name *Combat pour l’écologie et l’autogestion* (Struggle for Ecology and self-administration). In Belgium, it was the first time that the word “ecology” appeared on the electoral scene.

The list of candidates in Namur obtained 1.9%, whereas in Mons, a list entitled *Vivre-Combat pour l’environnement* (Live-Struggle for the Environment), and in Charleroi, a more anarchic list *Blanche Neige et les sept nains* (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs) received 2.1% and 0.4% respectively. A Belgian section of Friends of the Earth, created that same year, set itself the objective of working to “introduce the teachings of ecology into daily life and into the economic, social and political landscape”. This section was going to constitute the backbone of work by Belgian ecologists throughout the second half of the 1970s and its members were the instigators of the lists of ecologist candidates grouped together under the *Wallonie-Ecologie* banner in 1977 and 1978, with an *Ecolog* list presented in Brussels by a dissent movement of Friends of the Earth. In the first instance, these lists met a strictly momentary objective, that of participating in the elections, and it was only later after the European elections of 1979 that the creation of a durable political organisation with an existence outside of electoral periods was envisaged.

Questioning the Industrial Society

The ideological hotbed in which the activists from environmental, social and cultural associations, who, later, were going to create *Ecolo* thrived, was not initially dominated by the debate on the need to enter the traditional world of politics. The original idea was to develop a collective conscience about the fact that the defence of the environment was part of a much wider problem, that of industrial society, the development of which was a growing threat to humanity’s survival. Environmental protection was not an isolated struggle and could not be separated from an over-

5 In 1973, this factory in the French city of Besançon was taken over by the workers for a short time.

all questioning of the society which was destroying it. Ecology as science and systemics as method helped to recreate the links between problems which “hard science” tended to separate. To the utopia of industrial society, according to which growth made possible by the progress of science and technology would help to reconcile men, ecologists wanted to present a utopian vision of a society in which man would be reconciled with himself and with nature. Political ecology encountered exponential growth in a region struck head-on by the industrial crisis. In this particular case, for the ecologists, the crisis was not cyclical but structural. Rising above it required a complete change in the political, economic and social model instead of attempts to cobble together a hypothetical revival based on old models which had already shown their limits.

A Movement in the Democratic Institutions

But, how to convince the widest number of people to undertake this change when there are only a few dozen of you and a few hundred activists? The first ecologists realised that they could not rely on a mass movement – such as the trade unions – to promote their ideas and, therefore, had to consider using the path of representative democracy. The choice was difficult: should they put “green” candidates on the lists of other parties, not take part in elections, or create a party of their own? Finally, it was the third option which was chosen, but not without some difficulty. The historic score of the Europe-Ecologie list at the European elections of 10 June 1979 (5.1% – namely, more than the Belgian Communist Party on the decline) succeeded in convincing them of the importance of ecology’s electoral potential. Nevertheless, there was considerable fear of being “swamped” by the political system. In order to protect themselves, the ecologists from Wallonia and Brussels chose to create what they called a “movement”, a concept which they felt was differ-

ent from that of a “party”. Through their federalist and self-management philosophy, they wanted society to win back the power done away with by the supporters of bureaucracy and even trade unions. However, there was a degree of paradox in their thinking: conscious of their inability to base themselves on a mass movement, they decided to undertake a long march through the institutions whilst building a “grassroots” movement which operated on truly alternative methods. The difficulty of ecological change was already visible in this paradox, with a desire to change life “at a grassroots level”, even in a minority manner, and to reform politics by working from the very top level of the state. Reconciling these two objectives was going to be a permanent challenge and subject of many long strategic discussions.

Which Strategy?

On 8 November 1981, Ecolo presented itself for the very first time under its new name at the national legislative elections and obtained a total of six elected representatives (two in the Chamber and four in the Senate), with scores varying between four percent and eight percent depending on the constituency and despite the presence of three different ecologist lists in Brussels. The entry into the Belgian parliament, where the newly elected parliamentarians arrived on bicycles to take their oath, immediately asked for a number of strategic questions. How to position oneself in the political field, in particular with regard to the left/right divide? Should they follow a strategy of division or compromise?⁶ In 1982, Ecolo replied that ecologists were initiating an original project for society, “neither on the left, nor on the right” because “these two ideological trends were defined in the 19th century in relation to a method of production, whereas ecologists define themselves in relation to a way of life”.

The choice was clearly made for division. However, achieving this involved a “different

6 The leaders of Ecolo met on 5 July 1982 in Bütgenbach (a German-speaking municipality located in the province of Liège) to reflect on the specific nature, the future and strategy for the Ecolo movement. The report of the meeting (by Philippe Van Parijs) was distributed to all members in Ecolo-Infos, the movement’s bi-monthly periodical (No. 10 – August 82).

manner of doing politics” (no multiple functions, a restriction on salaries, entertaining and eye-catching actions, etc.), through proposals which “were shocking because they touched on taboos” (liberalisation of soft drugs, protection of the rights of homosexuals, etc.) and through a desire “to not compromise our fundamental priorities whether in order to have more elected representatives or to put more people in executive positions”. This question of the principles to be respected at all costs resurfaced again a few months later when Ecolo negotiated its first participation in a municipal majority in Liège, after having obtained more than eleven percent of the votes. After long negotiations and regular feedback to its “grassroots members”, the majority finally agreed on the televised broadcast of municipal council sessions and the possibility of organising popular initiative referendums.

Alternative Is No Longer Otherness

Gradually, in the 1980s and 1990s, Ecolo established itself in the Belgian political landscape. Those who thought that the green phenomenon would not last were disappointed. In 1989, at the European elections, Ecolo struck the “jackpot” (371,053 votes and no less than 16% in Wallonia) which was good enough for seating two Members of the European Parliament. Two years later, Ecolo obtained 13.6% of votes in Wallonia and quadrupled its numbers of MPs. These successes encouraged the ecologists to show what they were capable of, not only on the opposition benches, but also in the corridors of power. The opportunity came in 1992 and 1993. Whilst remaining part of the opposition, Ecolo and its Flemish friends from *Agalev* took part in negotiating the reform of the Belgian state, which, once and for all, transformed unitary Belgium into a federal state. They exchanged their support in this institutional proc-

ess against an increase in funding for schools in Wallonia and Brussels and the implementation of an ecotax programme. In a relatively unprepared manner, they had to propose a system which did not concern energy, as they had initially hoped,⁷ but non-reusable products such as drink cans.

It was a period during which questions started to emerge both inside and outside the party as to its exact political function. The contribution of Belgian Greens to the implementation of environmental policies appeared to be less important than their contribution to institutional reforms. The environmental conscience was wavering, pushed to great heights by crises such as Chernobyl before being forgotten in the daily life of a country obsessed by the explosion of its public debt.⁸ The utopian perspective of a different world looked distant and some people blamed Ecolo for having abandoned its role as a cultural movement with an ambition to change everyday life. “Alternative” did not simply involve otherness, a crude affirmation of difference, but involved modest democratic work, replied José Daras, one of the first green parliamentarians. The ecologists now had to demonstrate their teaching skills, invest in communication, in particular in order to explain the interest of ecotaxes and the challenge of “the hidden debt” which transfers to future generations the policy of budgetary austerity which sacrifices community functions.

Unlocking Society

For Belgians, the 1990s are dark years marked by the Dutroux affair⁹ and popular criticism of the Belgian authorities’ inability to protect their weakest members. In view of the creeping rot of state undermined by budgetary austerity and bureaucratic inertia, the ecologists wanted to continue to promote the mobilisation of society’s

7 This proposal for an energy ecotax clashed with the veto of the Christian People’s Party (CVP) and, especially, with Jean-Luc Dehaene, the future Belgian Prime Minister.

8 “You have the impression of an ecology carried by waves. When the ecology movement falls, we have to paddle hard to get back to the to of the wave. There was a promising wave at the start of the 1980s and then it fell back again. It has been promising again since Chernobyl and the hole in the ozone layer. There is no linear development. The problem with this type of ebb and flow is the absence of memory, oblivion”, José Daras, interviewed in *La Revue Nouvelle*, February 1990.

9 Marc Dutroux kidnapped, tortured and sexually abused six girls during 1995 and 1996, four of whom he murdered.

dynamism and creativity. A new generation of activists, who had cut their teeth in the teacher and student movements of the start of the decade, proposed the organisation of a new type of political process: the *Etats Généraux de l'Ecologie Politique* (Forums on Political Ecology). This involved opening up the party to society, enlarging the party base by updating the ideas of political ecology through a process of participative debate which was not reserved solely for its members. The internal debate was very lively. Was there not a danger of introducing an excessively fragile ecologist identity into society? At least, that was what those opposing the proposal feared. Finally, after much long discussion, the process was launched. Between 1996 and 1998, no fewer than 75 public forums were organised in Wallonia and Brussels on themes as varied as cultural law, prostitution, the reform of the justice system and the promotion of renewable energies. These very rich meetings and debates enabled Ecolo to extend its network considerably, strengthen its popular support and, finally, escape the “green niche” in which the media tended to place it. In the June 1999 elections, the dioxin crisis¹⁰ transformed the predictable victory of the Greens into a genuine triumph. Among the French-speaking electorate, Ecolo obtained 22.7% of the votes in the European elections and dispatched no fewer than eleven representatives to the federal parliament (out of a total of 150).

The Difficult Experience of Power

This victory, unprecedented in the history of political ecology, was the start of a very difficult period. The ecologists fought with each other over the opportunity of entering a Liberal-Socialist coalition which had been prepared prior to the elections. They were not mathematically indispensable unlike their Flemish sister party Agalev. Finally, the “yes” vote to participation in the federal and Walloon governments won the day. However, it was refused in Brussels. This first experience of participation was a rude awakening,

especially on a federal level. However, the power struggle did not prevent Ecolo from scoring some points: the rejection of nuclear power, the refunding of teaching, a law on the regularisation of illegal immigrants, the launch of a policy on sustainable mobility and renewable energies, etc. The results were considerable. However, they were not enough to convince the voters who, in 2003, punished the ecologists very harshly. They lost seven members of parliament, as well as a large part of their financial striking power. Agalev even failed to obtain five percent of the votes and found itself excluded from the federal parliament. The causes for their defeat were multiple. In general, the Liberals and Socialists tended to agree with each other at the expense of their “green” partner. The media, too, had launched a full-scale campaign to “bash the Greens”, in particular following the Greens’ refusal to authorise tobacco advertising at the Francorchamps Formula 1 Grand Prix. But, by parading their internal disagreements in public, the Greens also sometimes proved to be their own worst enemy. However, the experience left them with both good and bad memories and, above all, a huge capital of experience and expertise. At long last, Belgian ecologists had lost their virginity. They now knew how the state worked and what the gradual implementation of policy meant. In this respect, governmental participation from 1999 to 2004 and subsequent defeat constituted a genuine cultural turning point which helped to give the Belgian ecologists’ identity a harder edge, although, no doubt, they have not yet learnt all their lessons, offering them a real opportunity to make a much hoped return to government.

The New Green Wave

In politics, it is sometimes dangerous to be right too early or to be right on one’s own against the world. As much as public opinion had criticised the Greens’ inflexibility over the Francorchamps affair, it condemned the amateurism and squandering of public money of which the other parties were guilty in the management of a car-

¹⁰ Jean-Luc Dehaene’s government (composed of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) did not succeed in controlling the general crises provoked by the discovery of a major contamination in the food chain.

racing track which had benefited from hundreds of millions of euros of public funding. It was a genuine scandal which coincided with a growing awareness of climate change. This was the difference between the 1980s and the 1990s, the ecological conscience no longer resembled the ebb and flow of the tide, but was gradually becoming a groundswell which was growing in the minds and spirits of the inhabitants of industrialised societies and, in particular, Belgians. The challenge involves quickly turning this change in attitude into structural changes, which, of course, is far from easy. Ecolo is able to, and obliged to, play a central role in this crucial project and opinion polls give their support to the ability of the party's leaders to provide solutions to ecological problems. The party's concrete proposals had been refined over the previous few years. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to be able to continue to take advantage of its genuine independence from lobbies from the polluting sectors of industry. This is very far from being the case for the other parties who are always ready to cave in to promises of competitiveness or employment, etc.

The electoral victory in the 2007 legislative elections (Ecolo doubled its parliamentary federal representation from four to eight members) gave it new responsibilities, although it is still part of the federal opposition. Its constructive position in the new reform of State, which had been requested by the Flemish parties, reinforces its status as a "responsible" party. The launch of a new participative process called "solutions for all" is designed to develop support for the party by showing that it is capable of providing concrete solutions to the problems of this time, not only on an environmental level (climate, biodiversity), but also on a social level (employment, inequality) and an economic level (ecological conversion of the economy). Such work also requires the constant renewal of its values in line with contemporary changes, thus pursuing the work of a movement which has not been interrupted since its origin.

Follow Tradition and Make the Future Possible

The main difference between the modern-day context of political ecology and that of its origins, no doubt, resides in the level of awareness of the radically intolerable nature of industrial development. In the 1970s, this observation was made by a marginal and much criticised minority. Today, it is an opinion shared by all. The only thing missing is action, which we now know does not necessarily follow from awareness. At the end of the 20th century, the relatively marginal character of those who were ringing the alarm bells permitted them to evoke radical solutions involving the causes rather than the symptoms. Now that the subject is part of public opinion, it is more difficult to adopt a truly ambitious dialogue as to the measures to be taken despite the urgency of the problems. The approaching hour of ecological truth heightens the fear of action, no doubt because we all know that nobody will be able to escape the potentially painful challenges. The obligation of this "new ecological realism"¹¹ must lead us to reconsider the road covered by Green parties since their foundation. This is not a question of judging the so-called traitors of the original ideal, but of improving present-day action in line with the lessons learnt from the short history of the Green party and the changes in their initial visionary intuitions. The aim should be to continue with "tradition", in the true sense of the word: review the changes made and update the project according to future challenges. In this respect, the ideological debate is not abstract, or theoretical, but should aim to enlighten the very clear choice of political orientation to follow in line with historical changes.

From Integral Federalism to the Modernisation of Belgium

The first value defended by Ecolo in 1980, that of federalism, is perhaps the one which has undergone the greatest change. Firmly rooted in criticising the centralisation which accompanied

11 Reinhard Loske, Pour un nouveau réalisme écologique, see translation at www.etopia.be.

the development of industrial society, it was employed both for the party's internal functioning and for the "external" functioning of Belgian political institutions. The general application of the subsidiarity principle was supposed to help society resolve the crisis of the state and prevent the confiscation of power by bureaucrats as much on a political level as on an internal level within Ecolo. The founders of Ecolo had banked on a citizens' mobilisation, which, paradoxically, the movement's creation put into doubt by acknowledging, through its participation in the political world, the inability to create a social "mass" movement. In the meantime, there was no choice but to accept that Ecolo's actions were becoming gradually more professional, even though, fortunately, the party's structure continues to be based on the energy of local groups increasingly in demand of help and support from the "federal" structure.

The Green party, in the same way as all political and social organisations, is faced with a gradual change in its members' commitment, now more flexible and occasional, but this did not prevent Ecolo from continuing to be attractive to young people wishing to become involved in politics. Also, on an institutional level, Ecolo's discourse had moved towards recognition of the importance of a certain degree of centralism, as well as towards a clear tolerance of nation-states. Participation in the 1991 institutional reform, which officially made Belgium a federal state, was accompanied by a new form of recognition of Belgium as a relevant political power. By maintaining close links with Agalev and later with *Groen!*, the Greens in Wallonia and Brussels, although already federalist, appeared to be "good" Belgians compared to the traditional parties which now divided into Flemish and French-speaking branches. Ecolo's commitment to teachers throughout the 1990s also made it a party which defended the French community, or, at least, the sectors which depended on it politically and financially,¹² although this level of power certainly did not ap-

pear in its initial institutional outline. However, in particular, following the emergence of Brussels regionalism, the idea of a French-speaking area composed of the two regions has gradually gained strength and helps to clarify the Belgian political landscape. Nevertheless, it is not certain that this is enough to resolve the overall mistrust which Belgians have in politics as a whole.

Fundamentally, this mistrust is social in nature and concerns the citizens' relationship with politics and, indirectly, their relationship with each other, which continues to be a major problem. For political professionals, the error would be to still want to impose participation from top-down without asking whether it is really possible.

From Self-Management to Re-Integration of Economics Into Society

Although the principle of self-management is still retained for internal functioning (in particular, the autonomy of local groups), the project of economic self-management gradually lost ground in the 1980s and 1990s. Nowadays Ecolo promotes the strengthening of economic democracy and political participation, and this, in particular, was behind the organisation of the Political Ecology Forums in 1996 and 1997. In parallel, Ecolo moved closer to the trade union movement which it did not hesitate to criticise harshly at the start of the 1980s for its bureaucratic method of functioning and its support of industrial logic. On the opposition benches, the Greens developed links with all those dissatisfied with the programmes designed to fight the deficit in public spending in which the socialist parties participated throughout the 1990s. Conversely, the trade union movement took greater account of questions concerning the environment and sustainable development, which greatly helped the dialogue.

However, the idea of a world beyond capitalism and the market economy also started to fade.

12 In the Belgian institutional structure, communities (competent in cultural matters such as teaching) coexist and merge with the regions (competent in territorial matters such as the economy and the environment). If on the Flemish side, the region and the community have merged, this is not the case on the French-speaking side where a French community, a Walloon region and a Brussels region coexist with a German speaking community.

The demand for self-management disappeared from the introduction of the statutes in the 1990s and was replaced by eco-development and social justice. At the beginning of 2000, the theme of regulation of the market economy on a national, European and worldwide level became increasingly important, in particular with the demand for the Tobin tax on financial transactions. The ecologists – like other parties – realise that ecologising or socialising capitalism would have to be carried out on an international level. Economic regulation is also at the heart of the debate on demographic change. Ecolo proposed a “Contract for future generations” which aims to combine fairer pension funding with a complete reorientation of pension saving schemes towards sectors of the economy which meet social and environmental criteria.

This involved “re-introducing economics” into society and fighting the grip of finance on the economy as justified by neo-liberalism. However, in the future, the challenge would be to resist growing pressure and reduce parafiscal taxes on energy and increase individual transfers. In order to maintain social justice (ensuring access to energy by all and maintaining spending power), such pressure would be disastrous for community functions. Today, the fight for justice and freedom involves, as a priority, the upholding of a quality “community salary” in the form of effective public services (teaching, transport, etc.). It also imposes the restoration of the community legitimacy of public services and, in consequence, the reinforcement of their effectiveness.

Accelerate and, Above All, Generalise the Ecological Transition

In recent years, there have been dozens of books on the sorry state in which our method of development has left our planet. It could almost be said that there is a sort of exaggeration of future catastrophes – in particular in terms of the climate and biodiversity – but, unfortunately, there ap-

pears to be a consensus on such forecasts from a growing number of scientists. These publications appear to serve to constantly alert earth dwellers, who have a tendency to forget and abandon their efforts. But, often, most of these books stop where the real difficulties start, when it is necessary to develop actions, namely by removing the political obstacles to the realisation of projects. Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference,¹³ community awareness has made great progress. Along with others, the ecologist parties contributed to this. The notion of sustainable development was one of the first victories of this large movement. It has now almost become an integral part of international law and in states such as Belgium, administrations were dedicated to the implementation of politics of sustainable development.

Nevertheless, this progress also carries a risk that this green wave brings to an end the initial demands of the ecologist parties, as can be seen by the commercial takeover of the ecology theme by some of the biggest polluters in the industrial sector. This wave which washes greener than green is, in some respects, a sign that the ecologist parties have fulfilled their role of awakening the public conscience. But the hard work is yet to come. Their new historic task involves working to generalise for the entire economy the pioneering behaviour which they were the first to promote, whether for the production of renewable energies, organic farming, citizen participation, ecological and social regulation of the economy, sustainable mobility, or the preservation of biodiversity. Their work starts where all the ecology plans stop: through the generalisation of sustainable lifestyles.

It is a completely different society which needs to be invented, for example, to enable Belgians to emit no more than a yearly average of one or two tonnes of CO₂ by the middle of the century (at the very latest) compared to the present rate of 14 tonnes. Believing that our industrial structure and consumption habits will not be completely

13 In 1972, the first Earth Summit took place in Sweden. For the first time, a link was made between development and environment in the framework of global action

revolutionised by this change is a sign of naivety bordering on cynicism. The knowledge required for this mission will be less of a technical nature than of a political nature. Ecologists must show a new intelligence in decision-making and persuasion in order to create rapidly the conditions required for the generalisation of a sustainable economy. To achieve this, the Greens must be the first to believe in the exponential improvement in well-being which will result from the generalisation of sustainable lifestyles.

Ecolo and Europe

Since Ecolo's origination, Europe has been important. At the outset, it was in the European elections that the Belgian ecologists obtained their best scores. In a country where voting is mandatory, the European elections provide voters with an opportunity to demonstrate a more "idealistic" choice, removed from the events of national politics. However, what this vote truly reflects should never be underestimated. The voter may very well have understood that by voting for the Greens in the European elections, she/he was supporting a major aspect of society's ecologicalisation. Since the 1980s, it has been increasingly obvious that without the European Union a certain number of major decisions on environmental protection would not have been adopted on a national level. Conversely, Europe is also a centre where industrial lobbies deploy their strongest striking power. Often, the environment suffers at the hands of the promises made to traditional parties by these lobbies, through increasingly professional rhetoric on the subjects of employment and competitiveness. This is the reason why it is essential that the Green group in the European Parliament is strengthened in order to allow it to swing the majorities in favour of the ecological and social regulation of the European economy.

For a party such as Ecolo, no doubt, this would require greater investment in the European project. Having initially placed itself under the sign of Europe of the regions, Ecolo's commit-

ment to Europe is nothing new. In 1984, it was the ecologists from Liège – the first to participate in the management of a town of more than 100,000 inhabitants – who took the initiative to bring together the European Greens. This meeting created a dynamic which, in 2004, led to the creation of the *European Green Party*. In total, Ecolo has provided five very active European Members of Parliament⁴ and no fewer than two Vice-Presidents of the Green group. In 2001, there were two Belgians (Olivier Deleuze and Magda Aelvoet, of Agalev) among the five Green ministers for energy and the environment who saved the Kyoto Protocol from collapse. But, despite this, a form of functionalism still sometimes dominates the commitment to Europe. This is because Europe is "good" for the environment, for social aspects and also, formerly, for the regions, and is a relevant level of action. However, the idea that Europe is a value, a project to be defended in its own right still needs to be refined. The constitution of a European democracy coexisting with the people and the nations of Europe will continue to progress not only through transnational debates, as in the case of the Constitutional Treaty (at least if they are not completely overshadowed by national debates), but also through "physical" encounters between green activists from all countries, such as the magnificent example set by the Heerlen Group – a network of members of Green European parties – provided that the number of those wishing to get to grips with the joys of multilingualism increases greatly. In this context, becoming European is not only understanding what is being played out in European institutions, it is also opening oneself to the personal experiences of each of the Green parties.

1980-2008, History Is Being Written Every Day

At a time when we are moving from one type of civilisation to another, we do not see all the consequences of the changes in progress and the role which we can play. A party, regardless of how many members it has, will never replace a social

14 François Roelants du Vivier, Paul Lannoye, Brigitte Ernst de la Graete, Pierre Jonckheer and Monica Frassoni.

movement, namely community action by citizens to change society on a daily basis and not only in parliaments and governments. In 1980, as in 2008, Ecolo has been well aware of its role, its means of action and its responsibilities. But, sometimes, modesty is the best way to persuade others and achieve one's goals. The 30 or so years of political ecology have offered a wealth of experiences, some of them difficult, some of them joyful. Looking back at them in order to "follow tradition" is

not a duty of old soldiers envious of their first truths, but a daily work of dialogue and invention. Those who fear that collective action is a black hole for their energy, should always remember that politics may also be a place where men and women find a form of happiness in working together to promote greater justice and freedom in the world. Today, sharing it with the widest number continues to be the challenge faced by Ecolo, as it is for all Green parties.¹⁵



Benoît Lechat is responsible for research at *Etopia*, the think-tank and political foundation of the francophone Greens of Belgium. Born in Eupen in 1960, he graduated in philosophy and communication. He started his career working as a journalist for BRTn (Belgian Radio and Television – Flemish language) and the press agency *Agence Belga* where he covered the social and political Belgian news. In 1999, he became Isabelle Durant's spokesman, at the time Minister of Mobility from Ecolo. Since 2004, he has been responsible for Etopia's publications and publishes the *Revue Etopia*, a political ecology journal. He is the author of many articles on Belgian politics and particularly on Belgian community problems.

¹⁵ I would like to extend my thanks to the entire team at the Etopia archive centre, which preserves the memory of the ecologist movement in Wallonia and Brussels. Its members of staff, Angela Camboni, Marie-Laurence Dubois and Dawinka Laureys, offer a great service to all those who want to undertake a journey into the green world (see www.etopia.be/spip.php?rubrique47). Thanks also to Roald Wyckmans, the watchful guardian of the Federal Council's archives.

JOHAN MALCORPS¹

Groen! – A Tale of Falling Down and Getting Up Again

The Birth of Agalev: “Changing Our Way of Life” (the 1970s)

Agalev had already become a party before the actual realisation of that fact dawned on it. The political party as such was born out of the apolitical movement *Anders Gaan Leven*.² The first *Agalev* mandataries were elected to Parliament even prior to the actual Founding Convention of the would-be party.

From the early 1970s onwards, the Jesuit-teacher Father Luc Versteyleen tried to get his students at the Borgerhout Xaverius College interested in the gentler values of life by organising regeneration and self-improvement groups at the Viersel Brewery (a meditation centre near Antwerp). From the very outset, it was clear that *Agalev* had ambitions beyond merely advocating the preservation of the environment. From a sociological standpoint, *Agalev* embraced the values of the post-materialistic generation: it pleaded for solidarity, at that time still called “silence” and “sobriety”, and alter-globalisation. Although, during the initial years, the movement addressed itself primarily to its own members, already in 1971 a small publishing house was started for wider dissemination of its ideology. In the process of their publishing efforts, the “Greens” were true to the values they preached: in other words, they not only talked the talk but also walked the walk. Their modest propaganda materials were printed on recycled paper.

As of 1973, *Agalev* kept expanding beyond its previous confines. The movement took on the establishment and its values. It very rapidly em-

braced and espoused the cause of proponents of grassroots democracy, world peace, tolerance, inter-culturalism, women’s rights, gay rights, rights of vulnerable road users and social equality, while aiming its darts at over-consumption, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. Among the first initiatives directed to the outside world were the *Green Cyclists* and *Save Voorkempen*, aimed at saving the village of Doel by the river Scheldt. To that end, the most deeply committed members within the movement set up “action committees” and began to organise themselves more coherently. The more eco-philosophical oriented members gathered in “daily action” and “reflection groups”.

Founding of the Political Party *Agalev* (1979)

The birth of the political party *Agalev* followed some years after the founding of its francophone counterpart *Ecolo*. In 1974 and 1976, *Agalev* did not yet participate in the elections under its own name, but it did support certain candidates on the lists of the traditional parties. These candidates promised they would consider the movement’s social aspirations and expectations but, after the elections, they were quick to forget these promises. It was very clear that, if the greens wanted to have their demands firmly entrenched into mainstream politics, they would have to arrange for it themselves.

At that time, the party was fiercely engaged in the debate whether or not *Agalev* ought to turn into a political party or remain a social movement. For instance, there was quite a bit of resistance

1 With a sincere vote of thanks to Stefan Colaes and Jan Mertens and the borrowing of a part of the analysis from the contribution by Jo Buelens and Benoît Rihoux to the book ‘De Groei van Groen. Twintig jaar ecologische politiek in Europa’ (*Green Growth – Twenty years of ecological politics in Europe*), ed. Jan Mertens, Houtekiet, Antwerp, 2001.
2 Literally translated: living differently.

from the environmental movement to “getting tainted” by a political brush. But the flight stood poised for take-off and take-off was now inevitable. As of 1979, *Anders Gaan Leven* entered lists of candidates in various regions under the abbreviated name *Agalev*.

Initial results were not great. The State Council of *Agalev* subsequently formed a Working Committee to attract people from the new social movements and individuals with political experience. Successfully, as it turned out, since at the 1979 European elections, the Greens finally broke out of their old mould, garnering 2.3% of the vote. Not a bad result for a party without funding or resources and void of well-known names. This result did not yet translate into seats in Parliament, but two years later, the Greens did double their previous score. By the early elections in 1981, *Agalev* managed to get more than four percent of the vote and, suddenly, had three members elected to the national Parliament and seated one member on the provincial council in East Flanders.

The shockwave this caused within Belgian politics was enormous. Especially the election of the provincial council member carried a high symbolic value. Since 1932, not one single non-traditional party had managed to get elected to any such body. Socialists and Christian-Democrats hoped to get their piece of the pie by adopting green platform planks and thus recover a portion of the votes but, alas, they did not succeed in convincing the voter.

The unexpected and un hoped for success booked by *Agalev* convinced most of the Greens of the correctness of the course they had embarked on. A party structure was devised and implemented. In March 1982, the party held its Founding Convention in Tielrode, and, in May of the same year, a convention was held in Hasselt to discuss the statements of principles. In October, municipal council elections were held in which *Agalev* again scored highly: in some areas, *Agalev* managed to get more than ten percent of the vote, mostly at the expense of the Christian-Democrats. The Greens had finally and spectacularly entered the political arena.

From that moment onwards, there were three elected members that could devote themselves full-time to the realisation of the green philosophical objectives. They assembled a small professional staff around them. *Agalev* acted at that time primarily as the gadfly party that stung the old, traditional parties into action on ecological and social issues. Where the major parties had, ideologically speaking, run out of breath, the Greens presented a new socio-critical project that was greatly favoured by the voters. The Greens believed in the reparability and rejuvenation of society. They aimed at putting an end to the ecological ravaging of our planet and to an economy that had completely run amok, while wanting to mould economic growth into a sustainable economy, both in the western world and in the so-called Third World.

In addition, they would try to promote community-oriented self-development and grassroots democracy. During those initial years, the party scored especially well with local nuclear waste protest demonstrations, objections to linear taxation, and with concrete proposals around the question of waste recycling. Furthermore, a continuous stream of new – more theoretical – concepts emerged from the green source: eco-taxes, a basic income for everybody, referendums on the democratisation of the European institutions, and voting right to immigrants. The reverse side of this dialogue culture is that some of these discussions never reached their final issue. The party’s structure was not sufficiently adapted to switch over in the short term to a decision-making culture and needed to participate in policy-making.

Blossoming and Growth of *Agalev* (the 1980s)

During the second half of the eighties, *Agalev* quietly kept building up its platform and managed to profile itself in excellent fashion during the mass protest demonstrations against nuclear weapons. In the area of the environment, the party set the tone with its objection to illegal dumping of toxic wastes and to nuclear energy. According to the Greens, the economic and ecological risks were too high. Moreover, *Agalev* kept pleading

unabatedly for stronger European cooperation and, with the first congress of the European Green Coordination 1984 in Liège, set the right example. In the electoral arena, there seemed no need for Agalev to make any extra effort to win election after election. This was also apparent from the published election materials: Green candidates disseminated only a fraction of propaganda materials compared with the volume distributed by their opponents. The personality cult was diametrically opposed to the original party values. Rather, the Greens gained their votes as a team and with principled argumentation.

In particular, the ruling against accumulation of functions and rotation requirements appealed to voters. The elected Green candidates engaged themselves, in keeping with these rules, to combine as few different political mandates as feasible and not to hold on to any office for longer than two terms. In addition, the Greens did not participate in the Flemish-nationalistic debate amongst the other parties: for Agalev, the real problems did not stop at the (linguistic) border. Also, political careerists stood no chance in Agalev: mandataries were required to make substantial monetary contributions to the party and the combination of a mandate with a full-time career or a professional occupation was discouraged to such an extent that a substantial dose of selflessness and self-sacrifice was demanded from anyone committed to the green cause.

Members from all kinds of social organisations took their place at the cradle of Agalev: e.g., *Greenpeace*, *Union for an Improved Environment*, *Organisation for an Ecological Life Style and Cultivation Mode*, *Amnesty International*, *Doctors Without Borders*, *Oxfam*, *Committee for Women's Consultation*, the training organisation *Elcker-Ik*. Yet, the Greens have never tried to erect their own compartmentalisation along socio-political lines. The fact is that they arose in reaction to the shortcomings of the old, traditional denominationalism and they had no intention to stumble into the same pitfall.

As a result, Agalev profiled itself as a typical left-wing libertarian, anti-authoritarian party.

That kind of a party does not owe its success to bureaucratically orchestrated mass actions such as protest demonstrations and strikes, but rather to small-scale events and ludic-provocative, media-friendly actions. Characteristic was the small professional staff supported from the bottom-up by local groups, while the substantive party line was explained by working groups composed of volunteers. In the ethical field, the party positioned itself as a progressive advocate of the individual right and entitlement to a large degree of self-determination. The political core tasks rested on only a few shoulders, but these could count on a lot of sympathetic support. With respect to numbers, the greens had a rough time during municipal elections to everywhere enter complete lists of candidates that actually wanted to be elected. Even a strategy was developed to activate an *Agalev* group in every community.

About 1985, membership numbers hovered for the longest time around 1,000. By active membership drive, this had at least doubled by the end of the decade (in 2005, the number was circa 6,500). This remained little in comparison with the number of green voters, less than one percent in fact, in contrast with the old, traditional parties where that ratio was about ten percent. Furthermore, the link to the voter was quite loosely tied and indirect. The green voters and members were more than commonly critically inclined. Agalev saw itself forced at every new election to start the convincing process all over again and had to fight for every vote. The Greens tried to get across to more sympathisers beyond the core of the Agalev members and thus to broaden their base. Although this situation corresponded perfectly to comparable parties abroad, and with the entire sector of the new social movements, the ambition remained to grow in time into a stable, medium-size party.

From the very outset, women have fully occupied the most important positions within the party organs and on election lists. This trend was continued by taking recourse, voluntarily and earlier than the conventional parties, to the so-called *ritsysteem* ("zipper system": the alternation of candidates of different gender on the election

lists). Within the party councils, the Greens raised the bar equally high for themselves: everywhere, men and women had to be equally represented. During the same period, the young Greens organised themselves separately as Young Agalev, first and foremost amongst the students of the Catholic University of Leuven. They particularly addressed themes that keep youths and students wide awake and in this way attempted to get the ear of a new audience.

The Siren Call of Power Sharing

Until the closing of the eighties, Agalev was not really taken seriously. As long as its demands remained restricted to “a little bit more green”, the party could count on some sympathy. Yet, questions related to different production means and methods, presenting the bill for payment of damage done to the environment, the fight versus the ubiquitous automobile, and the constant demand for voting right of foreigners... this is but a smattering of issues that did not exactly appeal to the majority of the population. At the beginning, Agalev also presented only a limited platform and agenda. But as a result of the different successive election victories, not only the number of members of parliament but also the number of staff members had grown considerably larger. This enabled an extension of its research department. Support measures for the local cells made for an improved party organisation. Attention was devoted to the development of a full-fledged programme that could be presented to party conventions. Gradually, a gap was developing between volunteers and professionals. Truthful to the principles of the movement to remain as horizontally structured as possible, and to retain the decision-making right in the hands of the volunteers, an organisational schedule was maintained, at least in theory, but which, in actual practice, received a different kind of complementation and realisation. Members of parliament sat at the mainspring of the information, and the party professionals were the only ones with sufficient time to follow. The informal leaders now took command.

With this scenario in the background, the 1991 elections came calling. Given the previous results,

there was no real doubt about having achieved further growth and progress. On the contrary, expectations ran high since any improvement in the score was bound to have a significant impact: with a score of ten percent, Agalev would have been given a ministerial seat in the Flemish government. The Flemish Council was not yet elected directly at that time – every Flemish candidate elected to the House was automatically a member of the Flemish Council – and the government was composed proportionately.

At the party council of Westmalle in May 1990, the question was tabled: is Agalev justified in accepting the ministerial post? Would the acceptance of the post not be taken as a breach of the strategy which Agalev had thus far pursued? Realising the agenda was important, not sharing in the power. What were the guarantees that green factors would be implemented? Could the offer be refused without running the risk that the party would lose part of its credibility? Agalev hesitated. The threshold of negotiating and of participation in government suddenly stood together on the agenda. Which one to cross? The objective to gain power for the first time called in question the priority of achieving the objective of the party's programme.

A few days before the elections, the Steering Committee (the highest decision-making organ after the Party Convention) reached an agreement. The decision was actually rather ambivalent. Negotiations would be carried on about participation in government on two levels, both federal and Flemish. The regional participation would have to be for the entire term (at first, a transitional period of nine months was foreseen). There were to be no breaking points but rather a list of aspects open for negotiations and given a certain margin for discussion. It was unclear how the whole set-up would eventually be evaluated. That there existed some sense of reality with the individuals in attendance may be deduced from a sentence in the report: “The abolishment of the political appointments is considered very important, but it will prove difficult, even unfeasible.” (Steering Committee, 20/11/1991)

The date of 24 November 1991 would later be called “Black Sunday” following the stunning victory of the extreme right-wing party, *Vlaams Blok* (the “Flemish Block”), and the populist anti-party *ROSSEM*. This was not without consequences for a party such as Agalev. Grassroots democrats had no cause for rejoicing, even though the party had achieved minor gains. Gains were not as large as expected, but the success of the *Vlaams Blok* made the prospect of a proportional Flemish Government out of the question. The reality was that the *Vlaams Blok* was unacceptable as a government coalition partner.

A first attempt was undertaken to work out a “purple-green” government with the liberals and socialists but those negotiations fizzled out. In the media, the Greens were given the blame and accused of bringing an “immature” attitude to the table. But public opinion was at that moment the least of the party’s problems. During the negotiations, a serious internal conflict had surfaced: the contrast between secret negotiations under time pressure and grassroots democracy. In keeping with the movement’s philosophy, each and every major decision had to be first submitted to a Party Convention, the organ that still remained the highest decision-making body. But, likewise, a broad circle of party members wanted to be very closely involved in these important questions. This was not only fairly impossible from a practical point of view, but also not advisable tactically. The larger the group, the more difficult it appeared to keep strategic decisions under one’s hat.

The “base” was very disappointed at the lack of information during the negotiations. The principle of internal party democracy was clearly not to be abandoned as yet. Likewise, some were of the opinion that the objective of realising the goals of the party agenda had been seriously compromised. The fact that a basic demand such as voting right for immigrants had not been exacted but merely been tabled for further discussion, led some members (amongst whom an ex-senator) to lose faith in the party. The Green Party leadership was shocked at the lack of trust and confidence on the part of the party’s base. On the whole, then, the entire outcome had proved very disappoint-

ing indeed: no participation in government, an unhappy and dissatisfied base, and equally unhappy party leadership.

Seen against the entire background of the party’s evolution, this period needs to be regarded as a turning point in its brief political history. For the first time, Agalev had been asked for its participation as a coalition partner, and the organisation quite clearly demonstrated the will to negotiate. The threshold of negotiations had been crossed. This, in fact, was fully confirmed and affirmed one year later with the support of the St-Michael’s accord.

The St-Michael’s Accord: First Negotiations With a Result

In 1992, the Christian-Democrat and Socialist coalition government wanted to adapt the Constitution as a further step in the reform process of the Belgian state. The Liberals did not wish to allow this government a two-thirds’ majority so that consideration was given to the Greens (both Agalev and Ecolo). The *Vlaams Blok* was excluded on account of the existence of the *cordon sanitaire* (an agreement amongst all democratic parties not to include the extreme right in the composition of government).

Agalev was entirely disinterested in the idea of state reformation, but, in exchange for an accommodating attitude on that point, it became possible for it to table other, ecological, points for negotiations. The most telling example of this was the “ecotax”, an environmental taxation. The basic idea is very simple: by the levy of an additional tax on environmentally-unfriendly products and packaging, the consumer may be induced to pursue different shopping and consumption habits. The levy on beverage packaging received a highly symbolic function during and after the negotiations. Also grassroots points such as enabling local referendums and restrictions on the accumulation of political mandates were put on the agenda.

An added telling reason for Agalev to support this accord was the proposed reformation of the system of entering candidates on the electoral

lists and the direct elections of the Flemish Council (which, until that time, had been composed of Flemish members elected from the House and the Senate). From previous discussions, at that time still conducted with the Liberals, it appeared that a proposal had been tabled to reduce the number of elected officials per constituency. That was a very negative development for Agalev and could, in the long term, erode the party.

The support for the new accord for state reformation (which was given the name *Saint-Michael's Accord*) was unanimously accepted by the Steering Committee. The implication was clear: that was all that could be gotten out of the situation and it was better than nothing. Striking, however, is the fact that this important political decision was never put to the vote at a Party Convention.

The local groups themselves were not trying too hard to join the policy-making majority. Following the municipal elections in 1994, Agalev joined the majority in only 14 municipalities. At that time, it had already become clear that the ecotax had turned into an empty concept which had been professionally emasculated by the lobbying efforts of industry and traditional organisations.

Agalev might well feel a greater sense of self-importance and self-aggrandisement, but it did not belong to the political circles that possessed real power. Nevertheless, the Greens had managed to come one step closer to being accorded the status of a "potential government candidate" and this would allow them to cross the threshold towards government participation.

The evolution from a movement towards a full-fledged party organisation was nearly completed. The acceptance of a strategic plan, the agreement with a compromise, the increasing influence and power of the professionals... these were all signs that the choice of operating as a party had been taken. Nonetheless, the hesitant choices connected to conducting personal campaigns and the ad-

vancing to public prominence of party figureheads demonstrated that the party still had not achieved the status of an election machine.

The Dip of 1995

In May 1995, Agalev was for the first time confronted by a real election defeat. No doubt, this meant that the party paid the delayed price of the ecotax debacle. Yet, it did involve more than that. The traditional political class got bogged down into a very negative marshy field of corruption because of the Agusta-scandal.³ Agalev was able to appeal to the voters with the slogan "We are Clean"; yet, voters preferred to support the underdog, the wounded Socialist Party. The Socialist standard bearer Louis Tobback scored high points with his slogan "Your Social Security".

To everybody's surprise, Agalev lost ground. The party that was reputed to have the most integrity lost out to "scandalitis". The Greens then realised they had to get better organised if they ever wanted to oppose the traditional parties and stop the increasing trend towards the right. The call for the direly-needed increased professionalism had been issued: personnel were employed more efficiently and effectively and communication was modernised. The party took a progressive stance, opposed to intolerance and prejudice. The agenda prioritised lifestyle quality and solidarity. Agalev again burst out of the starting blocks and voters took positively to the renewed enthusiasm.

The Dioxin Crisis and the Dioxin Bonus (1999)

In 1999, all regional and federal levels were re-elected simultaneously, together with the European Parliament. With Agalev, the well-known Green politicians were explicitly promoted during a professional campaign that placed the emphasis on specific green points: a liveable environment, quality of life, mobility, etc. What happened next would prove of enormous benefit

3 In 1988 the Belgian Army had bought military helicopter of the A109 Agusta-type after Agusta and Dassault had bribed various office holders.

to the party. The dioxin crisis made people painfully aware of the reality of things as they were happening around them. Toxic dioxin-remnants had found their way into the human food chain. The scandal broke out just prior to the elections. The Christian-Democrat and Socialist ministers tried to talk their way out of the crisis but, in the end, were forced to resign. Agalev suddenly saw its core business elevated to the status of an indisputable campaign theme. The shelves in the supermarkets had been stripped bare, poultry and eggs appeared poisoned with dioxins. No escaping it. Agalev acquired greater credibility with its quality tale, especially since it adduced solutions during the food crisis.

The *Christian People's Party (CVP)* was held responsible for the government's faulty food policy and for the painfully inadequate subsequent communication efforts. The elections punished the party severely for its failures and the CVP lost its dominant position in the political arena. Liberals and Socialists saw their chance to make another attempt at their failed objective of 1991: forming a government without the Christian-Democrats. At the francophone side, the majority was already large enough by itself; in Flanders, support was needed from Agalev and from the democratic Flemish nationalists of the *Volksunie* (People's Union). After a brief negotiation period, the "purple-green" government was formed. As Agalev and Ecolo had thrown in their lot together, they both took up seats in the government. The threshold towards government participation had been crossed.

By crossing this final threshold, Agalev had incorporated the objective of participation in government into the party's objectives and also made this evident. This had happened also on the local scale, and even very explicitly so by its participation in the Antwerp coalition. Nonetheless, this was quite a big step to take for the party that had grown out of a movement that was entirely opposed to "filthy" power. The last campaign had further demonstrated that achieving victory in elections had gained enormously in importance. The logic in all of this was clear: who fails to get the vote has no elected representatives and no oppor-



tunities to realise its agenda and may, therefore, forget about any participation in government and a chance to score even more points.

Government Participation (1999-2004)

In July 1999, the Agalev Convention fully opted for participation in government. Agalev received in the federal government the portfolio for, amongst other areas, the environment, public health, animal care, food safety standards and development cooperation. In the Flemish Government, the Greens became responsible, amongst other areas, for the environment, agriculture, welfare, and equal opportunities, and, likewise, development cooperation.

Any initial step in participating in government affairs is not always that simple or easy, but the Green ministers were, nonetheless, able to present a very nice record of achievement. At the federal level, the decision was taken to cease involvement in nuclear energy, a stricter law on traffic safety was introduced, the food agency was formed, marriage amongst gay couples was allowed, a law was passed on patient rights, there

was an updating of the status of “people without papers”, (individuals that were forced to wait for a protracted period for a decision on their application for asylum), and, finally, there came a legal embedment of a growth curve to the 0.7% level for development cooperation.

At the Flemish level, a fully supported choice was made towards sustainable and organic agriculture and cultivation, the area of natural and forested stretches of land was increased, and a trail-blazing accord was signed with the care sector in response to the so-called “white anger” (demonstrations in the welfare sector). In addition, there came measures to improve the quality of life (such as the time credit: the opportunity to interrupt one’s career with partial salary compensation) as well as a serious acceleration of solutions to the environmental policy (amongst other concerns, the soil purification decree and sustainable water management). Finally, the environment and public health were given greater attention, and new resources and equipment was made available to physically challenged individuals (such as the “Personal Assistance Budget”).

Thus far the official resumes. But in the perception, Agalev had a much tougher time in government participation. The party was governed with a strict hand by “strong man” Jos Geysels, who deliberately chose to remain in the function of “political secretary” (meaning Chairman, in fact) rather than to become a minister. The base of Agalev appeared to accomplish the switch-over to a power party with rather surprising speed. The Agalev members were hardly getting themselves entangled in individual conflicts, as many had expected. Nevertheless, of the 27 Agalev members of Parliament, many were very critical of what was happening. They largely played the role of the opposition. Also the grassroots movements that were most closely related to the party followed the goings-on by the Green ministers with Argus eyes and, sometimes, dealt some striking blows. Quickly it became evident that Agalev was less able to cope with compromises than other parties.

All hell burst loose when mistakes started to happen. Judgmental errors perhaps, but perceived

as fatal. In the federal government, Agalev minister Magda Aelvoet did, in an unguarded moment, approve of the exportation of arms (sub-machine-guns) to Nepal. Consternation and disapproval amongst the rank-and-file was pronounced and Aelvoet resigned. But the damage was done. In the Antwerp coalition, the green aldermen were sucked into the maelstrom of the “Visa scandal” (a scandal centred on expense account reimbursements). A tempest in a teapot, so it appeared afterwards. But the fact was that, for the first time, Green politicians had become targets of controversy. In this respect also, the damage was incalculable. The Greens had lost their innocence.

Added to this was also the unfortunate communication of Green ministers or parliamentarians, for instance, on the subject of alleged legalisation of drugs or about the threatened erasure from the map of the village of Doel as a result of the expansion of the port of Antwerp. At the same time, major victories such as the regularisation of the status of individuals without proper immigration documents were not sufficiently communicated. The abandonment of nuclear energy was considered all too much as a foregone conclusion that needed no extra emphasis. And this while a large segment of the population, and especially a lot of youths, were actually no longer sure why there was such fierce opposition to maintaining the operation of nuclear power stations for a bit longer and gullibly swallowed the propaganda of the electricity proponents who promoted nuclear energy as a weapon against the greenhouse effect and global warming. Its major green trophy thus turned to the party’s disadvantage.

Right before the elections, the other parties smelled blood: the Greens were hunted game and were being pursued further. Delivering scathing criticism of Agalev became *de rigueur* for a few months, especially amongst the progressives. It was called “Green Bashing”. Farmers and huntsmen held a protest march against the Green environmental policy, displaying a broad banner that derided the Green minister for the Environment, Vera Dua, as a “green whore”. Members of another majority party joined in. The death bell for the Flemish Greens was sounded by a desperate

act on the part of Ecolo figurehead Isabelle Durant who, because of the controversy over noise overload inflicted on neighbourhoods around the Zaventem airport, suddenly decided to throw in the towel and, a few weeks prior to the elections, resigned from the government.

This was deadly for Agalev, since the party had always prided itself on its collaboration with the francophone Greens but now suddenly was left foolishly dangling in the winds. Durant ranged herself on the side of the interests of the Brussels population, the majority of whom are francophones. Her solution went against the interests of the people living in the Flemish peripheral regions around Brussels. This led to the situation that – on this extremely delicate issue of environmental pollution – Agalev was floored by its own sister party. What followed was a lifeless campaign with, as the only notable feature, the fact that the candidates on all lists – with one single exception – were women. But this appeared at this time wholly inadequate to placate the progressive voters, who happened to be mesmerised by the project of the socialist wonder boy Steve Stevaert and his idea of forming a progressive front that would bring together socialists and progressive Flemish nationalists into one progressive alliance under the name SP.a (Socialist Party – Different)-SPIRIT.

The Defeat of 2003

The year 2003 is a dark page in the history of Agalev. The federal government participation was found wanting by the electorate and, at the federal elections on 18 May, the party sank everywhere below the five percent electoral threshold. 197,000 voters switched their allegiance from Agalev towards the progressive cartel. Agalev did not manage to win even one seat and lost its federal party subsidy. It had become a party on the ropes. And, to add to the disastrous situation, the tide gave no indication of turning. A number of former green voters expressed regret and claimed that they had not wanted this turn of events, but the majority stuck to its guns. Also in new polls, Agalev remained firmly mired well below the electoral threshold.

Moreover, the party barely was given time to recover. In 2004, new elections for Flanders, Brussels and Europe loomed on the horizon. The political leadership assumed responsibility for the defeat and stepped aside to make room for a new generation. Jos Geysels handed the green torch to Dirk Holemans, Flemish MP for Agalev, but the latter was not immediately able to restore peace and order within the party. Agalev did maintain its presence in the Flemish government, albeit with different ministers. A new historical play was staged: Flemish ministers Mieke Vogels and Vera Dua resigned. Some former parliamentarians deserted to other parties. The people that remained took heart from the success of other Green parties in Europe and from the founding of the *European Green Party*.

A New Impulse: Conversion to Groen! (2003)

Following a brief chaotic period in the summer of 2003, Vera Dua took over the helm from Dirk Holemans and restored order within the Green camp. The heavy blow to the Greens brought still more positive results: hundreds of new members signed up, refusing to simply abandon the valuable green project. A majority still believed in a bright future for an independent direction of green thought. In the meantime, work continued assiduously on developing a new substantive project. The key words in this mission of party innovation were “solidarity, long term and boundaries”.

In order to make innovation completely clear to the outside world, a new name was selected that would immediately evoke the similarity with the names of the other European Green parties: simply *Groen!* (Green!). At the November 2003 congress, the party-jargon was modernised even further: Dua had herself proclaimed the first Green “president” instead of taking the title of “political secretary”. All party organs were thoroughly revamped, the structure and, especially, the communication channels were streamlined, and a new contingent of young talent was being prepared for the eventual succession. For the first time, the Green election candidates were allowed to set up personal posters. Also some other old



principles were sacrificed on the field of this drive for renewed efficiency. Notwithstanding this renewal, the final decision-making competence remained in the hands of the members of the Party Convention. *Groen!* adhered to the ideas of grassroots democracy and an active volunteer policy. Participation and transparency were not merely empty concepts with the Greens.

The 2004 Elections: a Make or Break Situation

In spite of all efforts to streamline the party, it remained a balancing act that teetered on the brink of the abyss. Overwhelming loud sounded the siren call of the socialists and their progressive alliance. SP.a-figurehead Stevaert had become a saint in his own country. On the federal level, a new purple government was formed without Greens. Ecolo, with a handful of MPs, had been reduced to a fretful opposition. *Groen!* was still present in the Flemish government but had not a single seat in the Belgian Parliament. The party had been forced to submit to the unthinkable come-down: from being a force in government reduced to extra-parliamentary opposition.

To make matters even worse, *Groen!* was torn apart by internal conflict. An important group, especially in the province of Limburg, wanted a coalition with the progressive alliance. Others, in contrast, were fiercely opposed to succumb to the socialist lure. During the Party Convention, where the Greens were again finding their footing, the socialist figurehead Steve Stevaert was severely assailed. He was compared to the “holy priest of

Hasselt”, a paragon of “hypocrisy”. The entire convention applauded. But other greens, who did believe in collaboration, were angered and felt they had been betrayed. The figurehead of the Greens in the Flemish government, Ludo Sannen, could not ultimately acquiesce in, and reconcile himself with, the decision of the convention that forbade him to appear on one list with the socialists. He resigned as minister and crossed over to the SP.a. And once again, the Greens were forced to replace a minister. The merry-go-round had come full circle. It was under that kind of political constellation that the party had to conduct its campaign for the Flemish parliamentary elections on 13 June 2004.

This campaign actually turned into one of the most critical ever in the history of the Green party. Could *Groen!* find its footing again after the serious setback of 2003? Could *Groen!*, in the absence of adequate financial funding and resources, conduct a professional campaign? In short, would there still remain a Green party? *Groen!* opted for a purposeful campaign. Under the motto “Vera is looking for ... 280.000 supporters”, all resources were put to good use in a straightforward and creative manner in order to establish a dynamic presence. With the election slogan “The ball is in your court”, *Groen!* clearly hit the right note with the voters. It did turn into a very suspenseful campaign, and on election day it appeared that *Groen!* scored a lot better than had been expected. For the Flemish Parliament, the party obtained 7.6% of the vote; for the European Parliament, 7.99%. Following the elections, the party immediately decided to go into opposition, even though *Groen!* was once again considered for participation in government.

During the period following the elections of 2004, a sense of peace and order returned to the greens. In spite of the fact that the financial and personal consequences of the 2003 defeat still lingered and weighed heavily on the party, serious efforts were made to strengthen its overall structure with a view to the coming years. Serious investments were made in content with party conventions in 2005 and 2006 (the latter establishing the programme for the municipal elections).

Furthermore, an intensive collaboration with the European Green Party was pursued. And, in the meanwhile, preparations were in progress for the local elections in October 2006 and for the federal elections in the spring of 2007.

The results of the municipal elections in 2006 confirmed that *Groen!* had recovered from the 2003 disaster and was once again a political party to be taken into account. With more than 300 representatives in municipal, district, provincial and *Public Centre for Social Support* councils, *Groen!* remained locally firmly entrenched. To repeat the top results of 1999 seemed slightly too high an aim. In many municipalities a price was paid – albeit with some delay – for the decline in 2003. As a result, a number of groups lost their only seat on the council. But on the whole, *Groen!* was, with its 2006 results, as strong locally as Agalev had been in 1994. Moreover, the two green mayors, Willy Minnebo (Zwijndrecht) and Ingrid Pira (Mortsel) managed to record a surprisingly strong result, which procured both a renewed term in office. In the process, Pira survived a new wave of “Green Bashing,” which even depicted her in the national media as the worst mayor in Flanders. All of this because of the opposition she had to face for measures to put the brakes to the volume of car traffic. In many locations, *Groen!* entered the elections as part of an alliance.

Re-Entry Into the House and the Senate

But the true touchstone was 2007. For four years, *Groen!* had – on the federal level – been in opposition without elected MPs. Would *Groen!* regain seats in the House and in the Senate? This was not at all an evident and foregone conclusion. The socialists were conducting a very green campaign and made it appear that *Groen!* had become superfluous. They opposed nuclear energy and organised everywhere in Flanders information and discussion sessions called “climate evenings” in the wake of Al Gore’s defence of the environment. In response to all this, *Groen!* opted to embrace a radical rejuvenation operation with a new generation of ecologists: all entries on the

party’s lists for Parliament were new, young candidates. Only Vera Dua figured as a veteran on the Senate list. Political commentators talked about a suicide mission.

As to the content of its message, *Groen!* placed particular emphasis on climate and poverty. An important campaign resource was the well-documented “Climate Book” by *Groen!* candidates Els Keytsman and Peter Tom Jones. The tide turned once again and, in the polls, the party scored highly. With their campaigns in protection of the endangered polar bear, the Green candidates managed to re-enlist the sympathy of the public. Yet, ultimately, the result was somewhat disappointing and *Groen!* barely managed to hang on. In fact, the entire left in Flanders bit the dust. Yet, the socialists were even worse off and scored deeply disappointing results. In spite of its alliance with SP.a, SPIRIT⁴ lost all of its seats except one. The climate theme barely played a role with voters and was overshadowed by populism and by the community theme, discussions about the splitting up of Belgium.

Nonetheless, because of the 6.3% federal results, *Groen!* made a return to the House and to the Senate. The party’s score resulted in four MPs, one directly elected senator, and one community senator. Together with Ecolo, which doubled its seats in the House (from four to eight), the Greens again formed a strong team of ecologists in Parliament. In Flanders, the Greens and socialists sat together in opposition. Once again, it became a question of probing and searching for a direction. Would there follow a logical task-division between the two factions or would they continue to contest each other? This question could prove decisive for the future of *Groen!*, but likewise for the future of progressive Flanders. A lengthy crisis in the forming of a government, a provisional government under outgoing Prime Minister Verhofstadt, and, finally, a new but very impotent and fragmented government under Leterme, where the coalition partners happily devoured each other like raw meat, offered opportunities to build forceful opposition work. In the meantime,

4 Since 19 April 2008: Flemish Progressives.

the next Flemish parliamentary elections loomed near. There remained the chance that the crippled Belgian government would fall and that all elections would again be lumped together: in that case, the Flemish and European elections would coincide with the accelerated federal elections.

Is the Future Coloured Green?

The future is green. This was the slogan used by Agalev during the successful elections in 1999. On the twentieth anniversary of the party's existence in 2001, guest authors for our commemorative volume, Buelens and Rihoux stated in this respect: "the future is green, but not necessarily to be contemplated through rosy-coloured glasses (for a green party)". Two years later, they were proven so right!

And still today, five years later, when the Flemish Greens are still alive and kicking, the question remains pertinent. In Flanders, all political parties have taken on a green colour. Sensible greens, so they call themselves. This sudden green trend was started by the socialists. The Christian-Democrats were more than happy to take over the slogan and turn it into their own provocative adage. The Christian Democrat & Flemish Party's (CD&V) environment minister and, subsequently, Prime Minister Kris Peeters turns his back on green environmental policy, espouses the cause of nuclear energy and tries to sell his new approach as a sensible green policy. Underneath it all, this is just a new form of "Green bashing": the policy advocated by the Greens is – as any intelligent person can tell – an unintelligent, even "ignorant" green policy.

Even more remarkable is the green trend now evident in industry. "No future without green technology", so runs the headline from *Agoria*, the federation of the metal-working and processing sector in Flanders. Businesses and federations are elbowing one another to achieve the most prominent "green profile". "CO2-neutral" is the trendy word of the year. A number of environmental movements do not hesitate to flirt and fraternise with these enterprises turned green. And, naturally, companies are conducting their business in an "intelligent green manner" and the CD&V

Prime Minister is invariably very keen and most willing and available to come and cut the ceremonial ribbons for new green investments of his favoured companies. The traditional politicians and the companies are leaving the green party/parties in their wake. At the time when the climate crisis is turning critical, or at the moment when we are on the verge of a worldwide crisis in terms of food safety, the traditional parties are leading the fray. Green politics is far too serious a business to leave in the hands of Green politicians... such is the reasoning.

And, yes indeed, what exactly is the future of *Groen!* in Flanders, or of the Green parties in Europe, or, for that matter, on a worldwide scale?

The Ecological Revolution Will Always Be Short of Helping Hands

What do we have to worry about? Have the socialist parties now become superfluous because of the elimination of child labour, because of the introduction of general voting rights, or even because of the introduction of the entire social security law?

Is the ecological revolution we are witnessing now not a much more encompassing project than the social revolution that was initiated with the cooperation of the socialists? Have the socialists been affected in their reason for existence because, also Catholics, and, in time, also liberals, and recently likewise Greens, have embraced social themes? Never mind, the greater the participation, the greater the fun. Without collaboration across party boundaries, the social welfare state would never have come to pass and would not be able to survive.

And, consequently, is this not even more relevant to the ecological welfare state that we wish to establish right now? The Greens cannot succeed in this on their own, all the less so since time is pressing. Collaboration amongst parties is an absolute necessity. The presence of Greens is surely needed in this in order to keep asking pertinent questions, to expose and unmask green lies and all kinds of "green speak". *Groen!* or other Green

parties must not allow themselves to get excited and draw the odium of small-green radicals upon themselves. *Groen!* can consciously and deliberately trace out its own course of direction, to the left and libertarian without taboos, conservative and in defence of values where such defence is required.

It seems that currently everybody is occupied and pre-occupied with the green revolution. Indeed a splendid development! Did we hope for another development? Hardly. But, of course, there are false prophets. And, it must be confessed, the greens do not always have a monopoly on the truth. Yet, one thing is certain: for green questions that are posed by Green parties, and for green answers that we want to offer in response, there is a broad potential and a great need.

In the years to come, anything and everything is possible. Pronounced and acute ecological needs and crises do not necessarily create the ideal platform for green electoral victories. Nonetheless, the ecological facts are undeniable and unmistakably confirm our analysis and inspire thoughtful individuals to consider possibilities for solutions.

Each and every step away from the present critical situation and towards the solution of the crises that beset our civilization, however small, is a step in the right direction. The Greens will keep taking such steps, major and minor, as is their wont, in the area of climate policy, recovery of free space, support for ecological innovation. And that is a good thing!



Johan Malcorps has been an active party member since 1983. During the period 1989-1995, he functioned as political secretary of Agalev, and from 1995 to 2004 he was an Agalev MP. At this moment, he is coordinator of the political cell (research department) of *Groen!*.

TOMMY SIMPSON

From Pressure Group to Government Partner – The Irish Way

There is a striking similarity in the way Green parties emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century. Yet, with some variations from one country to another, the disparate types of people who assembled to form Green parties seemed drawn together with a common purpose. It was as if a new political ideology was revealed, an ideology whose time had come.

In most European countries, since the end of the Second World War political traditions had not changed very much. The mix of parties and outcomes of elections were predictable, either right or left. More recently they are referred to as centre-right or centre-left, as traditional parties gravitate towards the centre.

So what brought about this challenge to the existing political establishment of left/right politics? The radical upheavals of the 1960s and 70s had produced new thinking on political representation and demonstrated disillusionment with existing structures, particularly amongst young people. A new awareness of the interconnectedness of life on planet earth was emerging.

In 1948 the British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle stated, “once a photograph of the Earth, taken from the outside, is available, we shall, in an emotional sense, acquire an additional dimension, once the sheer isolation of the Earth becomes known to every man, whatever his nationality or creed – a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose.” Hoyle insinuated, that this additional dimension might provide mankind with a perspective on himself that could prove beneficial to his continued survival.

In 1966, in San Francisco, where the traditional view of politics and lifestyles was being openly challenged, Steward Brand, originator and publisher of the *Whole Earth Catalog* asked the question “why haven’t we seen a photograph of the whole Earth yet?” He had speculated, like Hoyle almost twenty years earlier, that an image of the earth as a whole would have a huge impact upon people’s perception of the world.

There was also the seminal works of people like science writer Rachel Carson, whose *Silent Spring* shocked people when it was published in 1962.¹ She questioned the use of pesticides and the power of the chemical industry. Also writers like E. F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* subtitled *Economics as if People Mattered*² and of course the Club of Rome Report *Limits to Growth*³ helped create this world view.

These events and writings did have an effect on a significant number of people, which motivated them into action. Many new NGOs sprung up in the late sixties and seventies that reflected this new paradigm. They lobbied existing political parties and governments. They staged colourful public demonstrations to raise awareness of the issues.

Frustrated at the lack of action by the established political system in many countries, particularly the more affluent, some activists were driven to challenge that same system at the ballot box.

A New Party Is Born

In Ireland in the depths of winter in December 1981, 80 people assembled to form a new political party. The *Irish Green Party* (*Comhaontas Glas* in the Irish language) was born. Initially it was called

1 Carson, R. *Silent Spring*, London, Hamilton, (1963).

2 Schumacher, E.F. *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered*, New York, Harper and Row, (1973).

3 “The Limits to Growth”, Club of Rome Report, London, Earth Island Ltd, (1972).

the *Ecology Party of Ireland* but this name was changed later when the term “green” became more associated with global and environmental issues rather than Irish nationalism. Also at that time it was harder to sell a party with the word “ecology” in the title, which was then more understood, by the public, as a term of scientific and academic study.

It was symptomatic of the types of people that assembled to form the *Green Party*, that selling a political message was not their forte. A mixture of environmentalists, feminists, animal welfare activists, disillusioned leftists, community activists, peace and anti-nuclear campaigners were the founders of this new party. Very few had any practical experience of political engagement in electoral politics. Yet most felt the need to challenge the established political system.

There were some strong voices saying that we should remain a pressure group, that we should not get involved in that sleazy, dirty game of party politics, whose hierarchical structures would force us to adopt unacceptable compromises. The very thought of fighting elections was anathema to some. Despite these forebodings we went ahead to form and register the party.

The first party convention was held in the mountains near Dublin in the spring of 1982. It saw the adoption, by consensus, of seven core principles that would guide the party in its future course of action. These seven principles remain the same to this day. They are:

- The impact of society on the environment should not be ecologically disruptive.

- Conservation of resources is vital to a sustainable society.

- All political, social and economic decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level.

- Society should be guided by self-reliance and co-operation at all levels.

- As caretakers of the earth we have the responsibility to pass it on in a fit and healthy state.

- The need for world peace overrides national and commercial interests.

- The poverty of two-thirds of the world’s family demands a redistribution of the world’s resources.

A lot of these issues were not on the political agenda of the political establishment at that time. We were pioneers with a new set of political ideals.

One of the participants at the convention was Michael Crowson who said he represented the *European Union of Green and Radical Parties*. He said that membership of the green movement ran into many millions and that there was a growing awareness that the human race was about to face a reckoning because of its exploitation of the earth. Another was a young 19-year-old, Ciaran Cuffe, who came out of curiosity. He later went on to become a Dublin City Councillor and is now a Green Member of Parliament (MP) and party spokesperson on Foreign Affairs.

The Art of Practical Politics

It is one thing to have a group of idealists with sincerely held beliefs of how society should be governed and another to discover how many of the public agree with you. We learned the art of practical politics the hard way. Even though a few had experience of electioneering, to the vast majority of members it was unfamiliar territory. Election campaigns are different from single issue campaigns, particularly in Ireland with our version of proportional representation. Irish election campaigns demand face to face contact with as many of the electorate as possible. This canvassing is done mainly by going door to door and asking for a number one vote.

Unlike most of Europe, Ireland does not have a list voting system. Irish elections are based on multi-member constituencies with each constituency having between three and five members. This system is called “proportional representation – single transferable vote”. To win a seat in a three seat constituency, a candidate would need to gain about 15% of the first preference vote. In

a five seat constituency about ten percent of first preference votes are needed.

We faced our first electoral challenge in November 1982. With the fall of the government, a snap general election was called. We put forward seven candidates. These reluctant politicians were selected on the basis that whoever wanted to be a candidate was allowed to stand. With very little resources and a small active membership, a common election leaflet was printed for all candidates. We knew that there was little chance of winning a seat, but we wanted to put the Green Party on the political map.

Media coverage was almost non-existent. Since the foundation of the party a large section of the media treated us quite cynically. They could not place us on the usual left/right axis of Irish politics. Greens were dismissed as elitist, ageing hippies, idealistic and their policies were considered incomprehensible and “off the wall”. This view was orchestrated by established politicians who resented the entry of the Greens into the political arena.

The formal launch of our election campaign was attended by only one reporter. While he was having his tea and cake, the chairman announced that “the party did not really expect to have anyone actually elected”. In his report in the *Irish Times* he noted that “the *Ecology Party* introduced its seven candidates at quite the nicest and most endearingly honest press conference of the whole campaign”.

The two page press release described the party as neither left nor right. It could be described as internationalist as it did not see Ireland as any more important than any other country.

The result nationally was 0.2%, but this is not an accurate reflection of electoral support, as we only had candidates in one sixth of the constituencies. In the city of Cork the result was closer to four percent.

In each subsequent election in Ireland the Green vote increased. The success of *Die Grünen* in Germany in 1983, winning 27 seats in the Bundestag, gave great hope to the Irish Greens and other fledgling green parties in Europe.

We established links with the *Co-ordination of European Green Parties* and sent a delegate to the meetings in Brussels. In 1984 the party decided to contest the election to the European Parliament. It secured two percent in the Dublin constituency with candidate Christopher Fettes, the party’s founder. Even then, a pan-European approach was being developed by Greens across Europe. A press release of the time illustrates this,

“... it is the aim of the greens to work towards a democratic Europe of self-determined regions. While the Irish people have the prime responsibility to work for their own development, they cannot bring this about in isolation.... The greens will also seek the democratisation of the present European Parliament, such that any decision that comes into force at community level would require an endorsement by the majority of the elected members.”

Financing

A lot of commentators and party members felt at that time that the party had an identity problem. There is no doubt that we had little financial resources. Paying for advertising space in newspapers or billboards was out of the question. State funding of political parties did not exist then. The Irish media ignored us. Greenpeace’s spectacular media events, that appeared on the TV main evening bulletins, had a positive spin-off for us. On door to door canvassing, some older people were heard to say “I like what you’re doing on the high seas, protecting the whales”. They sometimes referred to us as the Greenpeace Party. During one European election campaign we were congratulated several times for our party political broadcast on television, when in fact it was the broadcast of our green party allies in Great Britain on BBC TV, which is available in most of Ireland.

Before we had any parliamentary representation, we were mainly self-financed through membership subscriptions. The change in the law which grants state funding to parties is more recent. Election expenses were the concern of the local party branch, who tried to raise funds locally.

Our only significant injection of cash came about almost by accident. The *Waterboys* were a big name on the pop scene in the late 1980s, with major international hits. They walked into our old grubby office one day in 1987 and asked what we were doing about the pollution that was causing fish kills in Irish rivers. We asked them would they do a free concert for us. They agreed to do two concerts. It was the most successful fundraising event we ever ran. It received enormous press coverage and gave us the badly needed funds to develop the party.

In the General Election of 1989, we had our first success in a parliamentary election, with the election of Roger Garland in Dublin. The party also polled well in the European elections, getting 3.5% in the two constituencies which were contested. This success enabled the party to overhaul its administrative structure and employ its first paid worker.

The success was built on in the local elections of 1991 with councillors elected to the larger local authorities, ten in the greater Dublin area. The Greens became part of the governing coalition on Dublin City Council, securing the position of the position of Mayor for John Gormley for a year.

The perseverance of so many members during the years in the political wilderness, when it was obvious there was little chance of success, is to be commended. Now, the struggle to build a new political force appeared worthwhile.

The successes of Greens in other European countries raised our spirits. Our own successes in the 1994 European elections were also a major achievement. Patricia McKenna headed the poll in Dublin, with over 14% first preference votes and Nuala Ahern had a spectacular victory in the Leinster constituency with eleven percent. This was followed with two *Dáil* (Parliament) seats in 1997 and six in 2002. The European success was repeated in the 1999 European election. In 2004 we had a setback with the loss of both European Parliament seats.

Going for Government

The General Election of 2007 was scheduled to be a turning point for our party. Seat increases

were predicted, we were doing well in the opinion polls. The party had prepared for the prospect of entering government. The annual conventions for the preceding years had been carefully planned, with guest speakers from countries where greens had been in government. Their contributions were mainly in relation to their parties positive achievements in government. From Germany we had Reinhard Bütikofer, Renate Künast and from Finland, Pekka Haavisto.

The predicted gains in seats did not materialise, even with a vote increase of 22%. The greens were squeezed, with media attention concentrating on the fight between the large parties (this has occurred in other countries as well and is an issue that needs to be seriously addressed by greens). However with the retention of our six seats and the finely balanced numbers in parliament, we were in a position to negotiate for participation in government. This proved difficult and at one stage, negotiations completely broke down. The final agreement was satisfactory from a green perspective and we secured two senior and one junior ministry. The programme for government was passed by 83% of members at a special convention.

Being a member of the European green family proved very fruitful during our negotiations for government. Support and practical assistance was forthcoming from our *European Green Party* (EGP) sisters. The *Swedish Green Party* supplied us with a translation of their 121 point agreement they had negotiated with the Social Democrats. The Belgian Flemish party *Groen!*, supplied us with a copy of the Belgian law forbidding corporate donations to political parties. This was one of our manifesto proposals. Johan Hamels, EGP treasurer and *Groen!* Secretary General, paid us a visit and advised our party leaders. Reinhard Bütikofer was in contact by phone. This solidarity of the European Greens was reflected in media coverage, in newspapers, radio and television.

Party Structures

The Irish Green Party, in common with some of our sister parties in Europe have had many internal upheavals in our brief history. At the out-

set most green parties were composed of sincere well-meaning people, from the backgrounds described above, who wanted to make the earth a better place for all, not just humans.

The distrust of the existing political establishment was so strong amongst some, that any structure that smacked of an efficient political organisation was not to be trusted. They believed that non-hierarchical organisational structures should replace top down dictatorships. The basis for the “fundi” / “realo” debate was set. It still exists in some Green parties today. Those who wanted to modernise their organisation to effectively fight elections and win, were to be treated with suspicion by the more fundamentalist members.

In the Irish Greens in the 1980s, putting your picture on election literature or posters was considered to be promoting the “cult of personality” instead of policy. All decisions were to be made by consensus. This is a lovely idea, but in practice it meant that tedious interminable debate replaced productive progress. It was described by one member as the “tyranny of the minority”. After some heart wrenching, traumatic meetings the pragmatists were in the ascendancy. It is not surprising that the party was slow in making any significant electoral gains in the first decade of its existence.

Perhaps the terms fundi and realo are misnomers. Similar factions with different titles exist in all political parties. What was distinctly lacking in those early days, was a good understanding of group dynamics. How to get the best possible outcome from any gathering of people, brought together for a common purpose. The surprising thing is, that the type of organisations who have studied this subject in depth and implemented effective changes, are the large corporations, with whom the Greens find little in common. Yet some are adopting progressive organisational structures to empower employees to participate in a meaningful way in the decision making process. Terms such as “teamwork”, “team player” are now common in commercial and state organisations. It is a strategy that all Green parties could learn from.

Another area with which the Greens have great difficulty is the question of leadership. Most Green parties in Europe have now adopted a pragmatic approach to this subject. Again, it is an area where industry and commerce have forged ahead with effective answers. The suggestion of a dictatorial boss, in a well-run enterprise, would nowadays be regarded as a hindrance. The modern concept of a leader is a supportive facilitator, helping the staff (members) to use their skills and abilities effectively.

Most Greens joined their respective parties to bring about the changes to society that we all desire. There is very little disagreement on issues such as climate change etc. The disagreements have usually to do with strategy.

Members of NGOs have a particular strategy or mindset on how to achieve their objectives. Members of political parties also have their strategy or mindset to achieve, what may be, similar objectives. The difference is, that as parties we do it by getting people elected to political office in an electoral arena. This is often the most misunderstood aspect of being a party member. As most Greens come from an NGO background, it can be difficult to make the transition to the party political mindset, which involves winning elections. Also electioneering may require the use of an additional set of skills than those of an NGO. This is an area where some parties have introduced effective training.

The Way Forward

Like all political parties we have a message. We are the first political movement ever to have this green worldview. Even with recent setbacks in some countries, the green political movement is the fastest growing “new” political movement in the world. Green parties have achieved political success at all levels of government, in a relatively short time span, compared to the length of time it took for other political movements to achieve electoral success. How long were the socialists formed before they started to enter parliaments? In most countries it was more than half a century. Green parties from seventy-eight countries were represented in Sao Paulo for the May 2008 Global Green Congress. Most parties were

relatively young and were making electoral gains. Getting our message across is a communications exercise. We have excellent politicians who are doing a superb job of communicating, under difficult circumstances. Our only problem is that we do not have enough of them.

With the different electoral systems in each country there is no single prescription. In countries with list systems, personalities are less important than in countries with constituency systems (Ireland, Malta, Great Britain).

Communicating any message requires particular skills. Some people are better at it than others. I do not believe it is a major problem that people are joining for personal or career motives – as long as each party has strong statutes, that can deal with new members who stray too far from the message or bring the party into disrepute.

Most members of Green parties are altruistically minded people. They mistakenly assume that the general public is likewise altruistic. If that were true, the majority of citizens would be involved in altruistic charitable organisations for the betterment of society. Current evidence shows that less and less people are volunteering for voluntary charitable work.

As Greens, if we just direct our message at altruistic people and environmentalists our vote will remain static. Most parties have a client base: the Socialists have the trade union movement, the Christian Democrats have the business community. They know who their clients are and they target their policies to suit. But the left/right waters are becoming muddied at present. It is hard to know who is right and who is left anymore. These parties are now claiming to be green as well. It is a success for the Greens to be able to change the political agenda. But rhetoric from these politicians is not enough. It is said they are stealing our clothes. They may steal our outer garments, but they will not steal our underwear.

In the constituency of North Dublin where our former party leader Trevor Sargent got the most votes of four MPs in 2002, the core Green

vote would be about six to seven percent. Yet Trevor polled over 17% first preference votes. He is regarded as a good politician with outstanding integrity and honesty. It does not matter that others steal his clothes, they know where he stands on local issues, he is popular with the constituents. He knows many of them personally. It is one of the downsides of the Irish voting system that clientelism is so ingrained in the body politic. Yet, if a politician does not get involved in local issues and listen to voter's individual concerns, there is no chance of getting elected.

With the list system, this is less important. In Germany with a half list system, *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* have only one of their MPs directly elected in a constituency vote, Hans-Christian Ströbele. If there is an optimum percentage with the list system, or the growth is sluggish, then green politicians will need to make themselves better known to their voters. They will have to "press the flesh" (shake voter's hands), kiss babies and stand regularly outside shopping centres to talk to potential voters: do what Herr Ströbele does in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin.

It is interesting to note that all Irish MPs, have previously been councillors, for many years, operating at local level.

Policies

In the early years of the Greens our policies were less focussed than they are now. It was easy for critics to dismiss some of them as unworkable, since no government party was willing to take them on board at that time. Now they are tripping over each other, to show their green credentials. In Ireland there was also hostility from the business community and farmers, who saw the greens as a threat, with policies that would damage their incomes. Since the Greens have entered government, a lot of fears have been allayed and there is a heightened respect for the performance of green ministers. This is reflected in the opinion polls. There is no doubt that participation in government in different European countries has meant that green policies have to be taken far more seriously than heretofore.

Policies need to be tailored to where people are at now, not where Greens think the public should be. As US President George W. Bush's backroom man Karl Rove says, "if you are explaining, you are losing." In the past Greens were somewhat elitist in expecting voters to understand new political concepts. As one of our candidates put it, "it won't frighten the horses" when explaining people friendly policies. We have been credited with being ahead of the posse on issues like renewable energy, if we are too far ahead we leave ourselves open to attack and misunderstanding.

At the same time we must not lose sight of a green vision of sustainability. The word "sustainability" itself does not go down well on the doorstep, it is too vague for most voters.

The use of qualitative research such as "focus groups" are essential to test the temperature of voters to particular candidates, policies and visions. This has proved particularly useful in Germany and to a small degree in Ireland. We must focus our message without betraying our convictions.

The essentials of how to get a message across means hiring consultants, who specialise in this area. Now green parties are hiring advertising agencies. This would have been unheard of, when the parties were being established.

Left/Right

It should now be obvious to the parties on the left that the Greens will not guarantee them automatic support. With Ireland, Finland, Czech Republic and now the German City State of Hamburg aligned with centre-right parties, Greens have strengthened their bargaining power. As the old concept of left/right becomes blurred, it offers the opportunity for the establishment of a new paradigm.

Social Democratic parties are in decline in Europe. They are blamed by their followers for introducing right-wing policies. Some of their traditional support has gone to parties further to the left. Hopefully some will come to the greens. Some Christian Democratic parties have moved to the left. So the centre is getting crowded.

Greens should take advantage of this situation and devise strategies to attract disillusioned Social Democrats. They could also devise a marketing strategy to get the media to adopt new green terminology that replaces the left/right spectrum. This could be developed on a Europe wide basis. If all green politicians used these terms when dealing with the media, we may see people responding to the new paradigm, Greens versus the rest (the old parties with no solutions). This would require a coordinated common strategy, with advice from communications professionals.

Marketing

Most Green parties now realise we are involved in a marketing exercise. We must use all the tools of marketing. The cost of marketing expertise is often prohibitive, especially to parties who have not secured representation. As well as hiring professionals in this area, we should look to train our own. Not all parties have paid press officers and only when finances got better, did parties hire this expertise.

The EGP has already commissioned surveys with some of its members, to determine support among voters. This is mainly quantitative research, which is helpful in targeting specific groups of voters. As stated above, more qualitative research is required. It can be a waste of resources trying to convince a hardened socialist or conservative to vote green, when they will stick rigidly to their traditional parties. We need to find the "floating voters" and find out what will make them change to vote green. A lot of this research has already been carried out in the US. Bill Clinton's second run for office, showed he was going to lose, until a massive search was carried out to determine who are the floating voters and take corrective action.

This type of research was carried out extensively for the Republican Party in the US, to sway huge numbers of voters. That is where the term "Reagan democrats" emerged. It goes right back to the father of PR: Eduard Bernais, the Austrian immigrant who coined the phrase *Public Relations* (it was previously called "propaganda"), was the nephew of Sigmund Freud. He used Freud's

psychoanalysis, in PR, for the benefit of large corporations and the most reactionary politicians, right up until his death at 104 years of age. He was recognised as one of the most influential men of the 20th century in the US.

Marketing tools for qualitative research, which looks at changing human behaviour, is an essential tool if Green parties are to grow. Governments already use such tools, in campaigns to reduce road deaths, to get people to stop smoking etc. The “focus group” is one of those tools. Another tool is “word of mouth” marketing which is particularly appropriate to political parties.

There is sufficient evidence to show that voters act out of self-interest when they get to the secrecy of the ballot cubicle. Despite what they say in public and to opinion pollsters. When asked the question “do you agree with better health and education services and increased spending in these areas,” the answer is a universal, “yes”. However, at the ballot box, they think of their pockets and do not agree with the extra taxation to fund services.

It would appear that we Greens do not have much to offer a selfish electorate. But we do have solutions to issues that will ensure the survival of the human race. This can be brought down to an individual, self-interest level. Most voters will want to see their children and grandchildren survive. They are now more aware of the consequences of climate change than ever before. If we provide solutions to the threat “without frightening the horses”, then the green vote should grow.

Some members of Green parties recoil at the thought of presenting our policies with the aid of

professional PR consultants. But if we have the right message and that requires using tools to create a shift in individual behaviour, that is achieving our goals. There is always concern about “do the ends justify the means”. But being more professional should not mean the abandonment of green ideals.

There is no doubting the sincerity and integrity of the vast majority of green party members. Some people will object to the concept of the voters as clients. This is the jargon of business. We are not out to manipulate, but to educate. There is enough known about social science and human behaviour to educate in an effective manner. The tabloid press and TV stations of media moguls like Rupert Murdoch present distorted information to millions, every day. That does not mean that there is something wrong with the popular format of the paper.

In order to build Green parties we need to adopt best practice at getting information across. If citizens are coming round to our core principles, we must ensure that they know where they came from. Without being arrogant or “we told you so” statements. We must present to the public the failed policies of other parties and their bankruptcy of solutions. We must encourage the EU to present itself in a more positive way. We must also not lose sight of our vision of an ecological, sustainable earth. We must be creative in our interactions with the public, with friendly festivals that are lots of fun.

“The first day we all pointed to our own countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day we were aware of only one Earth.” Sultan bin Salman al-Saud, astronaut.



Tommy Simpson is founding member of the Irish Green Party/Comhaontas Glas, The National Ecology Centre at Sonairte (Ireland), and Energy Action (Ireland). He is also Chair of the international Committee of the Irish Green Party/Comhaontas Glas and Committee Member of the European Green Party.

PEKKA HAAVISTO

The Greens in Finland – From Grassroots to Government

If you stand in Senate Square, located at the heart of the historical centre of Helsinki, you might experience a moment of disbelief. For, right in the middle of the square stands a statue of the Russian Tsar, Alexander II, undisturbed and respected. Visitors to the Lenin Museum in Finland's second city of Tampere might also be wondering... Has "finlandisation" influenced these poor Finns so badly that they forgot to get rid of these relics of their Russian past?

"We Are Not Swedes, We Will Not Become Russians – Let Us Be Finns."

A short explanation is needed. Yes, Finland is a Nordic country, but it differs a lot from its Scandinavian neighbours. Finland was – for at least 600 years – an integrated part of Sweden, until Sweden lost Finland to Russia in 1809 – almost exactly 200 years ago.

Paradoxically, the 1809 Sweden-Russia war was also the beginning of Finland's long march towards independence: an independence which could only be declared in 1917, in the middle of the colourful Russian revolution. While Finland was an autonomous part of Russia, the country had its own currency, its own constitution (which was inherited from the Swedish period), and a customs' border with Russia. The fact is that it was only after Lenin recognised Finland's independence in 1917, that her Nordic neighbours and Germany did likewise. So, Finnish independence needed approval from the new Bolshevik regime in Russia before Finland could become a nation among nations.

German King Already Chosen for Finland

There have been moments in Finnish history when Germany has been politically very close to us too. As part of the independence activism, some Finns got their military training in Germany.

After the declaration of independence in 1917, a bitter civil war was fought between the "Whites" and the "Reds": the bourgeoisie and the Finnish socialists. The socialists were a very strong political movement in Finland. The "Whites" got military support from Germany, the "Reds" from the revolutionary units of the Russian army. White and Red terror poisoned the country, and finally many Reds died from hunger and diseases in national concentration camps which were established to hold the Reds while they awaited trial.

The Parliament decided in 1918 that Finland should become a kingdom, and not a republic, and a suitable king was found in Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse, the brother-in-law of the German Emperor William II. But Finland never got its king, for in November 1918 Germany was declared a republic, and Finland had to go for an elected president as well.

The Russian Dilemma Remained

During the Second World War developments in Germany and in Russia also dominated Finland's situation. First there was a Russian attack on Finland in November 1939, at the beginning of the Winter War; second there was the Continuation War (1941-1944) when Finns were fighting "hand-in-hand" with Germans to push the Russians back, and finally there was the Lapland War between Finns and Germans (between September 1944 and April 1945).

Finland as a German ally was on the losing side after the Second World War. But, compared to what had happened to the Baltic States (loss of independence), or in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, Finland was a winner. The country was never occupied, and the democratic system including the parliament worked throughout the war years without interruption.

However, the Russian dilemma remained – how was Finland to survive as a neighbour of the Soviet Union in the Cold War world? One strategy was Finland’s development of its neutrality as a political tool to prevent political pressure from Moscow mounting too high. At the same time, Finnish domestic politics were influenced too much by the “good neighbourhood policy”. Parties and politicians that did not want to adapt themselves to the official foreign policy liturgy were kept out of the government, whatever their results in the elections.

The Ruined Political Arena

So, the political scene included conservatives with no access to government regardless of their election results, and the Centre Party, Social Democrats, Communist Party and Liberals, who in different combinations formed a series of coalition (or minority) governments which usually did not last very long. President Urho Kekkonen ruled for 26 years (1956-1982) and was really a hands-on political figure when it came to appointing governments and dissolving parliaments. Finland was a democracy in which foreign policy dominated domestic political life.

To get some oxygen into this kind of political system is a challenge. Even the youth revolution in the 1960s produced a Moscow-orientated communist youth movement in Finland and not a strong alternative, such as the euro-communism or the “socialism with human face” movements, as happened elsewhere. But, step by step during the 1970s, alternative and grassroots movement ideas crept into Finland, mostly from other Nordic countries. Eco-philosophy, feminism, the anti-nuclear and alternative cultural movements started to change Finland’s political map as well. Norwegian eco-philosopher, Arne Naess, and author Erik Dammann, with his book “The Future in Our Hands”, and the movement with the same name became well known in Finland. The feminist movement in Sweden also encouraged a new political women’s movement in Finland. In Denmark the *Organisation til Oplysning om Atomkraft* (Organisation for the Abolition of Nuclear Power) became an

example that led to the establishment of a similar movement in Finland. The Nordic connections influenced the Finnish alternative movement very much in the beginning.

The first radical action of this new movement in Finland took place in the spring of 1999, when a famous bird lake, Koijärvi, in Southern Finland, was threatened by local farmers. Their plan was to dry the lake and so get some more acres for agriculture. Young environmental activists intervened. This was the first real appearance of a new political generation in Finland. This fight became very symbolic – with young activists chaining themselves to a Caterpillar earth mover.

Suddenly a whole new generation became visible: there were the new political movement called Greens, alternative magazines, feminist groups, the disabled rights activists, new wave musicians, and youngsters squatting in old houses both as places to live and also as cultural centres.

The traditional parties realised that new issues were entering the political sphere, but they failed to include these issues in their agenda. Again, the Finnish experience differed from that of other Nordic countries. While the social democrats in Norway rooted for sustainable development, the Centre Party in Sweden was in the vanguard of the anti-nuclear movement and the social democrats and the socialists in Denmark adopted green issues, the old Finnish parties remained paralysed. Because the Finnish political system was more rigid, it gave the Greens a possibility to establish themselves and grow.

Not Left, Not Right – But Beyond

The very first Green appearances at the ballot box were in the Helsinki local elections of 1976 (“Helsinki-movement”) and in 1980 (“Alternative Helsinki”). But the real breakthrough was the parliamentary election of 1983. That was when the green movement – the Green Party was established only later – got Mr. Ville Komi and Mr. Kalle Könkkölä elected to the Finnish Parliament. Ville Komi was a leader of the environmental movement which saved the bird lake Koijärvi

some years earlier,¹ and Kalle Könkkölä, a disabled rights activist whose main thesis was that handicapped people (or any marginalised group) should not remain objects but should become subjects of their own life. It was fitting that both the environmental and the social agenda were clearly visible in the Finnish Greens' first parliamentary victory in 1983. Most of the commentators thought that the green movement would disappear as rapidly as it had arisen, but they were wrong. Thirty years after the Kojjärvi battle, the Greens in Finland are still alive and kicking having now served as a government party three times.

Since 1983 the Green chairs in the parliament meeting hall have been situated between the Social Democrats and the Centre Party, and maybe that also describes the political location of the Finnish Greens in the best way. Even if some of the Greens had had a leftist background, Greens never advocated the socialists' doctrine of healing the economy and society by increasing the role of state-owned companies. In economic matters the Greens found themselves always closer to market-based solutions and a market economy. Many of the green voters were themselves running small businesses, or involved in co-operatives or working as freelancers.

When the new government was established in spring 1991, the Greens – now with ten seats in the parliament – were taken seriously for the first time also in the negotiations for a new government. In the 1991 talks, suspicions on both sides were still too high: the Greens were afraid that they would be misused in government to give “a Green Certificate” to whatever the Government wanted to do, and Prime Minister Esko Aho (Centre Party) was suspicious that the Greens could not be trusted when the “difficult votes” took place in the parliament. At that time the Greens kept repeating that they could not accept “the party discipline” in the parliament. The formal reason for walking out of the government talks in 1991 was that Aho's government did not want to include an anti-nuclear commitment and the protection of the Vuotos

area against the plan of an artificial lake, in their programme.

The Green Colour of the Rainbow Government

A new opportunity arose 1995 with Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen of the Social Democrats. His “Rainbow Government” included social democrats, the *Left Wing Alliance* (former Communist party), the Conservative Party, the Swedish Speaking Party and the Greens. In 1995 I got the seat of Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation in that government, and the Finnish Greens were the first Green party in the European Union to participate in government.

Lipponen's second government (1999) also included Green ministers – Satu Hassi and Osmo Soininvaara – but the Greens left that government in 2002 when the parliament voted in favour of building the fifth nuclear power plant in Finland.

In the 1995 government negotiations, we reached an agreement that the government would not build new nuclear power plants in Finland. In the 1999 negotiations, the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party refused to accept this “Green Moratorium” any longer. These parties wanted to leave the nuclear issue to the parliament – knowing full well that the new parliament had a pro-nuclear majority. The Green nuclear position was described by them as “blackmail” or “anti-democratic behaviour”.

Leaving to the opposition in 2002 was almost a unanimous decision; even if many in the Greens saw it as a beginning of a long period in opposition. But in 2007 the political coalitions changed once more. The bourgeois government, consisting of the Centre Party and the Conservative Party, reappeared; the Social Democrats went to the opposition, and two Greens – Tarja Cronberg and Tuuja Brax – were appointed as Minister of Labour and Minister of Justice. The Centre Party – which

1 He also became known as the advocate of “non-violent resistance” against the system which destroys the environment.

drew its main support from the conservative rural areas – insisted on keeping the Minister of Environment post for itself. Could the Greens survive in a centre-right government without having control of the environmental portfolio? We are testing it right now in Finland. Inside the Greens there is a lot of criticism towards the Centre Party's Environment Minister, and many Greens have the feeling that the crown jewels have been sold. At the same time the Greens are winning new credibility being responsible for justice and labour issues in the government.

Energy Policy Will Be the Key Challenge

The nuclear issue remains a challenge for the Greens in Finland. The Green Party and its parliamentarians are unanimously against increasing the use of nuclear power. The 2002 pro-nuclear vote in the Finnish Parliament has led to the construction of the fifth nuclear reactor in Finland, and the industry is now speaking about new reactors – not just about the sixth, but even about the seventh and the eighth. The rising prices of fossil fuels and the challenge of meeting the Kyoto targets of reducing greenhouse gases have influenced two separate tendencies: the increased use of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and biomass energy, and the pressure to increase the use of nuclear power.

The Greens are almost alone in the Finnish Parliament in their fight against nuclear power, and therefore it is impossible to form a non-nuclear power majority government in Finland. The Greens have now, and in the future, a difficult choice: they can remain in opposition as the only credible non-nuclear political party, or they can participate in pro-nuclear coalition governments and lose the nuclear votes. The choice is not very easy – particularly given the fact that many voters are supporting the Greens not only for their environmental agenda but also for their social and cultural agenda.

Lessons Learned as a Government Party

Can anything be learned from the Finnish experience? The situation in every country is differ-

ent, but let me try to summarise some experiences from the green life in government. The Finnish Greens have twice been part of a red-black-green alliance (Rainbow alliance) and once been in a centre-right alliance.

1. Being in the government does not mean that you lose your voters

Voters are clever, they see that sometimes you are fighting inside your coalition and losing on an issue. Remember to tell your voters, what these fights are about and exactly what happened. Do not try to explain black as white – tell them how things really are. The Finnish experience has been that being part of the government means winning new voters for the Greens. The election results after being in government have been positive.

2. Negotiate an exact government programme

Big parties do not necessarily ask for a detailed government programme. For the Greens, getting one has been good. We know what is coming – and what is not coming – during the four-year period. Within your own party, follow how the government programme is being implemented. Track what has been achieved and what is still lacking. This transparent record of victories, losses and open issues keeps your party activists convinced that you are not suffering from speed blindness as a result of being in the government.

3. Establish close links between the ministers and the parliamentarians

Being a minister does not mean that you are in a rocket on your way to the moon. For the Finnish Greens it has been very important that ministers attend weekly meetings with the parliamentary group and also that the parliamentary group can influence all issues before the government starts dealing with them. Parliamentarians will only vote for the government if they can have an impact on it.

4. Take care of the Green youth

There is no continuity if young people do not keep coming to the Greens. In the early days rotation was mandatory for the Finnish Greens. It is important that the same people do not monop-

lise the key positions in the party all the time but create room for younger people.

5. Greens are not only environmentalists

Many voters still see the Greens only as environmentalists. The Finnish experience is that you have to have a complete programme when preparing for elections and working in the parliament and government. There are more and more people who vote for the Greens because of their social or cultural positions, and not for their environmental ones.

6. Create networks between parties

In a multi-party democracy a single party can seldom hold the majority. Therefore you have to negotiate coalitions and find political allies. It is important that other parties and politicians begin to turn green, too. Do not be jealous of others turning green. It just means that you are nearer to forming a majority, and with majorities things can be changed in democracies.

7. Test your own ideas

What does it mean to be a Green? There is more than one answer. Take the bio-fuel discussion as an example. You can find pros and cons – replacing fossil fuels, or creating a new threat of monoculture in developing countries. Arguments have to be expressed and compared; let the debate enter the Greens.

8. Life is not only politics

The voters are interested in your political ideas and thoughts – but not only in those. They want to know what kind of poems you read and who your favourite composer is. They want to know that you really are a human being, even if you are involved in politics. The trust in parties and politicians is not only based on their political agenda.

9. Do not sell your grandmother

Voters sometimes think that politics is dirty and that politicians do not have any principles. It is important to stick to your key principles and not compromise them. For example, human rights are human rights, and that does not leave very much to be negotiated there.

10. Be a reliable partner

When you are working in a coalition government, other parties judge you on your reliability. If you behave once or twice in an opportunistic manner, you will very soon find the bill on your table. In a coalition government other parties want to achieve their goals as well. Where agreements have been made, they have to be kept.

Post Scriptum

As the Greens are now preparing for the European elections, let me tell about my experience in the end of the 1990s when I started as the first Green minister in the European Ministerial Council. First there was a big surprise: Greens in government? Can it work? Then I started to meet Green colleagues from Germany, France and Italy at the Ministerial Council. We were at that time four out of 15 among the environmental ministers.

Ministers from other parties in the Council started to show their concern: are you planning to take over? It seemed that every six months a new green minister would appear at the Council. Well, progress was not so rapid in the end. We have been winning elections, but sometimes we lost, too. But I am sure that the Greens are now in Europe to stay.

Finnish Greens: General Elections

Year	MPs	Votes	Share of votes
1983	2	43,754	1.47 %
1987	4	115,988	4.03 %
1991	10	185,894	6.82 %
1995	9	181,198	6.52 %
1999	11	194,846	7.27 %
2003	14	223,846	8.01 %
2007	15	233,930	8.5 %

Finnish Greens: Local Council Elections

Year	Councillors	Votes	Share of votes
1984	101	76,441	2.8 %
1988	94	61,581	2.34 %
1992	343	184,787	6.9 %
1996	292	149,334	6.3 %
2000	338	171,707	7.7 %
2004	313	175,933	7.4 %

Finnish Greens: European Parliament Elections

Year	MEPs	Votes	Share of votes
1996	1	170,670	7.6 %
1999	2	166,786	13.4 %
2001	1	172,786	10.4 %



Pekka Haavisto (1958) is a former Finnish Minister for Environment and Development Co-operation. Currently he is a Member of the Finnish Parliament where he sits in the Committee for Foreign Affairs, Committee for Defence and is a deputy member of the Grand Committee (EU Affairs). Between 1999 and 2005, Haavisto worked for the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, chairing several post-conflict assessments and identifying and addressing the problems for human health and livelihoods in the worst humanitarian crises areas in the world. He was the first EU Special Representative to Sudan (2005-2007).

VEIKO SPOLITIS*

Taking Root in Unfertile Soil: the Growth of the Estonian Green Parties¹

What marked the beginning of green political thought in Estonia?

Until Mikhail Gorbachev became the First Secretary of the Politburo and announced his *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms in 1985-86, any open criticism of the authorities in the USSR was immediately punished, and so protests against the role of the Communist Party or the wrongdoings of the Soviet regime were unimaginable. The Estonian population was tired after decades of Brezhnev's stagnating rule but it now understood that the changes were for real, and different civic movements began to spring up. Because of the legacy of the centrally planned and environmentally degrading Soviet heavy industry, it was obvious, that the first movements that sprouted were reactions against the simultaneous economic mismanagement and environmental degradation. These events, which came about in close conjunction with the "War on Phosphate" or the anti-phosphate campaign, raised public awareness in Estonia in 1986-87.

In 1986 Moscow's central mining authority had wanted to open a major phosphate quarry near Toolse, and journalist Juhan Aare published an article about the dangers of a possible environmental catastrophe. He got huge coverage on TV and in the Tartu newspaper *Edasi*, and the monthly magazine *Vikerkaar* launched an ideological battle over environmental issues and bilingualism in Estonia. The events were popular among the extremely active students at the Tartu

University, and so in May and June 1987 the *Estonian Green Movement* was created.

The Green Movement was initially more concerned about increasing public awareness of environmental issues, and – as they had no parliamentary representation – they did it by cleaning neglected parks all over Estonia. A national awakening took place concomitantly with the creation of *Popular Front Civic Movements* (the Green Movement being one of them), which were mainly interested in forming a counterbalance to the rule of the Communist Party. The Popular Front served as an umbrella organisation for all the civic movements that started at that period, and they continued their *Singing Revolution* against the Soviet occupation throughout 1986-1990.² The anti-phosphate campaign was so successful that it launched the political careers of some of Estonia's most renowned and high-calibre politicians (academician Endel Lipmaa and former president Lennart Meri).

When was the first Estonian green party founded? Was it an immediate success?

The Estonian green parties have their roots in the Green Movement, but due to personal quarrels two parties were formed in the early 1990s. The *Green Party* (ERP) was founded on August 10, 1989, and its first chairman was Mario Kivistik. The *Estonian Green Party* (ERE) was founded in October 1990. Because of the interregnum that lasted from the dual governance of the Popular

* Our gratitude goes out to Dr. Axel Reetz, lecturer for Political Science at the *Biznesa Augstskola Turība* (School of Business Administration Turība) in Riga, for his kind cooperation. (www.infobalt.de/reetz.html).

1 Questions Sebastian Duwe.

2 The name "Singing Revolution" is used to describe events in the Baltic countries between 1987-1990 that led to the restoration of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian independent statehood. The term was coined by the famous Estonian artist and political activist Heinz Valk in an article published after the spontaneous June 10-11, 1988 mass night – singing demonstrations at the Tallinn Song Festival park.

Front and the *Citizens Congress* in early 1990 until the failed coup d'état in Moscow on August 21, 1991, the democratisation of the Estonian political system was interrupted.

After the Estonian Supreme Council's declaration of Estonia's independence on August 20, 1991, and the failed coup d'état a day later, major states – including the Russian Federation – started recognising the de jure independence of the Baltic states. This marked a political turning point for Estonia which also opened the way for political movements to consolidate and regroup in order to put themselves in the best starting position for the years ahead. The Greens used this opportunity and thus, on 9 December, 1991 the ERE united with the ERP and the name *Estonian Greens* (ER) was chosen for the new party. Jüri Liim became the new chairman of the united party.

The creation of the ER did not bring immediate success – either in national or municipal politics – due to the changing environment that existed in Estonia at the time. Political, social and economic systems all had to be created anew. Because of the collapse of the centrally planned economy and a drastic decrease in living standards (the 1991 level of GDP per capita in Estonia was not reached again until 2001), green ideas did not appeal to the voters. However, the election law continued the traditions of the 1930s and specified that only two hundred members were needed to form a party. As a result, the Estonian Greens were able to survive the consolidation process of the party system until a new election law was passed in 1994. This new election law stipulated levels of financial control over assets, and amendments – catastrophic for the Greens – passed in 1996 increased the threshold for party membership to a thousand members. In consequence, a significant proportion of the Estonian Greens joined the Centre Party in order to be able to participate in parliamentary politics,³ and the Green Party had to go into hibernation along with a myriad of other small parties.

Why did the Greens fail to reach the higher threshold? And how did this new situation influence the work of the Estonian Greens?

A combination of institutional changes and the failure of green ideology to appeal to the general public were the major reason for their failing to attract sufficient members to reach the new threshold. Moreover, the Estonian Greens were suffering from a lack of leadership among the party elite. They were therefore obliged to work mostly as an interest group. When the Estonian party system showed promising signs of maturation and Estonia achieved both of its major strategic goals of joining the EU and NATO, the appetite for green ideas re-emerged. Suddenly there was a niche for green ideas once more. And so once the campaign for the 2004 European Parliament elections was over, a foundation for the Estonian Green Movement to build on was available. On October 4, 2004 a discussion forum was staged in Vodja: Two major factions formed during that gathering. One faction wanted to stay out of politics while the second faction (realpolitik) argued, that the Estonian Greens should form a political party and try to enter parliament after all.

What were the most important topics for Greens in the beginning?

In the beginning the Greens were concerned to raise awareness about environmental issues and about the question of bilingualism in the North-Eastern Estonian region. In fact, they had some success in these areas. Indeed, rather a lot of members of the Green Movement joined the ranks of the Ministry of Economics, Transportation and Environmental affairs at that time. The purpose of the 1996 changes in election law was to foster a consolidation of the Estonian political system. But because green ideas were not part of the mainstream popular or political agenda, and because there were various factions within the Green Movement, the Green Party failed to achieve the required electoral threshold, and as a

3 The Chairman of the Estonian Greens, Marek Strandberg, answered questions online in February 2007. The answers are available at: www.erakond.ee/index.php/Vastused_k%C3%BCsimustele.

result was unable to continue as an independent party in parliamentary politics in 1996.

A combination of a lack of leadership and structural changes to the economy which worked against the Greens' favour had undermined their appeal to the electorate. The changes in election law, which I have already referred to, caused party members to leave and join the Centre Party instead as the only way they could make their voice heard within the parliament. This of course added to the Green's problem of a small party membership and the lack of representatives in the parliament. That situation, linked to the ongoing structural changes in the economic and political system meant that environmental issues, and the associated green ideas, became unpopular with the majority of the electorate.

The historical development of the Green Party seems to be very turbulent. What are the reasons for this?

The major reason for the Greens' inability to generate a broad party membership was the structural changes in Estonian governance. The Estonian Green Movement – different from its West European colleagues – was socio-economically rightwing. It was a similar situation to that of Latvia where, because Green parties had to participate in the state and nation re-building process, any affiliation with leftist ideas would have ruined their hopes of entering parliamentary politics. Because green ideas did not appeal to broad swathes of voters, the Green Party had to dilute its programme to make itself more attractive. Even so, it was not sufficient to get at all close to a level of membership that would enable it to achieve representation in the parliament.

Another factor was funding. It was only after amendments to the Election Law in 2005 when the Estonian Parliament implemented a system for funding political parties from the state budget that new opportunities for the Green Party were

opened up, and the renaissance of the green movement could begin.

A new Estonian Green Party was founded in 2006. How did this come about?

Proponents of *realpolitik* – those who wanted the Green movement to take an active part in government – were in the majority, and on 7 May 2005 the Green non-profit organisation was founded. On 3 December 2005 the founding groups of the Estonian Greens met in Jäneda. On 9 April 2006 the founding members of the party met in Saku Manor, where separate discussion groups on issues such as energy, the management of mineral resources and public health were created, and on 16 June 2006 the founding members of the Estonian Greens adopted their programme in Suure-Jaani. By 21 October 2006 the Greens had already 493 members.

The present chairman of the Estonian Greens, Marek Strandberg (scientist and member of the Estonian WWF chapter), as well as Mart Jüssi (biologist and present Member of Parliament), Tanel Tammet (computer scientist at the University of Gothenburg) and Agu Kivimägi (IT specialist) were among the founding members of the party. On 31 October, 2006, when the parliamentary election campaigns for the major parties in Estonia had already started, the founding members of the Estonian Greens announced that they had reached the threshold of a thousand members. And so on 30 November 2006 the Estonian Greens applied to register their party in the Estonian Company Registration Office and the party was successfully registered on 6 December 2006.⁵

The reasons for founding the party were two-fold: firstly institutional changes created an opportunity, and secondly there was also a peculiarity of the Estonian political culture at play. The electoral law amendments of 2005 allowed for ideologically distinctive and successful parties to acquire public funds, whereas they previously had had to rely only on private contributions and

4 Rohelsitel on partei moodustamiseks 1000 liiget, October 31, 2006 - http://www.postimees.ee/311006/esileht/siseuudised/226243_print.php.

membership fees.⁵ Secondly, the Estonian post-independence political scene was defined by parliamentary parties in coalitions uniting against the founding member of the Estonian Popular Front, Edgar Savisaar.

From 17 April to 6 November 1995, Edgar Savisaar was the Minister for Internal Affairs. During his tenure as Minister of the Interior he was accused of recording the private conversations of other politicians, and the entire government faltered. He promised to leave politics after the scandal caused by those recordings, but he never did. Instead Savisaar founded the Centre Party and started representing the centre-left social and economic policy, at which point all the conservative and liberal political parliamentary parties united traditionally, en bloc, against him. In 2006 the polls were showing traditional results: the Centre Party was leading. After the *Pro Patria Union*⁶ united with the *Res Publica Party*⁷ to form a rightwing conservative party on 4 June 2006, many liberal members of both parties decided to join in the founding of the *Estonian Green Party*. They were motivated mostly by a lack of trust in the traditional politicians of the newly formed Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica parties (IRL in Estonian) and also by their wish to see new faces in Estonian party politics for the parliamentary elections in 2007.

In 2007 the Estonian Greens re-entered parliament with six MPs and were considered as coalition partners. This must have been a huge success? How did it influence Green politics in Estonia?

The Estonian Greens' (ER) entrance into parliament was a success, but their share of the vote

was not as huge as had been expected. Pre-election polls had predicted that they would receive as much as 12% of the total votes.⁸ Those expectations were premature, and in combination with the "Bronze Soldier" affair in April 2007 the elections resulted in unexpectedly good results for the conservative IRL instead. But, as a result of the encouraging pre-election polls, the Estonian Greens were asked by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip to join the new ruling coalition.⁹

The election results were surprisingly good for the ruling Reform Party which clinched the victory against their archrivals, the Centre Party. Because Prime Minister Ansip had enough votes to form a coalition without the ER, and because he was afraid that Social Democrats, IRL and Greens could tip the balance in the coalition away from the Reform Party, he decided not to invite the greens to join the coalition. The formal reason for the refusal was the offer of the position of the Minister of Administrative Affairs, which the Greens regarded as an offence because throughout the campaign and coalition negotiations they had emphasized that they would like to get the post of the Ministry of Economics, Transport and Environmental Protection.

Because the Greens are in the opposition, they cannot really influence the work of the government. For example, they have announced that they are against Estonian participation in the Ignalina nuclear power station project (together with the other two Baltic States), but since their position is against the official governmental position, their opposition will have little effect. They are however vigilant in raising awareness and they perform well as an opposi-

5 Until 31 December 2005 the Estonian parties were funded only by a calculated percentage derived from the party seats in the parliament. Since 1 January 2006 §12 stipulated that those parties that do not pass the five percent threshold, but gain one percent of total votes are eligible to receive 10,000 euros and parties that got four percent of total votes get 17,500 euros: www.riigiteataja.ee/ert/act.jsp?id=12810147.

6 Pro Patria is a conservative political party in Estonia, and its fame was very much defined by its long standing Prime Minister Mart Laar.

7 Res Publica is a self-defined conservative party and was created in 2001 as a response to the corruption of the political elite at that time.

8 Valitsuse vahetumine toob uue ärieliidi, March 2, 2007: http://ap3.ee/Default2.aspx?PaperArticle=1&code=3512/uud_uudidx_351203.

9 Valitsust koostav Ansip meelitab rohelisi oma leeri, March 8, 2007: www.epl.ee/uudised/377256.

tion party. Whenever EU directives concerning environmental issues are discussed in the Estonian parliament the Greens are usually involved in legislative duties. It means that they are not just killing time in opposition, but are actively participating in the legislative process with members of the majority coalition.

What are the main policy areas that the Greens work on at the moment?

The Estonian Greens traditionally support all kinds of different environmental legislature, but within the framework of an opposition party. During the election campaign in early 2007 the Greens emphasised the need to institutionalise a referendum culture in Estonia.¹⁰ On 29 May 2008, the Estonian Greens, together with the civic movement, stood against the reform of the state-owned Centre of Estonian State Forest Company. The liberal Prime Minister proposed to privatise this centre, but activists and Green Party members argued that privatisation would only allow private interest to prevail over the common good. ER is still against nuclear power generation in Estonia,¹¹ and it has asked the government to pay more attention to generating renewable energies and increasing energy efficiency in Estonia. As a result, the ER, together with the Estonian government, opposed the building of the North Stream gas pipeline on the Baltic Sea seabed. And finally together with the other opposition party, the Centre Party, they have supported the awarding of state funding for those schoolchildren with Russian as their first language who have to study Estonian following the implementation of the education law amendments in 2007.

Last year Estonia received strong media coverage across Europe because of the relocation of the Russian soldier monument. What is the position of the

Green Party on relations with Russia?

The relocation of the Bronze Soldier was such an extraordinary event, that almost all political parties, including the Estonian Greens, stood behind the government on this issue. However, due to the Prime Minister's smug style of governance, he was not credited for uniting the parties in support. The position of the ER vis-à-vis Russia is ambivalent. Because the ER is against the North Stream gas pipeline its attitude towards Russia is rather negative. And, since the ER is a party in opposition, it is not at the forefront of courting Russia. The question of the Greens' relations with Russia is not even mentioned in their party program.¹² Unfortunately the possibility that the Estonian Greens could follow the bad Latvian example, where Russian energy giants made local politicians accept schemes that are ecologically detrimental for Latvia in the long run, can not be excluded.

What are the future challenges for the party? Can the Greens repeat their electoral success at the European elections in 2009?

The Greens' greatest challenge is their own leadership. The ER policy proposals are sound and compatible with the positions of most of European Greens in the European Parliament. A repetition of their former electoral success could be a viable option because since 1979 voters have regularly punished ruling parties in European elections.¹³ Nevertheless, environmental issues are also intimately connected with the rise of post-material values. Although the harshest transition is over, material values still prevail in Estonian politics. As a consequence it will probably take between four to six years before, in particular, the younger generation of Estonian voters start to favour left-wing and green policies instead of predominantly

10 Roheline erakond hakkab nõudma referendumeid, 25 November 2006: www.postimees.ee/251106/esileht/siseuudised/230843.php. For more information one may also find a special section on the Greens webpage: <http://roheline.erakond.ee/index.php/Otsedemokraatia>.

11 Look for petition: <http://roheline.erakond.ee/eituumajaamale/>.

12 Estonian Greens party programme: <http://roheline.erakond.ee/images/4/45/EERuusprogramm.pdf>.

13 Simon Hix & Michael March, Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, Issue 2, pp. 495-510, May 2007.

conservative ones, as it is currently the case. The election campaign for the European Parliament could be a good indication of how this process is developing. If the Estonian Greens get at least a

third of the Estonian seats in the European Parliament, this would be a sign of an unexpectedly rapid transformation of the Estonian electors' value systems, and a good election campaign.



Veiko Spolitis is the head of the International Relations undergraduate programme of the Faculty of European Studies at the Riga Stradins University and a doctoral student at the faculty of state studies at the University of Helsinki. At the moment he is writing his dissertation "Governance in the Baltic States from 1994-2007 – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania between Europeanised regionalisation and continued Post-Soviet political culture". He received his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of Tartu, his Diplôme d'études approfondies (DEA) in History and International Politics from the Graduate Institute of International Studies at Geneva University, and his Master of Arts in European Studies from the Central European University in Budapest.

ŠADÍ SHANAÁH

The Czech Green Party: Brief Success or Lasting Presence?

The Fall of Communism: the Green Party without Greens

In Czechoslovakia, the Green Party, *Strana Zelených* (SZ), was officially registered for the first time in February 1990. Its creation was enabled by the disintegration of the communist regime that had permitted no competition in the preceding 40 years. Obviously, the circumstances leading to the creation of the SZ differed greatly from those that gave rise to similar parties in Western Europe. The revolutionary energies of the end of the 1960s were directed towards the creation of the so-called “socialism with a human face”. But the ensuing Soviet invasion brought years of “normalisation” (a fierce purging of all critics of the regime) that allowed no space for any opposition, let alone free non-governmental civic initiatives.

In the second half of the 1970s there were only two official environmental “non-governmental” organisations, both under the supervision of the communist authorities. It was the *Czech Union for Nature Protection* (Český Svaz Ochránců Přírody) and the movement, *Brontosaurus*, that was a part of the *Socialist Youth Organisation*. However, even in these conditions the environmental agenda provided some scope for a relatively safe criticism, albeit minimal, of the regime’s catastrophic handling of nature’s heritage. And in this way, there was also some scope for criticism of the regime itself. Branches of these two organisations, and some other groups (e.g. the Ecology section of the Academy of Science) sheltered many skilled and talented people in the field of environmental protection.

When the regime started to collapse in 1989, conditions were favourable for the creation and the success of a Green Party. But success did not come. Why? The answer to that question takes us to the heart of the problems of the newly created

SZ. Unlike its Western counterparts, SZ is not an organisation that was built up from or by grassroots activists. It was created by a top-down approach and organised as a classical centralist hierarchical party (putting aside its federal structure that copied that of the country as a whole). There was no other way it could have been created given the non-existence of grassroots movements during the communist era. There was also a further, fatal factor: the founding members of the SZ were neither ecological activists, nor connected to the other ecological movements and organisations that started to emerge from illegality or newly created parties or NGOs. Despite that, SZ had about 15,000 members in 1990 and scored 4.1% in the first free post-communist elections, which was just under the five percent threshold required for entry into the parliament. Moderate success was scored at the communal level too, but those elections were rather more of a battle between the Communist Party and the *Civic Forum*, an umbrella platform for the non-communist opposition.

In order to contest the 1992 elections, the leadership of SZ decided to join in a coalition with two other (leftist) parties called *Liberal Social Union*. The Union gained 6.5% and the Green Party got three MPs only two years after its creation. However, since the majority of party members were positioned more to the right of the political spectrum they felt uncomfortable being in a union with socialists. For this reason about one-third of the original Green members left the party and the Union collapsed in 1993 leaving SZ with only one MP (its chairman). This was the beginning of a long and steady decline of the party. Its members were mostly high-school educated, inactive in environmental or other social initiatives and not interested in post-materialism. Its electorate shrunk considerably, even in the regions worst hit by the ecological recklessness of the communist regime. People ignored the post-materialist agenda since

they had only recently begun to taste the material advantages of the Western World. The political battle was being fought over privatisation and wealth distribution, between Václav Klaus's neo-liberalism and the Social Democrats' gradualist approach to the freeing of capital. Radical parties at both ends of the spectrum divided the rest of the electorate while Christian-Democrats picked up its traditional catholic and centrist voters.

The Green Party had then accumulated a large financial debt dating back to the loans it took out for the 1992 election campaign, which, in combination with the often inept and (publicly) little known leadership of the following years, resulted in the party's slide into oblivion. Its membership went down to an alarmingly low level of 250 in 2002. The party withdrew from the 1996 elections and scored only just over 1% of the votes in the 1998 elections. This was below the 1.5% required for obtaining a state financial grant. Moreover, a political scandal involving the chairman of the party in 1998 made headlines with allegations of corruption and the infiltration of the party by the secret services. Sadly, this was almost the only occasion when the Greens appeared in the media. By 2002, the leadership had no financial means to control what was left of the party. The debt grew bigger and bigger and the party was literally on the verge of ruin.

The Green Party Rises From the Ashes

The political years of 1998-2002 in the Czech Republic were marked by the so-called Opposition Treaty, which was a power-sharing agreement (a grand coalition) between the two major political parties in the country; the Social-Democrats led by Miloš Zeman and the Civic Democrats led by Václav Klaus. – until that time tough ideological adversaries. Many intellectuals, mostly drawn from the circle of the then President Václav Havel, bitterly opposed this agreement and saw it as a betrayal of the electorate and a highly corrupt affair that demoralised politics and stifled civic initiatives. A coalition of centrist liberal parties and Christian-Democrats was created in order to attract disenchanted voters and to put an end to clientelism (though almost all of its leaders were old political veterans linked with the “wild

privatisation” of the early 1990s). In late 2001, a group of intellectuals and publicly active personalities formed the so-called *Brandys Forum* and negotiated with the centrist-liberal coalition on terms for the Forum's support. The talks collapsed (as did the coalition later) and the focus of the Forum (renamed as *Brandys Initiative*) shifted to the fledgling Green Party.

In spring 2002, *Brandys Initiative* began to cooperate with SZ, drawing media attention to the party. Well-known public figures voiced their support for the party through campaigns such as *Give Greens a Chance* or the *Appeal of 16*. Jakub Patočka, a journalist, ecologist and co-founder of one of the biggest Czech environmental NGOs – *Hnutí DUHA* – was one of the masterminds behind the renaissance of SZ. Together with his colleague Jan Beránek (who co-founded Hnutí DUHA), Patočka called on NGO activists to join the party and reform it from the inside. The sudden stir that surrounded SZ was in part caused by a search for an alternative political party that would promote a more moral, “apolitical politics” (a term coined by Václav Havel, who also indirectly lent support to SZ), and partly by an effort to finally “green” the party by attracting ecologists and other NGO activists to it.

Thanks to increased publicity the Green Party scored 2.36% in the 2002 elections, which was still below the five percent threshold but enough to reach the state grants which would help it deal with its financial crisis. The reason why SZ did not cross over five percent was that the party was still dominated by the “old” Greens, most of them untrustworthy and not really environmentally-minded people (the membership of SZ totalled only about 250 people). Also, the liberal *Union of Freedom* that had splintered from Klaus' Civic Democrats managed to attract protest votes of young, well-educated, centre-right liberals, who would turn to SZ later in 2006. On the other hand, the party's campaign included, for the first time, some points that none of the other parties had included in their programmes or stressed sufficiently: gender issues, legalisation of marihuana, legalisation of prostitution, support of civic activities and, of course, environmental issues.

In late 2002, even after the elections, Patočka and Beránek worked further on the plan to radically increase the membership of SZ, to attract more NGO activists and to overthrow the old leadership of the party that, in the meanwhile, had managed to defraud part of the state grant given to it for the party's election result. Both men, together with the help of many other like-minded people, succeeded in their plan and finally issued the *Dark-Green Appeal* that was supposed to mobilise the new and prospective "true" Greens. The *Dark-Green Revolution*, as it came to be known, led to a successful take-over of the leadership of the party by the *Dark-Greens* at an extraordinary party congress in April 2003. The leadership, with one exception, was filled by people with an NGO background. Jan Beránek became chairman of the party. Jakub Patočka became chairman of the programme group.

Soon, however, new tensions arose within SZ. Beránek, Patočka and their supporters got into conflict with some of their former Dark-Green colleagues over the party's programme and the degree of democracy in SZ. The former were accused of sectarianism and authoritarianism. Patočka, according to his opponents, was obsessed with the concept of a "neo-democracy" which was supposed to become an alternative to neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism and New Labour, a vaguely defined all-encompassing alternative to all politics. Patočka refused to compromise on this concept, insisting it became central to the programme of SZ. In February 2004, the so-called *Open Platform* was formed by Ondřej Liška (a member of the party's presidium) within the party, demanding openness, democracy and compromise as guiding principles of the party's internal politics and refusing Beránek's and Patočka's fundamentalist messianism.

Although the Green Party gained one seat in the upper chamber of the parliament (senate) in autumn 2004, it failed to secure a mandate in the European elections which took place a few months before, partly due to internal fighting over the list of candidates. The Open Platform was dissolved before the party's congress in September 2004, which confirmed Jan Beránek

as chairman but only by a slight majority over a candidate from the ranks of the internal opposition.

The March to the Parliament

In 2005, the internal opposition in SZ united around Martin Bursík, who joined the party in June 2004 after he was approached by the Open Platform. Bursík came to SZ as a political veteran, a relatively well-known politician who became an MP right after the *Velvet Revolution*, and who had also held the post of Minister of the Environment in 1998. While some people saw him as a political tourist and careerist, who was not "green" enough, others welcomed him as a skilful politician, one who could have represented the party with more dignity, and made it more appealing to voters.

In September 2005, at (yet another) extraordinary congress of SZ, Bursík and his people dominated the elections of a new leadership and Bursík himself became chairman of the party. Jakub Patočka, who unsuccessfully advocated that SZ should join forces with other small liberal parties during the upcoming general elections, left the party in protest and established an alternative *Green Movement*, which disappeared soon after.

The consolidation of power in the party by a publicly known leader was a promising starting point to the general elections of 2006. Since 2003, SZ had managed to secure about three percent of public support. The question was how to get the additional two-to-three percent necessary to pass over the five percent threshold. Bursík bet on a strategy of moving the party from its "relative radicalism" of the previous years to a position of "nonconformist pragmatism". The key was to offer the electorate a credible programme that would touch on more than just ecological issues and to present plausible candidates, mostly experts in their fields, who could guarantee that these issues would be tackled responsibly in line with the newly created programme. The programme was created using the input of numerous "expert groups" set up by the party, which specialised in various issues from environment, transportation

and energy, to foreign policy, health care and human rights. The programme also introduced issues that other parties ignored: consumer protection, ecological tax reform and gender. It touched substantially on social policy too.

In February 2006, opinion polls brought sensational news – the Green Party had scored over five percent! What followed was an unprecedented media interest. Suddenly, prospective voters were not hindered by the “lost vote” mentality and SZ’s poll ratings increased in each new survey, even reaching two digit numbers. Some people were so taken by surprise they became persuaded that the original poll in February was a result of some kind of conspiracy intended to disrupt the formation of a stable four-party system.

The truth is that a combination of factors helped SZ to beat the five percent threshold in early 2006. The first factor, as already mentioned, was the huge boost to the party’s voter-appeal given by its new charismatic chairman. The calm, professional and positive demeanour of Martin Bursík boosted the public’s confidence in the party. Second: since 2003 the party had finally incorporated many NGO activists and ecological experts (as well as experts from other areas such as human rights, multiculturalism, development policies etc.) and increased its membership roughly three times compared to 2002. Third: the two major parties (Civic Democrats and Social Democrats) waged an extremely hostile campaign, accusing each other of past sins and neglecting the need for a pragmatic debate over what needed to be done in the future. SZ came up with a down-to-earth, positive, and forward looking programme, which forced the other parties to hastily include some green issues in their own manifestos and to focus on practical issues.

Fourth, the favourable state of the economy combined with a growing degree of social maturity allowed many people to appreciate the post-materialistic values espoused by the Greens. Fifth, there was a real hunger for a new party which would not become embroiled in various vested-interest networks, scandals and corruption. A large part of the electorate – in



Official signing of the Czech accession to the ESA (European Space Agency). Signing: Czech PM Mirek Topolánek and the general director of ESA Jean-Jacques Dordain. Top right: Ondřej Liška

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Ministerstvo školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy

particular young people, women and highly-educated professionals – had become sickened by the options available to them for the elections: conservative, anti-European, nationalistic, anti-NGO and market-neoliberal Civic Democrats; communist-leaning Social Democrats who had led the government for eight years and who were not able to bring about the needed reforms, but had left a bitter memory of corruption scandals; socially conservative Christian-Democrats who had participated in every government and had a reputation of being political chameleons and, finally, the Communists who had still not renounced their past sins and ideology. There was a vacuum longing to be filled by a new liberal political party. And it was the Green Party who took this chance.

In June 2006, the Green Party won 6.29% and entered the parliament with six MPs as the first new party (not splintered from an existing one) to do this in the history of the independent Czech Republic.

Government or Opposition?

The 2006 elections were won by the conservative *Civic Democrats* (ODS), whose former founder and chairman Václav Klaus became President of the country in 2003. However, ODS were not able to form a majority government in the 200-strong chamber of deputies. Even in a coalition with Greens and Christian Democrats,



Minister Liška on a visit to the primary school Salounova in Ostrava-Vitkovice

they had exactly 100 votes. A coalition of Social Democrats (CSSD), Greens and Christian Democrats could not find a majority either unless it could have been supported by the Communists (SZ was in principle against any cooperation with the Communist Party). A grand coalition of ODS and CSSD was ruled out because the personal hostility between the respective leaders was too great and because the public was extremely sensitive and hostile to this idea (based on the experience with the grand coalition from 1998-2002). The political impasse lasted for six months during which the Green Party tried to prevent the forming of a grand coalition, although, in the end, that seemed to be more plausible for ODS than to call for early elections.

Finally, in January 2007 the coalition of the Civic Democrats, Christian Democrats and Greens won a confidence vote thanks to two Social Democrats who disobeyed their party's instructions and endorsed the coalition. The Greens got four ministerial posts: the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Ministry for Human Rights and Minorities.

At the same time though, criticism of the Green leadership by some intellectuals and more leftist Greens became more audible. These voices saw the role of the Green Party as an anti-establishment party, morally superior, staying out of power politics and keeping an eye on the establishment from opposition benches. Allying with an anti-EU conservative party that had a reserved attitude to civil society and that stood for a neo-liberal economy was perceived as a sacrifice of Green ideology to the power and prestige of governmental posts.

The counter-argument employed by Martin Bursík and the majority of the party was the following: by participating in the government the Green Party can influence much more than it ever could from the opposition benches, thereby enabling the implementation of some of the Green issues. SZ could work as a correction mechanism, balancing the negative side of the neo-liberal conservatives and mitigating the worst excesses. The government is reformist and the reforms it promised to deliver are badly needed. The Green Party is neither right nor left and its participation in the government is the best way to prove maturity and responsibility. Moreover, given the

inconclusive result of the latest elections, and the danger of having either a grand coalition of Conservatives and Social Democrats or a government supported by the Communists as alternatives, there is no better option than to stay in the government and to infuse it with as many Green issues as possible.

The internal opposition in the Green Party grew in autumn 2007 when the leftist wing joined forces with some leaders who had been excluded from political power. Their demand to walk out of the coalition intensified with the alleged corruption scandal of the Greens' coalition partner, the leader of the Christian Democrats (who made his name over the controversial removal of several Romany inhabitants of a city he used to be a mayor of). The Green Party, it was argued, based its politics on a new political style and on particular themes, but when confronted with immoral behaviour it closed its eyes and stayed in power for the sake of keeping together a coalition that did not deserve the loyalty. An even more serious crisis is now looming over the issue of the American plan to build a radar station in the Czech Republic as a part of its anti-missile defence. Martin Bursík, cautiously supportive of the idea for the sake of preserving the governmental coalition and maintaining the continuity of Czech foreign policy, runs into significant opposition within the Greens. This issue is so serious it has the capacity to be one of the truly defining tests of what it still means to be Green and what is simply beyond any acceptable compromise. It is, in other words, intrinsically linked with the question of Green identity.

So far, Martin Bursík has been able to maintain his leadership and authority not least because the party owes him a great deal of gratitude for elevating it to the ranks of parliamentary parties. The internal opposition is also mindful of the fact that Bursík is the single (perhaps with the exception of the Minister of Education Ondřej Liška) publicly well-known and respected politician from the party, whose loss would be highly risky. Yet prob-

ably the most fundamental question that not only the opposition, but the whole party has to ask is: "who exactly is our electorate?"

Identity and Dilemmas

There is an inherent tension within SZ caused by two, often hardly reconcilable, pull factors. First is the awareness of the fact that a part of the Green electorate can be described as young middle-class, liberal, highly-educated, centre-right, pro-European voters, who search for a new centre party that would not be too radical or too leftist on economy. The second pull factor is the vision by some party members and voters of a "true Green" party, which is anti-system, nonconformist and uncompromising on ecology and on what is subjectively defined as a moral high ground. The balancing of these two means walking a very thin line.

For this reason, the leadership of the party maintained that SZ was neither left nor right and that the whole left-right divide was an anachronism. The politics of the Greens were to be based on a new political style (openness, grassroots democracy, honesty, moral integrity) and on particular themes (that would sometimes require more "left" and sometimes more "right" policies). However, the realities of the coalition politics subjected this philosophy to a test. The situation in SZ began to replicate the "fundi-realo"¹ conflict inherent in all green movements. A seeming ambiguity of the party's fundamental political nature and a visible rift between the Czech version of realos and fundis (unfortunately waged through the media) was not left without notice from the electorate. According to polls, support of SZ fluctuated between 4.9 and 11% during the last 12 months.

It became hard for many voters to define what exactly Greens stand for, except for ecological issues that have been slowly picked up by other parties anyway. The issue of climate change is too

1 The term was first used in 1980s and referred to a political conflict between ideological fundamentalists (fundis) and more pragmatic realists (realos) within the German Green Party.

abstract for many people to become a distinct flagship of SZ. Luckily, there is still a relatively large pool of voters who feel antagonised by the anti-European and socially conservative rhetoric of the Conservatives (whose honorary chairman, President Václav Klaus, is infamously well known for his disbelief in climate change and contempt for NGOs and civic political activities). These voters were behind the success of SZ in 2006 because they added much needed percentages to the centre-left or even radical left “classical” second component of the party’s electorate. No one is sure though how big a share, in terms of percentage, these two groups represent.

Intersections and the Way Forward

What are the unifying elements that can hold together the often fragmented Czech Greens? Attempts to define the basic pillars of green philosophy have been made both in Europe and elsewhere in the world. In the Czech Republic, avoiding the left-right divide is essential but difficult to do in practice. Social liberalism is one of the common features that can bind the green electorate together. These are the questions of gender, human rights, minorities and all forms of social discrimination. Support of an active civic sector is crucial too. Ecology should cut across all issues and policies, but it has to be made clear that Greens are not anti-modern and that green politics do not imply a choice between human well-being and the well-being of nature. The Czech Greens should take advantage of their essentially long-term planning time-frame to make the public repeatedly aware of their orientation towards the future, beyond one or two political cycles. The Czech Greens should also take advantage of the global Green presence, particularly of the European cooperation between the Green parties that 1) reminds the electorate of the bigger Green family and 2) provides valuable political philosophy in areas that Greens are traditionally weak in (political economy and “hard” politics). The most crucial task for the Czech Greens though is to live up to their promise of a new political style. The moment the party is seen by a majority of its electorate as no better than other veteran parties (in terms of abuse of or lust

for power, corruption or general lack of principles) it will have a hard time winning back most of those voters who helped it achieve its historical success of 2006.

Communication strategy and the personal qualities of Green political leaders (due to the high degree of personalisation) are key to the party’s success. Communication has to be of a dual nature – within the party and between the party and the public. The first should build bridges between different ideological currents within the party that, unlike in large well-established parties, have the potential to pull the party apart and to kill it. The latter is needed to build up a more stable and faithful electorate. The party’s successes and its failures should be properly explained to the electorate. The public should know why there is tension in the party, what the history of the party is, and, mainly, what kind of vision for the future the party has and how it intends to bring it about.

Extensive work needs to be done in order to clarify in detail what the Green position is in different policy areas so that a framework is created within which the party can manoeuvre, but beyond which there cannot be a compromise. Issues such as the prospective US radar in the Czech Republic must be firmly positioned in or outside of this framework. There will be more dilemmas like this in the future and so there needs to be a clear guideline (or point of reference) that can become a measure of what can be tolerated as an implication of a shared coalition responsibility and what can not.

There is a great chance that the Green Party establishes itself as an integral part of Czech national politics in a similar way to that which the Greens have achieved in Germany. There is still a serious danger that it will fall, yet again, into an oblivion from which it might never come back. The choice lies by and large with the members of the party themselves rather than with the electorate.

The European Dimension

The European Union is a unique project that has a huge transformative potential. Not only can

it transform countries that are eager for membership, it can transform the whole world too by setting an example. Is that argument being too naive and idealistic? If so, then the whole project is built on naivety and false pretence since the global transformative effect lies in the heart of the Union's official agenda. Post-nationalism, post-materialism, multiculturalism and multilateralism; these are some of the values that the world's normative superpower – the EU – stands for. The EU has taken much from the green agenda: the fight against climate change, the accent on universal human rights, the support of civil society, and the fight against all forms of discrimination, to name but a few. The Greens in the European Parliament (although not so numerous) together with the European Greens in general represent a lively and future-oriented force in the EU. In turn, the Union itself represents the best tool available for the Greens to make a global impact along the lines of their political philosophy. If the EU is able to transform the world, then the challenge for the Greens is to transform the EU. This does not have to be done through political domination or through moving the Union towards a federation. It can be done by making the many forces that exist within the EU adopt a green agenda (which is already happening). Fears of becoming marginalised after other parties have taken on green issues are not substantiated. The Greens would maintain their presence as specialists while other parties accept and endorse some of their demands, reflecting

the general shift of the way Europeans think. This is what has happened in the case of climate change.

But the Greens need a complementary, stimulating, energising and daring (but realistic) project, beyond global warming, that will reinvigorate general interest in their cause, and also help Green parties in countries where they struggle for political relevance. The project needs to be global in impact and European in execution, and it has to signify a final departure of the EU from the unfortunate European history of power politics, war and selfishness. Unilateral European nuclear disarmament might be one such project that would set in motion a global renouncement of existing (and the creation of new) multilateral treaties banning these weapons, and establishing effective mechanisms of control and enforcement of the ban. Or it could be a major, thorough and fair reform of the United Nations. Or it could be a completely different “grand” project. Greens are visionary in nature and, apart from local ecological and other issues, they have always had “the bigger picture” in their minds. Most of the people have become distrustful of visionaries and rightfully so. But if green idealism and vision can be combined with a well-argued, non-radical and realistic communication strategy, it could become a powerful instrument in the attempt to take humanity one leap forward.



Šádí Shanaáh (25) works as an adviser to the Czech Minister of Education, Youth and Sports. He has obtained his master of philosophy degree in *Contemporary European Studies* from the University of Cambridge, Pembroke College. He is also a member of the *Green Future Team* (set up by the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament for the Green Summer University). Šádí became a member of the Czech Green Party (*Strana zelených*) only recently in March 2008 and participates in the party's Expert Section on Foreign Affairs. He is of mixed Czech and Palestinian roots.

AGNIESZKA GRZYBEK AND DARIUSZ SZWED

Zieloni 2004 – Scenes From a Long March

The Origins

The Polish Greens, *Zieloni 2004*, were created as a party of protest. They entered the political scene when the first symptoms of crisis resulting from growing dissatisfaction with the course of Polish transformation began to emerge. Those symptoms coincided with the commonly criticised rule of the post-communist left.

The authors of the Polish transformation allowed for the escalation of illegitimate economic and social inequality, which led to a sense that Polish democracy does not give numerous social groups a chance to develop, condemning them to pauperisation and exclusion and denying them access to the benefits of transformation. One such group were workers of large industrial plants, whom the transformation deprived of their jobs; employees of the public sector (teachers, doctors, nurses), who experienced a combination of deteriorating material status and declining prestige of their poorly paid professions. Another such group were women, whose rights were limited by the introduction of the restrictive anti-abortion laws in the early 1990s, and whose situation on the job market was far worse than the situation of men (higher risk of unemployment, lower pay, difficult access to promotion, professional training etc.).

Furthermore, the public debate of the 1990s was characterised by silent approval for the assumption that the costs of the transformation (social, environmental, etc.) are not to be questioned. Hence all articulation of social conflicts (albeit burning underneath the surface of changes) was

dismissed, as a demanding attitude and an obstacle in the way of changes.¹ Until 2004, the Polish public debate was dominated by the language of “return to normality”, which could not be questioned. Several sacrifices were made in the name of “Poland’s return to Europe”; its accession to NATO and the European Union. According to the people in power, those aims were worth any price.

The post-communist SLD-UP (*Alliance of the Democratic Left – Working Union*) governing in the years 2001-2005, strayed from its left-wing orientation by dismissing the ideals proclaimed during the election campaign. The government identified as “the left” conducted an anti-welfare policy (e.g. rising ticket prices for students or closing the Alimony Fund, which had provided maintenance for single mothers); abandoned the principle of the secular state, allowing the Catholic hierarchy to interfere with public life; involved Poland in the war in Iraq; led public health care to the brink of collapse. All this was combined with corruptive practices and the style of executing power, which finally resulted in a dramatic fall of their opinion poll results, and, most importantly, discredited politics and made people lose their trust in politicians (who have for years enjoyed the lowest level of public confidence of all professions).

Disappointment in current politics and broken election promises as well as criticism towards the post-1989 transformation benefiting only selected social groups on unequal terms inspired the idea of founding the green party. The people involved in its creation were activists of NGOs – environmental, feminist, human rights, LGBT²

1 An excellent analysis of reasons for the defeat of the left and the liberals and for the victory of the right who managed to employ the anger of all those unsatisfied with the shape of Polish transformation, was presented by David Ost, an American political sociologist, in his book *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press 2005.

2 Lesbian, Gay, Bi- and Transsexual.

– but also of certain political parties, mostly the *Forum Ekologiczne* (Environmental Forum) of the former *Unia Wolności* (Freedom Union), as well as members of the old democratic opposition – the *Wolność i Pokój* (Freedom and Peace movement).³ The Green Manifesto, a programme document approved by the Founding Congress in September 2003, declared that the people creating the new green party shared such basic values as “respect for human rights and principles of sustainable social, environmental and economic development, in particular: social justice and solidarity, civil society and state, protection of the environment and natural resources for future generations, equal status regardless of sex and age, respect for national, cultural and religious diversity, respect for the rights of minorities and violence-free conflict solution.” The Greens’ programme was built around those principles and values, and the newly created party was to constitute an effective tool for their reinforcement in Poland. Via its actions it aimed at restoring the moral and civil dimension of politics. Did the founders of Zieloni 2004 manage to satisfy the expectations expressed in the Green Manifesto?

Before we answer this question, we would like to mention that this was not the first green project after 1989. Since the beginning of the 1990s, environmental activists had made several attempts to create a green party which would deal primarily with pro-ecological tasks and actions to protect the environment. Interestingly enough, at the beginning of the 1990s (e.g. during the local election of 1990) the questions raised by environmentalists won significant public support, although environmentalism itself was not perceived as a political issue. The character of the Polish system transformation, the “shock therapy” of then

Minister of Finance Balcerowicz and the resulting effects of the economic reforms – mass unemployment, pauperisation of several social classes, diminished standard of living – led to the marginalisation of environmental issues. They were treated either as a “luxury”, which would only become available after the completion of the construction of a free market society, or as an obstacle in the modernisation process. The situation was similar in the case of women’s rights, which had to be sacrificed to the primacy of building a free market. Due to that, and to internal divisions, the attempts to create a strong political group able to effectively compete for votes failed.⁴ Eventually, many environmental activists withdrew from strictly political activity, while others got involved with the Environmental Forum of *Unia Wolności*.

The key difference between Zieloni 2004 and the green initiatives of the early 1990’s was a far broader range of values Zieloni 2004 wanted to refer to and openness to new, not just environmental, circles. In this sense, it is possible to draw a parallel with other West European Green parties concentrating on post-material values and introducing them into their political programmes, with support of members of the new middle class. It is symptomatic that the emergence of Zieloni was unequivocally perceived by the Polish media as an arrival of a party of generational revolt, and protesters against the petrified framework of political arrangements. We were interpreted as a voice of the generation, which was to crack the “historical division between the post-communist and post-solidarity parties, shaping the politics”.⁵ Also, right from the start we opted for relations with social movements and for close cooperation with NGOs, from where most of the Green politicians originated. From the very beginning, the

3 „*Wolność i Pokój*” – a social and political movement, in opposition to the Communist regime, active during the years 1985-1992. The movement originated from a protest (a hunger strike) in defence of a student sentenced to prison for refusal to take the military oath. The movement was involved in pacifist and pro-environmental actions and organised protests against construction of a nuclear power plant in Żarnowiec.

4 Due to personal disagreements, in the 1991 parliamentary election the Greens presented two lists: *Polska Partia Ekologiczna – Zieloni* (Polish Ecological Party – The Greens) won 0.82% of the votes; *Polska Partia Ekologiczna – Polska Partia Zielonych* (Polish Ecological Party – Polish Green Party) won 0.63% of the votes. Due to further splits, by 1995 there were as many as 17 green parties in Poland, but none of them managed to permanently reach public awareness.

5 Amelia Łukasiak, Piotr Zaremba, *Barwy Zielonych* [in:] *Newsweek Polska* issue 44/2003, 2/11/2003.



Action at the German-Polish border

programme of action was built on four pillars: 1) sustainable economic and social growth, 2) human and in particular women's rights, 3) protest against war and use of force in conflict solution, and 4) participatory democracy.

From Protests to Mainstream

Zieloni 2004 originated from protest movements. We stood out from the "colourless" parties, due to the radicalism of our demands and the fact that we took them to the streets. We protested, reminding those in power of their unfulfilled promises. One of the most famous actions was the Freedom of Speech Day organised in February and March 2005, when a Polish court once again heard the case of a young Polish artist, Dorota Nieznańska, who was charged with offending religious feelings with her installation *Pasja* (Passion). In the first trial she was found guilty and sentenced to community service. On the day of the trial, Zieloni organised pickets in front of court buildings in Poland's largest cities, protesting against the restricted right to creativity and freedom of expression. In November of the same year, we co-organised manifestations of solidarity with Poznań in Poland's ten largest cities – a protest against a brutal police attack on the *March for Equality and Tolerance* in Poznań (the largest manifestation in Warsaw was attended by over 2,000 people). At the eve of 2007, Zieloni, along with women's and feminist organisations, protested against an amendment to the Polish constitution proposed by the far-right parties (*Liga Polskich Rodzin* – League of Polish Families and a number of MPs from *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – Law and Justice), which was aimed at introducing an absolute ban of abortion, including the cases when pregnancy posed danger to life or health, or when it was a result of rape or incest.

Certain political commentators reckon that it is due to the Greens' radicalism – both regarding the nature of their actions and their demands concerning identity issues (e.g. women's rights, sexual minorities' rights), that they still cannot obtain significant support of the voters. Those commentators think that Polish society is still too conservative and not ready for a vision of shaping a communal identity open to diverse outlooks and based on inclusion of others and securing full rights for them, as proposed by Zieloni. However, those demands, labelled "radical" by some, include calling for social egalitarianism and justice, which in most EU countries has for years been a part of mainstream politics.

Conservatism of the Polish society is up for discussion, nevertheless it is true that we have not experienced a post-materialistic orientation typical for the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, when the Green parties emerged in the West. The research of *Polish General Social Opinion Poll* in the mid 1990s indicated that Polish society was dominated by materialistic attitudes, and only 3.5% of the respondents believed in post-materialistic values. The voters were more interested in material issues and problems of economic and social security, than in quality of life, sensitivity to human rights or social and environmental dangers.

The above factors certainly contributed to the fact that Zieloni could not, as of now, manage to win any seats, neither in the European Parliament (2004), the national parliament (2005) nor in the local elections (2006). However, an equally important – if not decisive – obstacle are strong institutional barriers resulting from the electoral law which is unfavourable for small parties. It was introduced in 1993 as an antidote for fragmentation

of the Polish political scene. The five percent election threshold for participation in division of seats in elections of various levels is less of a problem. The real obstacle is the necessity to collect signatures of support for candidates, without which it is impossible to register a list of candidates in a particular constituency.⁶ This means that before an election campaign starts, a preliminary selection takes place. In Poland, where social capital is the lowest in the whole of the EU, people know little about democratic mechanisms, are increasingly sceptical about politics and politicians and are afraid to sign a list of candidates, because they think this is synonymous with joining the party. In those circumstances the condition to collect signatures favours large parties. The mechanisms mean that the voters' choice is limited: a part of the political spectrum never even reaches the voting stage.

On the one hand Zieloni struggle with institutional barriers making it difficult for them to enter the public scene. On the other hand, they try to overcome their image as a counter-cultural rather than political formation promoting a particular lifestyle. They want to leave the fringes of counter-culture and enter the mainstream. While the first green projects of the early 1990s focused mainly on environmental issues, the activity of Zieloni 2004 (at least in the first stage) was dominated by freedom and identity (freedom of speech, liberalisation of the abortion law, women's rights, rights of sexual minorities). An image of a moral left, a party of "gays, lesbians and feminists," sticks to Zieloni in the media.

Recently, mainly thanks to the defence of the Rospuda Valley, raising the question of energy security, protests against plans to construct a nuclear power plant and the installation of elements of an anti-rocket shield in Poland, the Greens managed to partially change this previously one-dimensional image. A definite success was linking

the party with the civil movement for protection of the Rospuda Valley. Zieloni not only actively participated in the protests, but organised them as well (e.g. in February 2007, during the Warsaw visit of Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission), and used an institutional path by submitting a petition to the Committee on Petitions at the European Parliament and by cooperating with the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament. At the moment, Zieloni build their image as a competent European party dealing with key challenges of sustainable growth: integrating the social, environmental and economic issues.

Can Zieloni be the Polish New Left?

The consolidation of the Polish political scene has advanced continuously since 1993 – the introduction of the mentioned election law aimed at preventing fragmentation of the Polish political scene, as did the 1997 Act on Political Parties. Certain political commentators go as far as talking of cartelisation and oligarchisation – Polish politics is in principle a closed cycle blocking a possibility of entry for new political actors. The existing political parties share the subsidies between them and are not interested in allowing new participants onto the scene. And although the intentions to regulate the political scene, to make it more predictable in order to allow for effective government can be considered right, nevertheless, as Adam Ostolski put it, there is "a difference between the thesis that less parties in the Sejm would be better, and the thesis that the less parties generally, the better."⁷

Furthermore, the effect of consolidation of the political scene is enhanced by the media focusing solely on the parties leading in opinion polls during election campaigns, and on the ruling coalition and the main opposition party after elections. An important change took place after

6 In a European election the condition for registration of a list in a particular constituency is the collection of 10,000 signatures of voters residing permanently in this constituency; in a national parliamentary election, the number of signatures is 5,000 for Sejm candidates and 3,000 for Senate candidates.

7 Adam Ostolski, *Czy polskiej modernizacji potrzebna jest polityka?*, unpublished paper. We would like to thank the author for granting us access to the article.

the parliamentary election of 2005. For the first time, the Polish political scene was dominated by two right-wing parties: the conservative and populist *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice, PiS) and the conservative and liberal *Platforma Obywatelska* (Civil Platform, PO). Promoting PO as the main opposition power (which led to it winning the early election of 2007), complete marginalisation of the left (SLD and SdPL, see below) and their lack of a clarified programme posed a serious threat to political pluralism in Poland. The situation did not change after the election of 2007, which was in fact a plebiscite, during which the voters focussed on the parties (in practice only the PO) capable of removing PiS from power. Anything but PiS – this was the logic of the majority of voters.

Is Poland condemned to bipolarisation of the political scene, and the greens' political offer has no chance to reach the electorate? Is there no room in Poland for a left-wing project? According to some sociologists this division can be overcome, since the opposition of PO/PiS is not able to articulate certain problems and conflicts important to people. This may be a chance for left-wing parties.⁸ In support of this thesis one might quote the results of a poll indicating that the Poles would welcome a better political left. Almost two-thirds of the respondents stated that Poland needs a party helping the poorest, the excluded, a party concerned with equal chances for all citizens; over a half of respondents reckoned that such party ought to stand for the interests of hired workers, separation of the state and the Catholic Church and the rights of women and sexual minorities.⁹

It is worth remembering that in spite of the declarative support for the left-wing values and demands, aversion towards self-declared left-wing parties is common. Perhaps one of the reasons is the fact that the only leftists currently represented in Parliament are the groups recycled after 1989,

where the key role is still played by politicians active in communist Poland who are more interested in maintaining the status quo than in creating a European progressive left in Poland.

Consequently, Zieloni undertake the difficult task of positioning the party “ahead” – according to Joschka Fischer’s maxim: “neither to the left, nor to the right, but ahead”. We substitute the left-right polarisation of the political scene with a proposition of green modernisation: enhancing democracy by increasing access to public information and public participation in decision making, improvement of quality of life of the Polish society by protecting natural resources and sustainable economic growth, as well as by creating green jobs, separation of the state and the Church and building an egalitarian society by equalling opportunities of women and men, or protecting the rights of workers and consumers. The instruments of green modernisation? We advocate increased expenses on public education, an ecological tax reform, development of transport policy based on railway and public transport, climate and energy policy based on increasing energy efficiency and promotion of renewables, introduction of equality regulations etc. We criticise the neoliberal corporate globalisation, indicating the need to build a global civil society and supranational democratic institutions which will ensure effective execution of international law, and rise to the new global political challenges, such as the environmental and energy crisis or climate change.

Such a political mix is crosswise from the existing left-right divisions of the political scene in Poland. We are aware that this signifies the need to surround our political project with a broader intellectual and social backing, and to translate the issues into the language of the voters' everyday life. In this sense, one of the most important challenges facing Zieloni is the creation of an original, consistent political narrative, within

8 An opinion of professor Jacek Raciborski in a panel discussion *Przyszłość sceny politycznej oczami naukowców* (*The future of Polish political scene according to scientists*) [in:] *Przyszłość polskiej sceny politycznej po wyborach 2007 roku*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warsaw 2008.

9 A telephone opinion poll conducted for *Rzeczpospolita* on 3 April 2008 by GfK Polonia with a sample of 500 adults.

which various issues connected with green modernisation can be articulated. Another challenge is communicating to people that issues like education, healthcare, taxes, energy security, infrastructure, are by all means political. Yet another is overcoming the conviction that “there is no alternative”, imposed by neoliberal economists, and dominating the public discourse. Other challenges, which can be addressed by green modernisation, include one of the lowest social capitals in the EU (low involvement in actions for public benefit, lack of trust, unwillingness to cooperate, no interest in and even negative attitude towards politics), as well as one of the highest levels of social stratification in Europe, as measured by the Gini index, which in Poland amounts to 0,33.

More than half of the society lives below the subsistence level, and five million people below the biological minimum. Consequently, environmental policies are difficult to accept for a majority of the Polish society. Some people are unwilling to “limit the newly regained freedom”, which is often synonymous with an unsustainable model of consumption; most associate it with yet higher costs of living. In addition, the ruling right cleverly exploits the situation, indicating that it is the European Union that forces various solutions regarding climate and energy policies (e.g. limiting the emission of carbon dioxide) and environmental policy (implementation of the *Nature 2000* programme), rendering “fast and cheap” development of Poland impossible.¹⁰ Right-wing politicians reckon that such a development was available to the old member states, at the expense of nature.

“We are not going to be Europe’s eco-heritage park” was the most persistent mantra of the government and parliament representatives during the conflict regarding the Rospuda Valley, which eventually concluded with a suit against Poland at the European Court of Justice. Increasingly, the ruling right and the active energy lobby blame the greens and the European Union for the growing

energy prices, indicating that they result from environmental and climate demands of the EU. They are right to a certain extent, since the European Commission makes insufficient demands from beneficiaries of EU subsidies to choose the economically most efficient methods of reducing emissions. Consequently, the unnecessarily high costs of environmental protection are shifted to consumers.

Taking all this into account, and considering the conditions of the Polish political scene with its institutional barriers, as well as the quoted challenges facing the Greens, we try to build our image by “escaping ahead” and away from the right-left divisions. At the same time we seek partners and allies with whom we will be able to implement our most crucial programme issues. We currently talk to organisations such as *Socjaldemokracja Polska* (Polish Social Democrats, SdPL), *Partia Demokratyczna* (Democratic Party) or *Partia Kobiet* (Women’s Party) created in 2007, with whom we may cooperate for the European election in 2009. We are aware that, unlike the West European Greens, we have a long way to go. The Polish social and political situation is different even from that in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. the Czech Republic or Estonia). We experience a low level of post-materialistic orientation, a lack of a new middle class, a very strong position of the conservative Catholic hierarchy and the consequences of permanent association of left-wing values with post-communist parties. However, the polarisation between post-Solidarity parties (originating from the former democratic opposition) and post-communist parties (composed of former activists from communistic Poland) is slowly beginning to blur.

Interestingly enough, press articles from 2003 on the creation of Zieloni 2004, as well as comments of Internet users forecasted (prophetically, we believe) that the Greens would only be able to find a place in the political scene in 2010, or later. Each election brings higher support for

10 “We fight for the right to fast and cheap development” – a statement by prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński in May 2007, during the campaign for the early election to local authorities of the Podlasie region, and a local referendum on the Augustów bypass.

Zieloni – e.g. the Green list during the local election in Warsaw in 2006 won support of three times more voters than during the European election of 2004. In the early election of 2007, our senate candidate in Katowice – a difficult region of Upper Silesia, where the entire economy is based on the coal mining industry, and environmental ideas to reduce the use of this commodity in the power industry are very unpopular – won almost five percent of the votes. We are optimistic about the future of Zieloni. At the moment, we focus on the preparations for the 2009 European election, and in a further perspective we build alliances for local and parliamentary elections.

Project Europe

From the point of view of Zieloni 2004, it is crucial to further strengthen the European Green brand and improve competence via the activity of the Greens in other European countries and in the European Union itself (by way of their activity in the European Parliament and the *European Green Party*). The 2009 European election can be used to enhance the European competence and European image of the Polish greens. In 2007, we witnessed a battle for the Rospuda Valley and the areas protected by Nature 2000, which lasted for several months and concluded in a defeat of the government and all parties supporting PiS in their battle against the environmentalists. Actions of the “greens” (environmental NGOs, the media and Zieloni 2004, working together in defence of the Rospuda valley) were supported by most of the Polish society. Importantly, in the context of European competence, the environmentalists and Zieloni had the backing of the European Commission, which indicated a possibility of violation of EU law and brought a case against the Polish government before the European Court of Justice.

According to the report by *CEE Bankwatch Network*, a regional ecological organisation monitoring infrastructural investment and protection of the environment, in the years 2007-2013 all

new EU member states will experience several socio-environmental conflicts around implementation of major investments, such as nuclear power plants, incineration plants or roads and motorways, co-financed from EU structural funds and by the European Investment Bank.¹¹ Cooperation is therefore crucial, between the greens from individual countries where those investments take place and from European structures, and active organisations and groups, on monitoring those investments, but mostly on indicating effective solutions, alternative to those promoted by local and national governments. Without a doubt, this ought to be one of the green issues in the European election campaign.

In Poland, priorities of several sector policies are contrary to those recommended by the European Union. While the Union recommends prioritising skilful demand management and improvement of efficiency, subsequent Polish governments say that the only reasonable reaction to a growing demand is development of infrastructure. Usually this is a result of pressure on Polish politicians coming from lobbyists from the “old fifteen” interested in selling obsolete technologies. A good example is transport policy, where the emphasis is placed on developing the road infrastructure and private instead of public transport. Another example is energy policy, where the priority is increasing the production based on non-renewable energy sources, mainly coal. In this area it would be important for the parties of the old and the new EU member countries to cooperate, as part of a European campaign. Good practices and green modernisation ought to be promoted across the whole of the European Union. An important part ought to be played by the European Parliament, which ought to monitor the European Commission as far as the distribution of EU resources generously directed to Poland and other new member countries in 2007-2013 is concerned.

The European opinion poll Eurobarometer indicates that an increasing number of Europeans believe joint actions at the EU level to be better

11 EU and EIB Funding in Central and Eastern Europe, www.bankwatch.org/billions.

than acting nationally, particularly in the case of environmental and energy policy. It is therefore important to emphasise the role of the European Parliament in the creation of the EU's joint sector policies.

It is equally important to indicate a potentially important role of the European Parliament in monitoring social policies, particularly in the area of equal opportunities of women and men and preventing discrimination. The European Union exists in the Polish public debate mainly as a source of external power, treated by some as a threat to national sovereignty, and by others as a hope, that by entering the European family the Polish society will be modernised and cured from deeply ingrained conservatism, national-

ism, vindictive attitudes and fear of modernisation. On the other hand, thank to the opening of borders and job markets, and to the fact that Poles working and living in other EU countries have experienced other standards, their attitudes begin to shift. And although conservative intellectuals and politicians would like to modernise Poland in a single dimension – on an infrastructural level, rather than a mental one – Zieloni opt for multi-dimensional modernisation, referring to the European standards.

It is therefore crucial to enhance the greens' image in the new member countries, as a political movement possessing a strong European competence.



Agnieszka Grzybek, (1970) is chairwoman of the Polish Green Party since March 2008. She is a feminist activist, journalist and gender equality expert. Since 1997 she has been involved in the women's movement in Poland: from 1997-2005 she worked in the National Women's Information Centre OSKa, and she is co-founder of the informal group *8 March Women's Alliance* which since 2000 has been organising street demonstrations to defend women's rights. She is a graduate from the Polish Philology Department at Warsaw University and the Post-Graduate School of Journalism. 2002-2005 she was a member of the Programme-Consultative Council at the Governmental Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men and the EQUAL Monitoring Committee.



Dariusz Szwed, (1967) is together with Agnieszka Grzybek the chairperson of Poland's Green Party - Zieloni 2004. Furthermore he is Zieloni 2004's delegate to the European Green Party and co-ordinator of various campaigns. Szwed is a graduate of the Krakow University of Economics and the University of Warsaw. He authored, co-authored and edited books and publications on sustainable development.



PART TWO

The Greening of the European Project



The Way We Were...

BRAM VAN DER LEK

Intrusion of a Motley Crew: the First Green Group in the European Parliament

Following the June 1984 elections, the first genuine “green group” appeared in the European Parliament. This was the *Green Alternative European Alliance*, generally known as the *Green Alternative European Link*, or, in the abbreviated form, as GRAEL. This was a group composed of representatives of parties that for the planks in their political platform had explicitly selected the issues of ecological responsibility, environmental preservation, and the search for an alternative economy. In the eyes of the parliamentary establishment, this rather seemed like the intrusion of a motley crew: a set with ties to the German *Grünen* (“street terrorists” in the words of the European conservatives), a couple of radical Italian leftists, plus a few dubious Dutch individuals: a provo, an extreme-left priest, a communist, and, on top of it all, a pacifist! The first contacts with the Parliamentary Bureau, and specifically with the then chairman, the quite conservative Frenchman Pierre Pflimlin, were, to put it mildly, of the reticent and stand-offish kind. It served us well that we had, in advance, already prepared a few things amongst ourselves across the borders, and that we had a couple of excellent advisors available to us who were able to initiate us in the special labyrinthine customs of this – already then – rather Babylonian parliament.

One of those advisors was John Lambert, a British-born journalist who for already many years had lived in Brussels. He spoke fluent Dutch, French, and Italian, and was reasonably proficient in German, with a smattering of some other languages thrown in as well. Together with a group of people from various countries he had organised a

kind of think tank for left-wing politics, *Agenor*, to which some of us had at one time or another been invited. For instance, to discuss the dangers of nuclear energy, or the warnings by the *Club of Rome*, or to discuss the question why left-wing trans-border cooperation is so difficult to establish. In our parliamentary arrival he saw an opportunity to put talk into practice. He introduced us to colleagues, steered us into the right administrative channels, and supplied us with a lot of useful contacts. After a hectic period of hammering together a common political faction, he became the first secretary-general of GRAEL in the *Rainbow Group*, a position he occupied until the spring of 1988.

The Basic Conditions

It could have taken a long time to establish a “green” collaboration within the EP, be it not for the concurrence of a couple of favourable developments. The most significant event was that the German Greens were able to get past the five percent threshold and, as a consequence, managed in one fell swoop to garner seven seats. But this would not have meant all that much without additional partners. Without these, they would have had to seek shelter within an already existing political group, either the Social Democrats (where they would probably not have been very welcome), or the TCDI, a technical cooperative partnership of small groups such as the *Danish People's Movement against the European Community*, the *Flemish People's Union*, and sundry others.¹ Fortunately, green candidates joined us from some other quarters, which made it possible

1 In order to have access to facilities, a party chamber in Parliament, a budget for collaborators, etc., needs to have a minimum number of members - drawn from at least three different Member States.

– albeit after some juggling – to establish a common faction. Two of these came from Belgium. One was from the Flemish party *Agalev*, and one from the francophone party *Ecolo*. There were already two representatives from minor leftist parties from Italy seated in Parliament, one from the PdUP² (a splinter party from the communist party PCI) and one from the *Democrazia Proletaria*, who also displayed some interest in going green and, in any event, were suitably to the left. And, in the Netherlands, we had achieved a *tour de force* of sorts by forging a cooperative partnership of no fewer than four parties: the CPN (the *Dutch Communist Party*), the *Dutch Green Party*, the PPR (*Radical Political Party*), and the PSP (*Pacifist Socialist Party*), under the name *Groen Progressief Akkoord* (Green Progressive Agreement, GPA), whereby we accounted for two of the 25 Dutch seats.

Previously in the Netherlands

This development was not unimportant for the political relations in the Netherlands. Already for a long time, attempts had been made to bring together parties of such widely divergent views as the PSP and the PPR, on the one hand, and the CPN, on the other. But those attempts had thus far been rebuffed for this or that reason, as it not uncommonly is the case with political parties, even though, in practice, there had existed cooperation in many areas for quite some time. Likewise, it had been clear for a while already that all three parties reserved important space for green issues, so that a green party could readily join in. But, even so, the future of the Green Progressive Agreement kept for a long time hanging by a slender thread. Nonetheless, since, in a certain sense, it was a one-off only, and could be interpreted as nothing more than an occasional agreement, thus something you can readily divest yourself of, it actually did succeed in the end. And even reasonably on time.

What is certain is that the later development, whereby the three parties, with also the EVP

(*Evangelical People's Party*) added as the fourth (at that time the Green Party was, in fact, no longer a relevant factor), did actually merge into *GroenLinks*³ in 1990, was strongly advanced by this precursor event.

Since everything had fallen into place in reasonably good time, the GPA could address itself to associated parties in the other member states and put forward suggestions for a future collaboration. This resulted in the drafting of a manifesto that was distributed in an English translation. It is too long to quote in its entirety, so a few points will have to do:

“With our joint participation in the elections, we hope to bring people into the European Parliament who are able to put forward a coherent view on how the Common Market and society should be changed:

- Present Common Market procedures should be altered drastically.

- Survival is our starting point. Therefore we oppose (nuclear) armament and new steps in the arms race. We wish to reverse the growing animosity and the division of the world into blocs.

- A different kind of economy, in which unchecked growth of material production and consumption is no longer the predominant goal. An economy which doesn't produce for profits but which takes social demands as its guideline. (...)

- A new policy which centres on people and opposes the enormous bureaucratic and economic powers; (...).

- A policy which will oppose male dominance and traditionally male values in economics, culture and administration. Striving towards more humane ways of dealing with each other and with power: that is what ‘feminisation’ means to us.

2 Proletarian Unity Party

3 Green Left

— Further democratisation, so that people have a say in matters which concern them.

— A policy with a tenacity to the right to a worthy independent existence and which opposes any form of oppression, racism, anti-Semitism and any form of discrimination.”

All in all a fine calling card as an introduction to continue the collaboration with one another.

The Rainbow Construction

Nevertheless, in spite of the 13 seats held by Germans, Italians, Belgians, and the Dutch, the affair was far from being a foregone conclusion. To ensure the formation of a complete parliamentary group, these numbers remained deficient, even with the addition of some like-minded spirits from the TCDI. Also in that case, it would again make the TCDI too small an entity. As a solution, it was decided to combine forces and form a new, more or less technical cooperation, which, because of its diverse, multi-coloured character, would be named the *Rainbow Group*, made up of the new Green group, the Green Alternative European Link (see supra), with, in addition, on the one hand, the EFA,⁴ the Flemish People's Union and the *Partito Sardo*, two parties intent upon national independence, and, on the other, the Danish People's Movement against the EC. The EFA and the GRAEL each were assigned their own secretary-general. For the technical support of the whole group (the Rainbow), still another person was added.

Heated Discussions, Sometimes Sheer Confusion

It should be evident that this did not happen at the drop of a hat. Suddenly, on 25 June 1984, some few dozen people got together – most of them without ever having had the chance to meet previously – speaking different languages and all of them bringing along their own political ideas. Naturally, we had provided for translations, but none amongst us was used to listening to someone else's arguments via headphone and for a

time to dismissing his or her body language. And, for instance, one also had not given any, or sufficient, thought to the fact that, when you engage in some light banter, just to put somebody else in a bit of a relaxed mood, you might – because of an unfortunate translation – be completely misunderstood and generate fierce anger instead. Often, there was need to suspend the proceedings just to let the few experienced colleagues amongst us diffuse the situation, or to let the ruffled adversaries try in their pidgin English to convince each other of their good intentions. Yet, in all of this fracas, it was not an unpleasant experience to find out from the interpreters that they found working with the GRAEL people so refreshing, since the doings were all so perfectly human and far less staid and stolid than in most of their other meetings. We were, of course, young at that time and still imbued with great ideals. In a sense, GRAEL was and remained also more of a movement than a political party.

It is true, of course, that some amongst us had met before. In April 1984, for instance, a preliminary discussion meeting had been organised in Strasbourg at the invitation of *Agenor* and the Danish *Socialistisk Folkeparti* (Socialist People's Party), in order to work out who could be doing what with whom. There were, for example, also the French Greens, and other parties that were interested but had failed to make the grade. But, as it is, the real business got off the ground only at that initial meeting in June.

An Optimistic Start

It was a time for people getting down to real business, a time for distribution of tasks. Who would sit on which committees? Who would treat which topics? How would we reach our decisions? How often would we be getting together? These and similar questions occupied us.

All kinds of problems popped up. For instance, 14 members had been designated for the seven German seats, with the mandate to change places with each other after half a term (two and a half years). “Nachrücker”, this was the name given to

4 European Free Alliance

the substituting man or woman. But it was also the intention that they would participate in the work without any delay. It appeared logical, therefore, that they would also take part in the vote whenever we had to decide on something internally. But how to deal then with the members that didn't have a "Nachrücker" attached to them? It was decided that "whole" members would receive two votes and all "half" members one vote. This thus applied to our Dutch group as well, although there it was somewhat different. I myself, since I was heading the candidate list (and being a PSP representative) was designated for the entire term, but amongst my colleagues one, Herman Verbeek (PPR) would take office for half of the term, and Nel van Dijk (CPN) would take over for the other half, while for the fourth man amongst us, Roel van Duyn (Greens) there remained only a position as collaborator and co-decision maker. It was obvious that we, just like the German members, would only get assigned one vote.

We came up with quite a few more extraordinary ideas which, on closer scrutiny, turned out rather more difficult to realise than anticipated. For instance, it was decided that our collaborators, for whom the EP set aside a certain budget, would not be fitted into the hierarchical schema of the European Parliament – with its ranking from A1 through C4 – whereby the highest-ranked official was paid three times as much as the one at the bottom rung, but would all "simply" receive the same salary. At first, this seemed quite a simple matter. Give us a list of the functions to which we are entitled, add the amounts of the remunerations that pertain to them, divide the sum by the number of collaborators, and so determine the amount of money they will receive. But it didn't quite work out that way. If we wanted to do such a thing, we had to organise and look after it ourselves. And, suddenly, the whole idea became more than uncommonly complicated. Because this meant that we had to make agreements with all collaborators individually, that the highly paid needed to surrender a certain amount (to be recalculated every time), and that others were paid the correct extra sum. Not even to mention all of the various secondary employment conditions, which made things even more complicated. All of

the above requires extra personnel to look after the administration. It was complicated but it did happen, nonetheless, and the system even persisted for quite a while. I understand that by now it has long since been abolished, but I still regret that.

The Political Work

Naturally, we were all eager to participate in the business of politics. We felt an affinity with the many extra-parliamentary movements. On many occasions, we took it upon ourselves to offer these movements extra possibilities to meet with one another and enable them to advance their platforms through press coverage and publicity. For instance, we organised a large conference on the dangers of, and the connection between, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy for WISE (World Information Service on Energy) in a meeting room of the European Parliament. Or we would invite representatives of organisations of migrant workers (Turks, Moroccans et al) to hearings where they could tell people about their work and the problems related to them, and, at the same time, meet with parliamentarians (in so far as the latter were willing to follow up on our invitations). These kinds of events can no doubt be deemed as our wishing to make some sort of a statement, as a sort of demonstration you use to propound your opinions and show where your sympathies lie, but they are more than just that. At the same time you are making good use of your possibilities (I would almost call them competences) as an MEP to get voters and politics in closer contact with each other. It was definitely not merely meant as some youthful mischievous prank and as a provocation, even though there was a touch of that as well and we often derived a lot of fun from it.

But the point is that we had been voted into office by the European electorate to work on the promised changes also via the parliamentary route, and we were, therefore, obliged to put our best foot forward in Parliament. Which means that you have to demonstrate that you know your business, that, wherever possible, you keep yourself better informed and more abreast of things than your – often right-wing – opponents. You must be in a position in the committees to dis-

cuss matters equally knowledgeably as anybody else there. You need to know how the official apparatus is functioning, who amongst the officials are the ones engaged in important issues that you might be able to appropriate to support your own argumentation. It is, likewise, useful to pay close attention to the lobbying scene, knowing what kinds of issues are being advanced, what arguments are being used, albeit only to be in a position to come up with timely responses. And, also, it is extremely important to have your own advisors and contacts in the field.

A minor example. This happened to me one time in the Committee on the Environment. There was a final speakers' session before a vote. I cannot quite recall what the proposal was, but it had something to do with some important environmental improvement that had to be decided on urgently. The proposal had run into fierce opposition by lobbyists from the industry concerned but it nonetheless looked as if most of the members would vote in favour of it. Then one of the British Tories took the floor. He cut the proposal to bits and then said: "I have here a study of two engineers of the well known Institute of TNO⁵ from the Netherlands". We had to read this through first for it would demonstrate that things were not at all what they had seemed in the arguments presented. A messenger had already started to distribute the study. Naturally, utter confusion resulted and I left the room. As one of the last speakers on the list (because I belonged to a small group) I still had quite a bit of time before my turn came. I immediately telephoned Lucas Reijnders (professor of environmental studies and part-time collaborator of *Natuur en Milieu*)⁶,

who just so happened to be in the office. Lucas told me: "Oh, I wouldn't take that seriously. That study is more than a year old. The Dutch government read it and put it aside. It's made up by two engineers that used to work with TNO but these days run their own little business". I got back to the meeting room in time and when my turn came I quietly explained that these were hardly new data, that all of this had already been duly accounted for in the formulation of the proposal and that we should therefore simply adopt it without further ado.

Of course, it does not always work out this way but it is a source of satisfaction the few times that it happens. Mostly, though, parliamentary work requires tough and protracted sloggng. You may be involved with something that, ultimately, will go nowhere. But, periodically, you are successful in getting something off the ground that looks like an improvement, as happened to me with the directive to restrict the publicity and selling techniques for products substituting breast feeding, and, after some detours, also in implementing a directive guaranteeing scrutiny by all citizens of all environmental data that government has at its disposal.

In the same way, other colleagues in their turn have come forward with proposals, made their contributions to the discussions, and, wherever possible, advanced our critical and non-conformist views and vision. All of this goes back quite a way already, but it seems to me that during that first parliamentary session we were able to lay a very solid basis for a Green Progressive, or, if you prefer, a Green - and Left-wing - vote in the European Parliament.



Bram van der Lek (born 1931) is a biologist by training. He was a teacher, scientific researcher, Member of the Dutch Lower House for the PSP (*Pacifist Socialist Party*) from 1967 until 1978, Chairman of the PSP from 1981 until 1983, Member of the Upper House from 1983 until 1984, and Member of the European Parliament from 1984 until 1989. Currently, he has retired from public political involvement but remains quietly active in the affairs of *GroenLinks*.

5 Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research).

6 Nature and the Environment, an environmental NGO.

FRIEDER OTTO WOLF

Magic Moments From the Past

Ave Caesar morituri te salutant¹

Ronald Reagan planned that his visit to Europe in 1985 should culminate in an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. An informal grouping of various left-leaning organisations in the Parliament, however, invited Jesse Jackson, the black civil rights activist, as a counter measure. Jackson's public prayers at the concentration camp memorial of Struthof near Strasbourg, in the presence of former Austrian Federal Chancellor and left-wing social democrat, Bruno Kreisky, were very moving. GRAEL, although small, was an influential member of the Rainbow Group which was active in bringing together the Jackson invitation committee, not least because of its good relations with the left-wing Labour group and the Italian communists. Inside the Parliament, the members waved banners protesting against rearmament, including one quoting the title of this anecdote that got plenty of press coverage. The protests were so loud that Reagan broke off his speech and playfully asked if there was an echo. His appearance at the EP, however, was left out of the further reports of his visit to Europe. It was clear that the European Parliament had great potential as a sounding board for a wide range of protests and would perhaps be taken more seriously at a global level than in Germany.

Scabs and Scargill

A small and informal working group that included left-wing Labour, GRAEL, French, Spanish and Italian leftists actively supported the strike by British mine workers (and later strikes in Spain). In this context I was able to see with my own eyes how severely the authorities reacted. I had never imagined that the "bobbies" would behave as

they did against the miners as they attempted to clear the way for busses containing strike breakers. I also had the opportunity in numerous discussions to observe that there was not much evidence (despite various attempts) of this protest breaking free of its hard left foundation and linking it to other issues such as the environment or freedom. It remained an isolated protest and recognition came much too late that the lack of support from continental miners' unions (some of whom had clear anti-communists roots) was a tactical disadvantage that could no longer be effectively overcome. All this provided me with a most decisive learning experience with regard to trade unions, politics and social conflict.

The World Conference of Prostitutes and the Women's Bureau

One of GRAEL's main achievements was an independent women's group that under the leadership of Annemiek Onstenk from the Netherlands along with Annette Goerlich and Margaret Kranich provided a team capable of highly effective operations beyond the remit of the organisation. I still remember how our rather "bourgeois" if not aristocratic Belgian colleague, François Roelants du Vivier (Ecolo) was shocked at GRAEL receiving world wide press coverage for having offered the EP as host venue for the second World Conference of Prostitutes. It turned out a great success, not just as a feminist anti-discrimination demonstration but also as a means of offering a wider perspective to trade union activity for all workers. It was also an important learning experience for me. A second such experience was my cooperation with the women's group in the debate on basic income as propagated by Dutch parliamentary assistant Alexander de Roo and Belgian philosopher and

1 "Hail Caesar. Those about to die salute you." Traditional greeting of the gladiators.

economist Philippe van Parijs. The question in which way to provide the goods and services necessary to guarantee for unrestricted societal reproduction (that I had already discussed at the beginning of the 1980s with the then spokesman of the Green party national executive committee, Rainer Trampert and the spokesman of the Green party in the Bundestag, Thomas Ebermann) turned out to be a good way into a wider public debate on the radical policy of work as an alternative to the rather masculine opt-out fantasy of the supporters of the leisure society.

A Magic Moment for Internationalism in West Berlin 1988

An alternative summit to the one organised by the World Bank and IMF in West Berlin in

1988 (tacitly supported by the GDR regime, who wished to ensure that official delegates would have a problem free stay in their luxury hotels), gave GRAEL the opportunity to show what a small group in the EP could achieve. Under the leadership of Wilfried Telkämper (at the time Nachrücker² in the Green party – now “Die Linke”) GRAEL succeeded, as it had done at the first alternative summit in 1986 in Bonn, in demonstrating that the EP was not only an important sounding board for a new internationalism but also capable of bringing limited but nonetheless important catalyst functions to the debate. In this fashion the first parliamentary Green group in the EP was able to play an important role in the events that saw the internationalism of the 60s and 70s develop into the movement critical of globalisation in the 1990s.



Frieder Otto Wolf was Nachrücker for the Greens in the European Parliament and a member of the GRAEL Board from 1984 to 1989. From 1994 to 1999 he was a member of the EP for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. Since November 1973 he has been lecturer (since November 2006 honorary professor) in philosophy at the Free University, Berlin. Web site: <http://www.friederottowolf.de>.

2 His position on the Party list was not high enough for him to enter parliament at the election but with the departure of a sitting MEP, as next on the list, he was able to enter as replacement. At the time, the deal within the German Greens and some other green parties was that a Member of Parliament should actually only serve one half of his or her term and then be followed up by a successor who had already assisted his or her predecessor.

ALI YURTTAGÜL

Migration, Asylum, Civil Rights and Minorities

The first Green members of the European Parliament (MEPs) wanted us typically to work on migration, asylum and minority issues. The European Community had no competence in these areas. There was hardly any documentation from the Commission and no committee in the European Parliament concerned with these topics but this was not important for the MEPs in GRAEL. Refugees, immigrants, minorities and civil rights were issues that needed to be discussed in, but more importantly, outside parliament.

Just how important these policy areas were, was demonstrated in the 1984 elections. Le Pen and his *National Front* party not only succeeded in getting into the European Parliament but were able, with the support of other right wing elements, to organise a parliamentary party. This prompted 113 MEPs to call for a committee of enquiry into the resurgence of fascism and racism. Le Pen wrote to the president of the parliament to protest not just about the committee of enquiry but also to signal that he would not be participating in its investigations. In addition, he warned that “all defamatory and false claims would be pursued in the courts.” The suit brought by Le Pen and his followers to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) against the enquiry was based on the claim that “the subject matter of the enquiry did not fall within the competence of the Community.” The findings of this enquiry, however, painted a formidable picture of racism and xenophobia in Europe. GRAEL was represented on the committee by Bram van der Lek, who was also rapporteur.

Racism and xenophobia in the 1980s were on the increase much as is the case unfortunately today. With the electoral success of racist parties not just with Le Pen in France but also the German Republicans entering the European Parliament, another committee of enquiry was set up. Even today such a committee is still necessary.

There was no European Community competence in the area of information exchange between police and border control agencies. Cooperation at the European level had, however, already started and, in some areas, had begun to take legal form. Only a few people in Europe had noticed that five member states, Benelux, France and Germany had signed up to a modest but comprehensive three-page agreement in the small Luxemburg town of Schengen. The member states did not inform the European institutions and even national parliaments were not fully briefed. Texts existed in French or German but we were unable to have access to them. We only learned of the contents via Dutch translations. The Schengen Agreement appeared to combat “drug smuggling, arms trading and criminal behaviour.” To this end the core members of the Community agreed to an exchange of data. It was the GRAEL MEPs who were the first to spot the dangers of information exchange without data protection legislation. The setting up of the *Schengen Information System* (SIS) that was to regulate data exchange and police cooperation within Europol, was a swift reaction to the validity of this argument.

Immigration and asylum issues were not formally discussed at European level but they received much “informal” attention. A 1987 protocol to the Schengen Agreement removed “fighting drug smuggling” as the treaty’s major aim and substituted the control of external boundaries and the creation of a Schengen-wide visa. This was the case until the fall of the Berlin Wall. All this work was done on the basis of agreements between member states, not under the aegis of the European Community. Expressions such as “fortress Europe” found their way into the political debate. GRAEL organised numerous conferences to investigate discrimination against immigrants and led demonstrations at border crossings to highlight that many immigrant families were

unable to travel between member states because of restrictive visa requirements. It could take three weeks to obtain a transit visa to cross Germany for a journey to the south. School trips were brought to a halt at borders when there were immigrant children requiring special visas in the class. Frequently teachers turned to us in Brussels for help after such incidents.

One of GRAEL's most important issues concerned the immigrants' right to vote. Debates in Sweden and the Netherlands had already put this on the European political agenda. There was a partial success when immigrants and EU citizens gained the right to participate in local and European elections in the member states where they lived but third country immigrants were still excluded. This question is still ongoing. Political representation for immigrants is viewed as more than just the right to vote. It has a European dimension, which is why it is important to encourage the formation of a Europe-wide organisation for immigrants.

GRAEL, even in the 1980s, had its own special refugee policy. The 1951 *Geneva UN Refugee Convention* was a reaction to the events in Nazi Germany and the post Second World War problems. We fought for a new definition of the refugee status to reflect the current situation. During this period, phrases such as "persecution because of sexual orientation" and "environmental refugee" gained political currency. It was already clear in the second half of the 1980s that any UN revision of what constituted refugee status would only

have negative results. Work to achieve results at the European level therefore became a priority.

The current European parliamentary group of *Greens/EFA* still has something of what characterised GRAEL within the Rainbow Coalition. Close cooperation with the regionalists was important to GRAEL and it was in this area that there was a policy overlap on minority issues. Combating discrimination of minorities and the suppression of minority languages was not just an issue of the regionalists within the Rainbow Coalition but also of importance to GRAEL. Perhaps the only difference between today's parliamentary party and that of the Rainbow days is that there are no longer anti-EU elements in the group. Within the Rainbow Coalition, GRAEL was established perhaps because it was not anti-EU but critical of EU policies.

With my Turkish background, GRAEL provided a political home where I could feel comfortable and some of the friendships of that time have lasted over the years.

It must have been because of my ancestry that the files on Turkey landed on my desk. It was Green MEP Wolfgang von Nostitz, who first proposed cooperation between the EP and the Turkish National Assembly in 1987. Earlier in the same year, he had been an election monitor in Turkey. He was convinced that cooperation with a democratically elected assembly would only further the process of democracy in Turkey. This still holds good today and is the reason why the Greens are in favour of Turkish accession negotiations.



Ali Yurttagül was born in Antakya, Turkey, in 1953. From 1970 to 1976 he studied Political Science at the University of Ankara and the Free University Berlin, where he subsequently worked as an assistant lecturer. In 1981 he changed as project director to the Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth. Since 1985 he is a staff member of the Green Parliamentary Group in the European Parliament.

ANNETTE GOERLICH, MARGRET KRANNICH AND ANNEMIEK ONSTENK

Breaking New Ground – The Women’s Bureau

GRAEL’s three member women’s bureau was a one-off. No such group existed before, nor has it since. As women were greatly under-represented among our Members of Parliament – only a fifth of members was female – it was decided to set up a women’s bureau with two fulltime positions. These we divided among the three of us: one Dutch and two Germans. Having a two nation perspective was a great help.

Feminist policy cannot be restricted to just a few topics, or even to matters of interest to women. It is about making women’s issues an integrated part of all policy areas. (GRAEL policy statement, 1988).

Consequently, we did not just work on issues such as the rights of immigrant women, women and health, violence against women, effects of the European single market on women, gender implications of flexible employment policy and strengthening the position of women in politics. We also intervened in other areas like genetic engineering: we organised a feminist hearing on reproductive technologies in the European Parliament (EP).

We learned to function according to the rules and regulations of the Parliament and produced reports (e.g. on discrimination against migrant women), proposals and amendments – and we tried to go beyond parliamentary affairs. In response to the then very critical attitudes toward the European Community, we worked to develop a Europe-wide network of civil society groups and NGOs. We were delighted to be able to provide them with the excellent conference and interpretation facilities of the Parliament. We took part in protests at the European level, such as a demonstration – which included the presence of cattle – against genetically modified milk in front of the European Commission building. At a protest against dangerous exports to developing countries we pointed to harmful contraceptives. We supported the Irish and Belgian

women in their fight for abortion rights. And we worked closely together with our GRAEL-colleague in charge of human rights on the rights of lesbians, gays and transsexuals, HIV-positive persons and AIDS-sufferers.

We also took the liberty of ignoring certain issues. One day, one of our MEPs came beaming into our office to tell us that he had gotten hold of a report on equal treatment given to women in the process of the ordination to priesthood. We were not amused with the emancipatory aspects of this initiative and our MEP rather contritely handed it back to the Committee.

Educating Men

We also played an educational role within our “green” circle. In the debate about the basic income we aimed at phasing out the gender division of labour. At the GRAEL conference “From a Work-based Society to a Culture-Based Society?” we insisted on the question-mark arguing that shorter working hours may occur in paid work – but as unpaid care work as well as gender division of labour showed no sign of disappearing, we questioned the advent of the kingdom of liberty – at least for women.

There were some hardship cases. One of our colleagues, outraged by our statements, denied that there was prostitution in the communist countries behind the Iron Curtain. He was truly convinced that it had disappeared under the “real socialism”. Later we discovered that he had been a Stasi-informer.

Breaking New Ground

Some of our activities caused irritations. A translator called us in some confusion, wanting to know what “quotas” had to do with women.

She had only come across the expression with regard to cows and milk quotas. In a paper on the restructuring of employment we had demanded that all employment and training opportunities should observe a 50% quota of women. We were certainly demanding in our requests but restrain never got women very far.

Provocations

GRAEL was a small group, but we once in a while we caught international attention: The highlight, not just for GRAEL but also for the EP (at that point in its history), was the 1986 Second World Whores' Congress. Some 200 prostitutes met at the EP to discuss human rights, social security and health issues. Things did not run smoothly: conservative and communist MEPs both tried to stop the event. There was a heated debate about the dignity of the Parliament, in which a Belgian socialist MEP rather dryly pointed out: if it is OK for MEPs to visit prostitutes at their workplace, what is wrong about prostitutes meeting where MEPs work?

It was a tremendous success. Never before had the EP been besieged by so many journalists as during the two days of the congress and their reports gave a full and accurate coverage of the prostitutes' demands. We worked hard, but as pioneers we had a lot of fun and we have remained friends to this day.



Annemiek Onstenk

Women's Group 1985-1991, now a journalist in Amsterdam.



Margret Krannich

Women's Group 1985-1990, now executive director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation Hesse in Frankfurt am Main.



Annette Goerlich

Women's Group 1985-1990, now working at the Heinrich Böll Foundation Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart.

BARBARITA SCHREIBER

Dogged Workers for Sustainable Solutions

In 1984 when the German Greens gained seven seats in the European Parliament, the *Green Alternative European Link* (GRAEL) advertised a two thirds part time position (full time salary 2.000 DM). Applicants, however, needed a good deal of idealism. When I went for my interview it was explained that the job would involve providing technical advice on the *Common Agricultural Policy* and the European Community's trade relation, be responsible for cooperation with the so called developing countries and provide support to Green MEPs from five countries. All applicants, independent of each other, declined to accept such a completely unrealistic and utopian job description. The new MEPs were persuaded that the job needed to be divided and instead of one position one and a half were created. With lots of part time contracts and colleagues from the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Italy and the Federal Republic we often worked round the clock to create the structures necessary to run the parliamentary party, the working groups and provide support for members from six very different green parties and other associated parties.

At a time when the EP was the weakest of the European institutions, we made full use of all the opportunities that the Parliament offered in the form of parliamentary reports, speeches, emergency resolutions, inter-parliamentary conferences, delegation trips, hearings and not least telephone campaigns. It was frequently a high wire act trying to find a common language not just literally but also ideologically. In the end we got the balance right by allowing each individual to plough their own furrow as long as they kept within the GRAEL political guidelines.

The Greens in the EP currently play an important role in parliamentary business and this would increase with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty when the Parliament's co-decision

powers in the areas of foreign and tax policy will expand, as will competences in other areas. In the 1980s, however, their extra-parliamentary activities were reasonably significant if not even more important. Creating a network of various movements (environment, peace, human rights, women, solidarity with the third world, and anti- nuclear) was right at the top of the agenda. We did indeed have something to offer: ourselves as well as our parliamentary party facilities. Networking throughout Europe required multilingual communication, translation skills, information exchange, analysis and experience in building cooperation structures, some of which are still in existence. Nearly all the issues and projects that we initiated are still prominent on today's European agenda: an alternative meeting to the 1986 *World Economic Summit* in Bonn; the occupation in Geneva of the building housing the UN High Commission for Refugees; the use of parliamentary immunity to draw attention to the state of refugees in El Salvador; the trip to Guatemala in 1986 post its „democratic opening“; the disastrous consequences of development aid during „Operation Flood“ in India when European milk exports destroyed the Indian market; debt forgiveness in the developing world and criticism of the structural changes demanded by international finance institutions, which the then European Community also wished to adopt. Our approach was and still is right.

The international solidarity movement of that time that sometimes used the Greens in the Bundestag and the EP as a mouthpiece no longer exists. New social movements are active in Europe and the wider world, albeit at a distance from political parties. The *World Social Forum* mobilises ten thousands of people, including Green MEPs. This is a good thing as: the abolition of global inequality and injustice is, given the current macr-

oeconomic, ecological and social structures, still a long way off. Both politicians and civil society still have much to do.

It is well known that the Greens are always ahead of the game and are dogged workers for

strategies that will provide sustainable solutions to global challenges. At least they are when not participating in government. Anyhow, in the last 24 years their numbers have almost quadrupled in the EP from 11 to 42.



Barbarita Schreiber was GRAEL parliamentary assistant in the EP 1984-1990 and is currently working as parliamentary advisor for Europe, Women and Development policy for the Green group in the regional parliament (Landtag) of Baden-Württemberg.

HANNES LORENZEN

Green Agricultural Policy - The Perennial Battle

From Standing Joke to Success Story

The European Union's *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) is the best established but at the same time the most highly criticised of the Union's policies. Since the Rome Treaties establishing the European Community, the Member States have never succeeded in adapting this policy to reflect the economic and social changes that have taken place. The steady financial aid from Brussels has made the recipient countries refuse any changes demanded by the donor countries. Things only changed, when agriculture became too expensive for everybody and when the ecological and social follow-up costs could not be denied any longer.

This was the situation post 1984 when the Greens first entered the European Parliament (EP). At that time the EU spent half of the agricultural budget on storage, destruction or export of unsaleable agricultural products. At that time we demanded an end to industrialised agriculture and the promotion of organic farming. This was originally a standing joke in the EP's Agriculture Committee. The agricultural lobbies present in this committee simply regarded organic farming as left-over of old times.

The Greens' EU Agricultural Policy is Approaching Mainstream

Enormous industrial interests depend on the CAP. Despite this we succeeded in giving already the major reforms of 1992 and 1999 a "green" touch. Organic farming is now an economic and political success story and a recognised way of achieving healthy nutrition. After repeated food scandals, the precautionary principle is now widely applied to EU consumer protection. Disbursement of EU funds is now dependent on fulfilling certain environmental and animal protection requirements. Since the latest agricultural

reforms, rural development has become an independent policy area.

Green agricultural policy is capable of becoming mainstream. We knew how to exploit the weak points of the old policy. Innumerable food scandals, mad cows and the attempt to apply patents to plants and animals in the EU were important issues where our reform demands were effective. The banning of hormones in animal feed, the prohibition of dangerous pesticides and the resistance against gene technology in the food industry are now reflected in EU legislation. Our success in influencing important decisions in the Agriculture and Consumer Committees was also due to the way we matched parliamentary work with civil society and extra-parliamentary activities. We were able to put the necessary pressure on public opinion at the right time.

The Principle of Diversity

Any real socio-ecological change in agricultural policy still encounters serious resistance. The world's extremely unstable food situation gives the old industrial food producers the opportunity to propose a new so-called green revolution including "green gene technology". The extreme disparities in the funding of agriculture continue to be defended as a historical right by those member states and agrarian industries that profit the most. But both the call for new production methods to fight hunger and the call of the agricultural lobbies for public funding without social or ecological requirements could, however, give new impetus to the socio-ecological movement.

Climate change and rising oil prices will force our society to think about agriculture and energy in terms of respect for the ecosystem and the conservation of natural resources. In political terms this implies that research, education, production

and consumption need to concentrate on diversity in food crops rather than increased mass production targets.

Diversity – the Strategy for Sustainability

Sustainable biological diversity in agriculture requires an end to industrialised animal husbandry based predominantly on imported feedstuffs and a move forward to a more reasonable balance between crops and animals. This will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also ground water pollution and animal health problems. Planting more crop varieties will mean fewer pests and chemicals. More diversity in our diet means improved health. There is nothing new about this. The Greens were already expounding and demanding such a change in the 1980s.

In the 1980s the CAP with its guaranteed intervention prices acted as a magnet for overproduction. Today, with intervention gone and markets opened to world prices, it is the power of international trading concerns and the supermarkets that threatens a policy whose aims are food security and fair prices for farmers and consumers. It is therefore vital that, alongside social and ecological support measures for farmers, we should push for reforms to competition law and strengthen local and regional markets so that food prices are accessible to all.

1. Flash Back: Green Agriculture Success Stories

Greens and Regionalists: Opposition

At the beginning, the German Greens were unique in the EP. Along with other anti-EU groups, opposition was their watchword: opposition to the atom treaty; rearmament; centralised states and the power of the agriculture lobby. The *Green Alternative European Link* (GRAEL) brought together the Danish anti-EU party, the Basque movement against the Spanish state, the Flemish *Volksunie* and others. What remains today is a much more stable alliance of the Euro Greens with groups from the regions, the Welsh, the Scots, the Basques, the Catalans and the Russian Latvians.

What has kept the Greens and the regionalists work together for so long is a vision of Europe that recognises the special characteristics of the regions and wants to eliminate narrow-minded regionalism and centralism from the nation state. In the agricultural area, their relationship is based on common demands for independent regional development programmes for rural areas, quality labels for special regional food products and short distances between producer and consumer. Scotland now has its own parliament, independent of Westminster and the regions are able to influence the government. Gordon Brown and Chancellor of the Exchequer Darling had to withdraw proposals to “scrap the CAP” as the result of protests from Wales and Scotland. A good result for European solidarity!

Attack on the Subsidies Empire

The EU Commission’s Director General for Agriculture for a long time acted like a European Duke. The European Commission spread its bounty amongst the various production sectors with no consultation with, or control from, the European Parliament. Subsidies were allocated according to weight and size. The larger the farm and the greater the production, the more money came from Brussels. Market economy was negated. As soon as the market was unable to absorb any more milk, meat or grain at a certain threshold price, the surpluses were bought up by the EU that then paid agro-business to process, store, destroy and export this overproduction. In fact we should not really talk about European surpluses. The EU was then the world’s biggest importer of agricultural products, as it still is today. All the unsaleable quantities of meat, milk and grain were dependent on massive imports of feedstuffs from the USA and the developing world.

The empire of the DG Agriculture continued for as long as the taxpayers’ money was there. Once a year, the Agriculture Council conducted dramatic price negotiations, following which ministers proudly announced that guaranteed prices had barely been reduced. The new rates were usually just enough for the most efficient operators to deal with but not enough to allow

the great majority of smaller farmers to stay in business. During this period some 250.000 small farmers went out of business per annum. Many villages and regions lost the critical mass needed to keep schools and infrastructure running. There was therefore a dramatic increase in the number of regions suffering loss of population and animal slurry pollution. Herman Verbeek, a Dutch catholic priest and former Green member of the Agriculture committee commented dryly, "In the Netherlands we have a lot more pigs than people."

Intensive meat production and its concentration in a few EU regions is currently a important weak point in our agriculture policy because it pollutes ground water and creates greenhouse gas problems.

Farmers Get Going – Networks of the Socio-Ecological Movements

While the established farming organisations only pretended to regret rural depopulation and favoured industrialisation of agriculture, we have always viewed our task to support the small farmer and to support consumers, environmental and development organisations in shaping their own rural development model which emphasises social and ecological factors.

Despite the ideological differences between the socialist/communist approach of farmers in France, Spain, Italy and Portugal and the more environmental/animal protection and consumer orientated affiliations of the northern Member States, we were able, by means of conferences and local actions, to make a significant contribution to the establishment of a European green alternative movement.

The organic farming movement, the *European Small Farmers' Coordination*, the seed initiatives, the anti-GMO (genetically modified organisms) movement and many more were able to benefit not only from the interpretation services of our Green Group. They also, however, had to get to grips with the opportunities and limits of parliamentary procedure. We have remained strong



allies because we have never questioned their independence; on the contrary, we have always desired it.

Against GMOs – No Patents on Life!

One issue that from the beginning caused environmental, social and legal concerns and even today represents one of the major successes of the Greens is resistance to the use of gene technology in agriculture and food production. The first big EP conference held in February 1989, *Patenting Life*, was the result of cooperation with the international seed organisation (GRAIN) and opponents of gene technology. It was Benny Haerlin, then a Green MEP and today an outstanding proponent for the culture of diversity in agriculture who first brought the topic to our attention. We also had decisive support from the US in Texan Linda Bullard who later became the cofounder of the network for gene ethics and was an EP parliamentary assistant for genetic technology.

The Patenting Life conference became a model for many other conferences. We did not just bring together like-minded people. We wanted to involve friend and foe alike in fair discussion: scientists and the gene technology industry, gene banks, animal welfare activists, consumers, representatives of the churches and the European Commission. By providing a forum in which business interests, those with moral reservations, scientists and lawyers could debate their differences, we brought the issue to public attention. In this way we were able to throw a spanner in the works of Ciba Geigy, Monsanto and their cronies in the EU Commission. They had hoped to be able to sneak through the change of the right to breed



becoming the right to patent genetically modified plants as a measure of simply keeping pace with technology. The fact that today we work closely with the anti-GMO movement, seed preservation organisations and GMO free regions is the result of our earlier cooperation activities and our efforts in the EP.

Common Agricultural Policy's Weak Points

The industrialisation of agriculture has predetermined breaking points. When these come to a head it can open up political opportunities. Eggs with dioxin catapulted the Belgian Greens into the EP with 20% of the vote. The first German cow to contract BSE resulted in Renate Künast (at the time leader of the Green Party) becoming Minister for Consumer Affairs. From this point on, agriculture policy had to take account of the consumer. Organic farming was given a boost on the grounds it protected health and the environment. But one had to be well prepared to take advantage of these political opportunities. And we were well prepared! The Green Party, together with the socio-ecological movement, had already defined the dangers of industrialised farming and, in contrast to the German Socialists (SPD) and conservatives (CDU), was in favour of radical reform. When the first mad cow was detected in Germany, Gerhard Schröder may have called for family farms not agro-factories but the phrase had previously been the war cry of the agro-opposition.

One example of the political long-term effects of targeting the weak points of the CAP was the case of hormones. The 1980 case of calves being

fattened with synthetic hormones was just the beginning of a whole series of food scandals, all of which followed a similar pattern: first those responsible ignored the issue, then they played it down, then there was hectic activity that came too late and finally responsible ministers resigned. There came a time when it was no longer effective to feed your daughter hamburgers on television (as the British Minister for Agriculture did) to reassure the public in the wake of the BSE outbreak. Trust had simply vanished.

It was also the case with the supposedly harmless hormones produced by gene technology. It is no longer any good for scientists to swear they are safe, people just do not want the stuff. On the basis of the hormone ban (incidentally still in operation today in the EU despite a lost legal battle in the WTO) we succeeded in banning the bovine growth hormone BST. The campaign "Would you like milk? With or without hormones?" was a big success in the media and part of a series of amusing pamphlets that we used on other GMO topics.

BST was never allowed in the EU although four producers (Monsanto, Ely Lilly, Cyanamid and Upjohn) had already manufactured large quantities in England and Austria at the beginning of the 1990, because they were sure it would be authorised. With all humility we can claim to have thrown out BST. The manufacturers sometime used mafia type tactics to control our campaign. The murder of Belgian chief veterinarian, Karel Van Noppen, who was found shot in front of his house in 1995, demonstrated the seriousness of their threat.

The BSE Inquiry Committee – the Parliament Gains Power

The EP's 1996 BSE Committee fundamentally changed the power relationship between the EP and the Commission. Up to that time we could count ourselves lucky if we managed to get answers to parliamentary questions. Now it was the Commission's DG Agriculture in the dock, accused of misinformation, deception and inaction. Time and again our parliamentary thrusts were

parried by supposedly scientific evidence that BSE was not dangerous to humans and that the epidemic was under control in animals. The millions of culled cattle did not just cost the taxpayer billions but also effectively damaged the reputation of European agriculture on a global level.

Despite crushing evidence demonstrating inaction and deception there was no majority in the EP in 1996 for a vote of no confidence in the EU Commission. It was a proposal from Friedrich Wilhelm Graefe zu Baringdorf (FriWi) for a conditional vote of no confidence that was passed in its place. To escape a motion of censure, the Commission was given a time limit to prepare a full report on what had happened and what preventive measures needed to be put in place. In this manner pressure was exerted that given the nature of the crises proved effective. Consumer protection and the precautionary principle were reinforced and removed from the agriculture portfolio. The then Director General of Agriculture got off with a transfer to another department. The tone and cooperation between the EP and the Commission, however, has since radically changed. The Parliament had shown its fangs and now stood on the same level as the Commission. Questions from the EP are now promptly answered by the Commission services.

A Green Chairman for the Agriculture Committee – The EP sees Green!

FriWi Graefe zu Baringdorf entered the EP in 1984 at the top of the German Green Party list and ever since has opposed the agriculture lobby and organised majorities for green projects. In 1999 he was elected chairman of the Agriculture Committee. It was his 15 years in the EP and his success in the BSE Inquiry Committee that made other political groups trust him to defend the interests of the Committee against the Commission and Council.

His credentials as an organic farmer and chairman of the German small farmers association gave him the necessary background to avoid being swayed by the assaults of the agriculture lobby. He got the open declaration on the contents of ani-

mal feedstuffs through, introduced a programme on the maintenance of biological diversity in agriculture and within the framework of the Fischler reforms succeeded in having rural development made the second pillar of the CAP, thus establishing it both politically and financially.

Democracy Does Not Come Easy

Above all, under his chairmanship the EP was able to exercise a somewhat unconventional form of co-decision making on agriculture questions. The EP is still only involved in consultation procedures. The Council once it had taken note of our decision as adopted by the EP plenary session was not required to undertake any further action. This is why we put pressure on the Commission. If the Commission did not want to accept the amendments proposed in the EP plenary, the final vote had to be postponed until agreement had been reached. In the case of seed marketing legislation this took three years. In FriWi's words: "Democracy does not come easy. You have to fight for it". Post the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty his words are still valid. Without ratification there will be no co-decision of the EP on agriculture policy.

The chair of the Agriculture Committee also helped mobilise civil society to work in the Constitutional Convention. Our *European Agricultural Convention* (EAC) brought together representatives of farmers, consumers, environmentalists and animal welfare supporters who, over the course of a year, agreed common proposals using a method similar to that of the UN. These proposals were then discussed with Giscard d'Estaing, the president of the Convention.

The McSharry Reforms: Less Intervention, More Environment

The first major change in agricultural policy, the so-called McSharry reform, came about as a result of the explosion in the cost of administering the surpluses. The second major change, the Fischler reform, came as a result of pressure from the WTO that wanted subsidies to be reduced and separated from production targets. The reasons given for both these reforms, however, sounded



just like Green Party criticisms of industrialised farming and its negative impact on the environment, biodiversity and the quality of food. This gave cause for hope that there would be real change in agricultural policy.

Decoupling from production was, in principle, a step in the right direction, as the EU market intervention system had basically ensured that the food manufacturing and export industries had enjoyed access to cheap basic materials. For example, instead of encouraging the production of maize for fattening cattle indoors, decoupling now makes it worthwhile to fatten livestock on grass in the field, which is good for the environment and for disadvantaged areas. When income support for farmers is no longer tied to production it allows new markets to develop, such as those for high quality food products. This will only work, however, if there is appropriate local and regional processing infrastructure (i.e. small abattoirs and dairies).

The Fischler Reform: More Market but No Socio-Ecological Breakthrough

The Fischler reform was unable though to make much of a breakthrough in linking funding to environment and employment issues. The payment caps proposed by the Commission and the Greens linked to the size of farms and the adaptation of payments according to the number of insured employees were stopped by chancellor Schröder and president Chirac. The compromise that all payments be based on the area farmed and past level of harvests derailed the proposals to make agriculture subsidies for rural economic

development more dependent on social and ecological criteria. The extreme favourability shown to industrial farming with few employees therefore changed hardly at all.

In principle, Commissioner Fischler's successor, Mariann Fischer Boel continued the policy of free markets and the decoupling of the remaining sectors. She is a firm believer in the hidden hand of the market and she has actively opened up markets for agricultural products but does nothing to tackle the extensive dumping of imports from third countries that threaten the hard won EU ecological and social standards. While she has recognised climate change, the loss of species diversity and water shortage in the so-called *health check* of the CAP (a kind of mid-term review), there has been no agreement on effective measures to counter these problems.

2. Looking Ahead: Agricultural Markets Need Ecological and Social Standards

Better Policies – Not Market Liberalisation

In February 2008 the EP, in a written opinion, criticised the major supermarket chains for exploiting their suppliers (in and outside the EU) by depressing prices and imposing unreasonable conditions. The Directorate General for Competition was asked to investigate how this situation affected small businesses, suppliers, employees and consumers and to put an end to this market domination (088/2007).

The refusal of European milk farmers to deliver at the dumping prices offered by the supermarket chains, the beef and poultry producers protests against cheap imports from third countries and the pressure on the EU to allow feedstuff imports containing traces of GMO products forbidden in the EU, are clear indications that the rules governing the agricultural market are dictated by a few major food industry giants. The rampant speculation on the world market for agro-fuel crops, the associated food crisis following the oil price explosion and the threat of climate change demonstrate clearly that fair competition will require reliable political regulation.

Ecological and Social Food Production – Regaining Market Ownership

Green agricultural policy should help small farmers and consumers to regain ownership and stewardship of their local and regional markets. We need an equitable system of supply management in order to counterbalance the power of the major food industries and an EU competition law that differentiates between direct local marketing and the requirements of a global market. Only 10% of European milk is traded on the world market but it is the world price that dictates the EU price. This does not take into account that milk on the world market is just raw material but in European regions it is a high quality food product. It is for this reason that it is important that the second pillar of the agricultural policy incorporate regional marketing structures to improve sales of quality products that conform to EU hygiene and other regulations and reduce the distance from cow to cup. COFAMI (Collective Farmers Marketing Initiatives) has published a collection of success stories illustrating this new successful form of marketing for quality food products.

Include Ecological and Social Standards in the WTO Negotiations

Even the stalled WTO negotiations might offer a chance for agricultural reform. The aggressive negotiating position adopted by the EU Commission requiring free markets at any price, without considering the negative social and ecological impact this will have especially in developing countries, has quite rightly resulted in these countries putting up resistance. Any move on the part of the EU to abandon support for production and encourage sustainable modern agriculture would be a serious offer that would also be compatible with the generally accepted criteria of the so called WTO “green box” (subsidies that don’t distort trade).

It is important that trade and customs regulations are such that international companies can no longer make a profit from social and ecological dumping but rather need to focus on developing sustainable production. The EP, on the initiative of the Greens, requested the Commission to examine the concept of qualified market access and



to efficiently use it in negotiations. The concept of *qualified market access* is to levy import duties on products coming from countries where social and ecological standards have been ignored or food security threatened by exports. The import duties thus collected could then be used to support sustainable agricultural practices and improve rural development programmes in the affected countries.

Food First! No False Signals on Renewable Resources

Climate change has reanimated the agricultural industry. Using the argument that agro-fuel crops are carbon neutral and therefore a magic formula against greenhouse gas emissions we now face a campaign for a new green revolution that runs contrary to our efforts to achieve sustainable production of food crops and renewable energy. Where we now have booming plant fuel crops there will be more use of chemicals and gene technology, greater water consumption and larger monocultures. With the rapidly rising demand for feedstuff, food and fuel there will be dangerous competition between food and fuel production for land and water resources.

Agro-industrial fuel production often has negative energy balance sheets because of lacking sustainability. We, in the EP, have therefore adopted a clear critical position on the boom in the large-scale cultivation of renewable resources. We do not want to give the wrong political signals. The key lies not in substituting agro fuels for mineral oil but in drastically reducing our overall energy consumption. Only with a strategy that is geared to efficiency, reduction in demand and sustainable use of renewable raw materials can we achieve success.



Europe Can Eventually Be Useful: the Classics of Green Organic Farming

What in the beginning was the running joke in the EP's Agriculture Committee, organic farming is now regarded as the undisputed expertise of the European Greens. All the EP's legislative reports on organic farming are tabled by Green MEPs. Close cooperation with national organisations and IFOAM (the global organisation of the organic farming movement) gave us the decisive edge when drafting the important details of regulations. As in the past chemical substances and genetic technology in any form are excluded from organic farming.

Today this is a fundamental if not *the* legal and economic factor in the debate on the right to GMO free seeds, foodstuffs and regions. The question as to whether "coexistence" (i.e. the growing of a GMO maize alongside an organic or conventional maize) is possible at all or allowable needs to be considered by the Commission and the member states because of possible *economic* consequences. Experience suggests that economic worries rather than ethical con-

cerns count more in this debate between the farming community and the gene technology industry.

The Perennial Battle

Organic farming and products are now accepted. They stand for a healthy diet, good business and a clear conscience. What is missing is the establishment of food production sustainability as a mark of good agricultural policy. It is crazy that consumers often have to pay considerably more for organic than conventional products even though organic produce actually saves us and the environment both money and liabilities. Green food policy needs to demand that sustainable agriculture is no longer the exception but the rule. It clearly needs to expose the damage that industrialised farming does to our society.

Organic farming can be sustainable, competitive and multifunctional if there is a reasonable balance between diversity of planting, animal welfare, regional food processing and marketing and local energy production. In this manner the most important aims of the European Union such as increased competitiveness in global markets (Lisbon targets) and the basic principle of sustainability (Gothenburg targets) will be met. Linking payments from Brussels to the observance of environmental legislation has been achieved with "cross compliance" but in practice its effects are marginal as member states and authorities view it as anti-competitive and an exception to the rule. Sustainable agriculture and an integrated rural development policy need to come out of the shadows and into the full glare of the debating arena.



Hannes Lorenzen is advising the *Greens/EFA* group in the EP on agriculture, food issues and rural development. He is co-founder and promoter of numerous European networks concerning sustainable rural development including the new members states and EU neighbour countries, and the conservation of biodiversity. With the Heinrich Böll Foundation, he works on a number of projects including the Eco-Fair-Trade Dialogue on equitable trade relations and the CURE Project (*Convention on sustainable Urban and Rural Europe*).

...the Future as We See It

BARTEK LECH

Ready for a Bumpy Ride

The Poland of the mid-1990s was a strange place. It was interesting, because we could all make, establish, and create things, ideas, and organisations that no one had created before. Or at least we thought that we were doing something new. What we did not realise until afterwards, was that we had been reinventing wheels that had already been invented and that existed just on the other side of the river Oder.

In my hometown of Szczecin, it was a time when politics was the least interesting thing to do, especially for young people. There was a lot of disappointment in “democracy”: the first “democratic” corruption scandals, involving old *Solidarity* groups, and a growing difference between the poor and the rich created a general feeling that even if you got involved there were not many chances to change anything. Some, older than me, used to say: “We got involved in 1981, and it didn’t make our lives any better”. Whether that was the truth or not, is unimportant. What was important was that people believed it to be true, and therefore it had consequences for the Polish reality of that time.

Nevertheless, there was a group of very young people that had not participated either in 1981 or even in 1989 who wanted to make a difference. Together we searched for new ways of expressing what we had in mind. I remember that at the time, as activists of *Amnesty International-Szczecin*, we organised a street action to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre. Some time later we started to create the first serious *Youth City Council* (an advisory body to the local authorities). Bringing a global perspective to politics, raising awareness and creating some

form of local and youth self-governance was a novelty at that time. In fact, it was only quite recently that I realised how big a novelty it was.

Some of my friends stayed in NGOs, some others, like myself, began to be active in *Unia Wolności* (Union of Freedom), the political party of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (the first democratic Prime Minister of Poland) and the late Solidarity leaders Bronisław Geremek (who till his death in July 2008 served as a Member of European Parliament) and Jacek Kuroń (who died in 2004). At the time it was the only political party that somehow referred to the social-liberal value system and aimed for stability within the political scene. *Unia Wolności* formed a government with Solidarity and other right-wing parties. For the party leaders at the time, it was obvious that the state had to go through serious reforms but implementing them hand-in-hand with the post-communists was unthinkable – even for the most open-minded people in *Unia Wolności*.

Without making any judgement as to the necessity of *Unia Wolności* joining the right-wing government at that time, I have to say that it changed the party a lot. Many members felt that they no longer belonged to the party. The idea of *Unia Wolności* being a new form of political expression, different from the old divided, and by then, irrelevant political scene collapsed, as, indeed, did the party. After that, a group of people coming from different angles of civic movements decided to begin to build what became the Green Party.

Some days after establishing the Greens in Poland, Magda Mosiewicz, the first chairperson of the Polish Greens, received greetings and letters of congratulation from Greens from different

places all over the world. One of the greeting letters, from colleagues of *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, read more or less: “Congratulations, you have just entered a long and difficult road.” They were right; we had.

East and West – the Real Differences

Undoubtedly Green Parties in the West and East, having come from such different historical and political backgrounds, had different ways of developing. It was inevitable. However, I do not think we can continue to use political differences as our main point of reference when talking about Green parties, or when comparing those from the West with those from the East, especially since lately this “different history” argument is being used by some of the Central and Eastern European Green parties to justify giving up on important points of the green political agenda – such as non-militarisation.

If I had to look for reasons for the current differences under which Green parties exist, it would be better to focus on the transition period of the 1990s, because that is the moment when most of the inequalities that disadvantage the Green parties in the East were created: electoral laws that give a chance only to those parties that are already in the parliaments, city or regional councils; short-sighted rules on financing political groups which privilege those that keep their hands on the judicial system and are closer to big business; and the unequal access to the media. All of those laws have their roots in the 1990s. One could say that in the European Union there are a lot of different models of democracy; that we have different rules on electing representatives to the parliaments; that the United Kingdom’s political system differs from the Czech; that financing political parties in Germany is different from that in Sweden etc. The point about the laws that govern political life in Poland, (and I assume that Poland’s is not an isolated case in the East) is that they exist not through democratic choice, but as a result of the fears that existed during the period of transition.

At that time high thresholds for entering the parliaments were introduced in order to be able

to construct a stable government; questionable sources for financing emerging businesses at the time paved the way to the law that bans the funding of the political parties by the private sector; fear of international influence stood behind the decision to prohibit money transfers to the political parties from abroad. These were temporary laws enacted because of a lack of trust in societies and the reasonableness of their democratic choices. It is high time to drop many of them and to start trusting people.

Without such structural changes and a real commitment to taking this last step of the democratic transformation, the continued existence of the Green parties in the East will always be at risk, as will the existence of all groups that were not on any side of the barricades, negotiations or round tables in 1989. The changes must be initiated domestically by Poland’s internal forces, or similarly by those in, and of, any other country that is facing problems of restricted access to political life. That is not to say the European Union does not provide many opportunities to stimulate these changes from the outside. The comparisons it allows gives people the chance to see the weaknesses of some states more clearly. The lack of political openness in Eastern states of the EU is one of those weaknesses and should be acknowledged by political leaders from other countries.

Europe

The European project was and still is the driving power of many movements and initiatives in East and West. In the 1990s that was the goal, the idea in Eastern Europe.

It spurred the Greens in Poland to organise a YES campaign for the EU referendum in 2003 and to stage a sit-in front of the French Embassy on the 29th of May, 2005, the day of the Referendum on the European Constitution, with a banner saying “Dites OUI!” (Say YES!). In the period when the acceptance of the enlargement of the EU was low in the member states, the Green parties in the East and the West did a good job.

Times are different now. The Eastern European countries have passed their entry test suc-



Action in favour of the European Constitution in Brussels

cessfully and the issue at stake is how to behave in this new reality.

Greens were, and are, one of the pro-European groups in Central and Eastern Europe. And, (even though I do understand some of the reasons of our Green colleagues from Sweden for opposing EU membership – after all there is no doubt that Swedish environmental standards are much higher than those demanded by Brussels) people should realise that without the European Union the *Via Baltica*¹ highway would go through the ancient forests in Poland, gay bashing would go unpunished in many states and the Baltic Sea would be in a worse state than it is now. It is good to keep that in mind when one would like to say simply NO to the EU.

The EU debate that shook our parties all over Europe when we were discussing the EU Constitution left us a bit weaker in the sense that we wasted a lot of our own blood. On the other hand we have reached an agreement that the best strategy towards the EU is to be able to balance what we feel are the very good and the not so good decisions on specific issues, without turning it into a debate on the European Union as a whole. For example, we do not want to liberalise the services of general interest, and we do not want social dumping, but if such steps were to be taken on the EU level they would not be a reason for me to oppose the EU completely. How could we oppose the EU if we want, for example, the anti-discrimination law – which already exists in many EU countries

– just because it was developed on the European level and imposed by Brussels?

I am sure that the vast majority of Greens in Europe share these sentiments about the EU.

Common Spaces

The European Union was presented in most of the East European member states as an opportunity to develop economically. An effect of this can be seen in the change in popular support for the European Union in Poland which after the 2004 enlargement increased in rural areas and decreased in urban ones. That is to say, it increased in those areas that profited faster and more directly from European funding. To be clear on this point: there is no problem with the EU being presented as a source of welfare, but there is a problem with not presenting it as an instrument of political solidarity and a source of democratic standards and values. At the same time any attempt of involvement “from the outside” is presented by the majority of the political parties working on the state level as an attack by the EU on the state itself. This is a mistake! We definitely should be getting involved from the outside – because the idea of “it is our business” does not work any more. Not fulfilling environmental standards anywhere in Europe is our business, as are the decisions of any local authorities to ban the Gay Pride march.

The biggest gap that has to be filled here is the one between national and European public debates. The latter are much weaker and we would all benefit from investment in bringing about an EU-wide public consciousness. The national identities of the big countries in Europe are still strong and form a barricade for the development of a common political space in the EU.

Creating a Europe-wide public debate also demands efforts in our parties in order to get rid of the national perspectives. Greens can only

1 The Via Baltica is a highway project in the Northeast of Poland, developed as a part of the European transport corridor. It was originally planned to go through the *Natura 2000* sites in Poland. The project was opposed by many NGOs for several years and the European Commission finally stopped it by taking Poland to the European Court of Justice in 2007.



Gay Pride in Poznań



Gay Pride in Brussels

work in Europe as a movement that is not based on nationalities. A big obstacle to achieving that is the way that European politics actually function. Member state-based European elections are one of the biggest mistakes of the European project. It makes the EU less understandable and deprives the European elections of their European character. The fight for European lists, or at least cross-border regional lists, should get a higher priority on our agenda. Making the green lists of candidates more international is a foundation stone that should be deeply embedded in the green identity.

The added value of such an internal strategy is not only the contribution to the creation of the European public debate, it could also help in developing those Green parties that will not have representatives in the upcoming European elections and those whose chances are small. The example of current German-Czech MEP Milan Horáček should be highlighted – I am convinced that his election to the European Parliament from the list of *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* made a big impact on the progress of the Greens in the Czech Republic.

The *European Green Party* (EGP), by its mandate, is the bridge that links the work of the national Greens to a united European endeavour. It could play a leading role in promoting the international attitude of the Greens when it comes to the European elections by encouraging the parties to include foreign candidates on their European election lists.

Green Institutionalisation

The debate as to whether the Greens should be a more institutional-based movement occupies many Green parties in Europe, and is certainly one point of debate among young Greens. Yes, we are a movement in which institutions/organisations play a vital role! As such, that is not a problem; I am even convinced that the institutions can work as an organisation of the activists, assuring their real representation. And that should be our main goal: making the Green institutions function better by shaping them in such a way that it will not be confusing, especially for those that they represent.

Making clear to the Green activists what the *Greens/EFA* in the European Parliament, the EGP, the *Young European Greens* and the (new) *Green European Institute* are and what job is done by which group should be one of the objectives of making the institutions more understandable.

Another dimension of the Green institutions that needs to be strengthened is the way in which they cooperate with each other. The biggest barrier to good cooperation is usually the different levels of political influence, and that is the case here. It must be our goal to make the EGP relevant when it comes to the work of the Greens in the European Parliament. At the moment both the EGP and the Green Parliamentary Group are performing tasks in parallel, focusing on different angles of Green activity. The Green Parliamentary Group is, by mandate of its members, influencing and making the EU legislation greener, whereas the EGP is organising and networking the movement. And so they should, but with greater cooperation, they could achieve so much more.

To increase our impact effectively we should aim to connect the political influence of the Green Parliamentary Group and the networking capacities of the EGP in order to influence reality by introducing the Green political agenda to the European, state and local level. That would make our work even more consistent. The first step in that direction would be to make the EGP more important for the member parties and when it comes to the policies made on the European level, especially those policies which are led by the Greens.

Furthermore, both the Greens in the European Parliament and the EGP need the youth wing as much as the Young Greens need them, and they need to come together in a relationship that is based on trust and the mutual recognition of the value each of the partners brings to the party as a whole. The task of taking the party forward is one that needs to be worked at from all angles, but it is vital that everyone recognises that is essential that the youth wing is present as a permanent and recognised presence within all sectors of the party – including in the recently established Green European Institute. Without youth, education fails. Without education, the Greens fail.

Ongoing Youth Issue

There are different reasons for people that agree with the green political agenda to become active in the green parties. Those reasons also change over time. When we were establishing the Greens in Poland, some of us believed that the profound social change in Poland would become revolutionarily; that a major change comparable to 1968 in Western Europe could happen again, only this time in the Eastern part. The idea of a mass levy made people join and work to build something new.

But that is not the whole picture. Apart from believing in the cause, many young people join organisations because of the opportunities they provide; opportunities such as education and capacity building which result in equal chances, and fair and open ways for self-development. And what seems to be the most important for us

as Greens, is to provide opportunities for creating different ways and levels of involvement – writing books or policy papers, organising events, lobbying, creating a web site – these are only a few fields in which we should provide an opportunity for young people to learn and work.

I do not want to judge the different reasons for becoming active in political parties; everyone has their own. But I have noticed that the first step to increase membership of young people in our parties, which would make Green political groups and factions more age balanced, would be to realise that a good cause as such is not enough to convince young people to be active in the political movement. There also needs to be clear opportunities available for members to learn and develop.

Prioritised, Yes – Exclusive, No

Many people came to the Greens from a background other than ecology. Of course, their instincts tell them that environmental protection is good. It is even “cool” to have an opportunity to go deeper into some new issue by coming to a political party: it is exciting. One of the first actions that the Greens organised in Warsaw focused on transport policy and the absolute environmental disaster performed by the government then in power. Only a few weeks later we co-organised the “illegal” Gay Pride march in Warsaw. This made it clear that what characterises the Green parties is the connection of environmental, civil liberties and social issues.

Prioritising one of these fields is sometimes useful and even necessary at certain moments in history, to fix urgent problems or overcome the total inactivity of the decision makers in some matters. This is now the case with climate change, which is a pressing matter. It is very easy to lose the distinction between prioritising something and going for a single issue. Nevertheless, it is important that we keep the balance, especially in view of the increasing attention given to European politics. We need to highlight that we have solutions not only for one issue, but also that we are the movement that is able to present a consistent

vision of Europe, and to put the policies needed to fulfil it into practice.

Civil liberties are under attack. The terrorist threat has brought about parliamentary majorities to restrict civil liberties – for example in the United Kingdom through the proposal of introducing an identity card, and the decision to ban the right of assemblies in the area around the Houses of Parliament. Across the whole of Europe getting onto a plane feels like entering a fortress and the collection of biometric data has become a standard procedure. If only those measures made us really safe. Instead, the feeling of insecurity is rising.

Throughout the EU, the struggle of minorities to be recognised, respected and not discriminated against have begun to reach the point in which disputes are settled by violence rather than being debated in the common spaces of democratic life. A lack of commitment to include the minorities in the debate is an issue in many countries. Limiting freedom of assembly, such as in the case of the gay demonstrations in the Balkans or Baltic states, accepting hate speech against minorities as an equal part of the public discourse – in Poland against sexual minorities or Jews, in Italy against the Romany people – are only some of the most recent issues.

There is no doubt that the Greens in Europe are the civil liberties movement; that we are leading the fight against discrimination and exclusion. But what we have to acknowledge is that

this leadership is not permanent and that we are not leading on this issue by default. We need to work much harder on these issues than in previous times, not only to change the reality but also to ensure that parts of our movement do not feel that their concerns are being dropped from the agenda.

No Promises

In 2003 when we established the Greens in Poland and started to be active in the European Green movement, none of us realised that our way would be so difficult. With smiling faces and full of optimism we decided to shake up the Polish political scene. Needless to say that we have not managed to do all we set out to do, or accomplished the profound change that Polish public life still needs to go through. But at that time we believed we could, and that gave us the power to continue and it brought about some results.

Building Green parties in the East, giving them more focus and sharing resources, assuring that they have fair chances to be elected, making the youth willing to join and be active in the Green parties, changing the Green institutions, stimulating a European public debate, tracking the issue of climate change and civil liberties at the same time with the same vigour – none of this is easy but these are the tasks that we are facing.

But then again no one ever promised us that it would be an easy road.



Bartek Lech (25) was elected to the *Youth City Council* of his home town, Szczecin (Poland) in 1999. He graduated in international relations with a focus on Europe at the Centre for Europe of Warsaw University. Bartek joined the Green Party in Poland right after it was established and got involved in the European green movement. He was a member of several political bodies of the Polish Greens and was responsible for the European policy in his party. Since 2004, as a collaborator of the *Greens/EFA* in the European Parliament, he dealt with campaigns on the European Constitution and the Service Directive and lately he coordinated actions

on the Via Baltica problem in Poland. Until the beginning of 2008 Bartek chaired the *Federation of Young European Greens*.

JUDITH VERWEIJEN

Recipes From the Young Green Kitchen

It was not until my mid-twenties that I started my relationship with the Greens. Before that, my belief in more radical forms of direct action and self-organisation kept me far away from any form of institutionalised politics. With the *Reclaim the Streets* movement, we blocked stretches of road in big cities, replacing noisy traffic with even noisier street raves. On *International Buy Nothing Day*, we would distribute fake money in shopping districts with the message that you could earn money by not consuming. Squatting was seen as a social duty.

However, I gradually started to develop the feeling that direct action was not enough to accomplish far-reaching chances. Perhaps there was some truth in the often caricaturised opposition between being outside on the morally right side, but marginalised, and changing the system more effectively from the inside while getting your hands dirty. After years of political homelessness, this revelation finally drove me into the arms of the Greens. At first, I was a traditional sleeping member, but this was to radically change when I found work as the coordinator of the *Federation of Young European Greens* (FYEG). My new job sucked me relentlessly into the green universe.

Political Activism and Activist Politics

Naturally, my activist heritage played an important role in finding political refuge with the Greens. Their activist roots are legendary: the story of how a political party was born out of the cross-fertilisation of different social and environmental movements reads like a proper myth of origins. The question is, how far have we managed to maintain this organic connection to grassroots movements? It is a question to which it is difficult to find any clear-cut answers. The often heard accusation that the Greens have become too institutionalised and have lost touch with the base

has become something of a cliché. Most of the work carried out by Greens is still being fuelled by NGOs, and street actions are still an important part of our spectrum of political activity.

At the same time, other trends do point in the direction of an over-institutionalisation that has affected the nature of green politics. The core principle of the regular rotation of offices and the non-accumulation of mandates is increasingly being violated. The phenomenon of a professional green career, which should be a contradiction in terms, has become a reality. The preponderance of elected representatives within many Green parties is a fact. Moreover, in the majority of present-day social movements, the Greens are not being seen as the principal political alley. Of course, the NGO dogma of political neutrality plays an important role in keeping those organisations from being closely associated with any political party. From a strategic point of view, it is also logical that they do not want to miss out on alliances with stronger political players. Furthermore, it should be realised that the movements that formed the womb from which the Greens were born have themselves become less visible and more fragmented. Nowadays, they are just small pieces in the broad mosaic of interest and advocacy groups vying for attention and political influence. This makes it relatively easy to think that the Greens are neglecting them.

However, I cannot escape the feeling that Green parties have to make an effort these days to be sufficiently nourished by the world outside of politics, instead of this happening naturally. I have witnessed “actions” by Greens that were unworthy of the name of their party, and even insulting to the very people whose rights they are supposed to defend. Although these were unfortunate exceptions, actions within the Greens are regularly motivated more by their potential me-

dia value than by their intrinsic worthiness. Furthermore, one must wonder whether the make-up and mentality of present-day Green parties is conducive to grassroots work. Are we investing enough in street work? Do we cooperate structurally with migrants' movements? Are we also in the front lines when less mediagenic actions take place? Are our communications capable of reaching out to a wide variety of groups in society?

It can not be denied that present-day Green parties focus predominantly on electoral politics, certainly from a Young Greens point of view. FYEG is a federation consisting of both youth wings of Green political parties and not politically allied youth organisations. The hybridity of this construction has helped to maintain a balance between party-political and activism oriented activities. Some Young Green organisations that are linked to Green parties even explicitly focus on the extra-party-political dimension, not only because they have less access to institutionalised politics, but also because they feel that Green parties are increasingly neglecting this dimension. This development is regrettable, as there should be no strong task division between those focusing on the institutional dimension and those undertaking extra-institutional activity: the unity of those two dimensions lies at the core of the green concept of politics. It is only by reinvesting in this unity that green politics has a viable future and can remain more than party politics with an activist gloss.

The Dream of a Post-Nationalist Green Movement

Of similar importance to remaining politically relevant is the necessity of turning the Greens into a real European political force. Structures and mentalities remain firmly rooted in the nation-state paradigm and we lack at present any meaningful mechanisms for creating a pan-European space of green interaction. Of course there is the European Green Party; but with each delegate restricted by the perspectives and policies of their national parties, their ability to unite and work together, to create and unleash a collective whirlwind of ideas and opinions that might lead to novel forms of thinking and identification, is stifled.

Such a storm of innovation is an almost standard ingredient of the exchanges and seminars of FYEG: everyone participates in the Young Green activities in their capacity as an individual and not as a representative of a national party or a constituency. This freedom from representation and the institutional burden of party-politics is highly conducive towards creativity and the development of stronger feelings of common identity that exceed the boundaries of politically determined units, be it nation-states or the European Union. One should not underestimate the role of personal and informal interaction in the creation of new ways of identification. In this sense, it would not be an exaggeration to say that FYEG is an important catalyst in the development of a post-nationalist green identity.

Even the *Green Group* in the European Parliament remains firmly stuck in nation-state thinking, despite its desire to be a model European political actor. Although this can partially be explained by the current European electoral system, it is still a missed opportunity. It is striking that many Green Members of European Parliament employ only nationals as assistants or even as interns. Furthermore, the commitment to transnational lists for the European elections could be much stronger. Whereas it is true that the Greens were the first to stage a common European election campaign, their overall dedication to becoming a fundamentally European party remains somewhat half-hearted. Constructing a European political space requires continuous efforts, especially outside of the realm of elections and party politics. Unfortunately, these efforts have been quite meagre so far: they have led more to putting a thin layer of European make-up on the green face than in creating a real green European being.

The European Greens: an East-Westside Story?

Apart from obstructing the formation of new identities, the shackles of party politics and electoral representation also prohibit a firmer integration of Eastern European Greens into the wider green European universe. This is quite a contrast with FYEG, where Young Greens from the East are regularly in the majority at activities or within or-

organisational bodies. Within FYEG, the East-West “divide” is both relevant and irrelevant at the same time. It is irrelevant in the sense that it is an organisation comprised of people interacting first and foremost as individuals, which makes their nationality a subordinate question. However, their background does become relevant when analysing the specific political context of the phenomena that are being debated during our seminars and exchanges.

The success in making the Greens a truly pan-European political family depends on the creation of new spaces and structures of interaction, as well as the making of more efforts to integrate a European perspective into existing ones. The Greens have always been at the forefront of emphasising that Europe is not confined to the EU, but if we fail to translate that convincingly into the functioning of our own political family, we lose credibility. Furthermore, the mutual benefits of strengthening the Eastern perspective in the Greens are underestimated. Here one should not only think of the new electoral opportunities that Eastern European migrant communities in Western Europe offer, but also of the lessons about the importance of local politics that Greens from Eastern Europe can bring to the West. A refocusing on the grassroots is both a precondition and a result of making the Greens a real European East-Westside story.

More Green Globalisation

The same applies to the desire to turn the Greens into a true global force. The construct of a global federation of Green parties is doomed to sap it of its vital forces and give predominance to the West, simply because of the weakness of green party structures on other continents. In many countries, the political environment is not conducive to establishing strong green parties. For that reason it was decided to shape the *Global Young Greens* as a movement to which youngsters can be affiliated on an individual basis, so as to remain as inclusive as possible. In this way, the energy of people operating outside a political party could still be absorbed. In some political environments, it might be a better strategy to first foster green thinking, rather than Green party politics.



Gay Pride in Zagreb

The difficulties in finding ways of global green interaction should not discourage us, as this is an issue of crucial importance for the future of the Greens. Whether we manage to stay a relevant political actor will depend on our capacity to convincingly integrate a global perspective in all dimensions of our thinking and actions. It must be admitted that this is a huge challenge which we have so far failed to live up to. International solidarity is a core value of the Greens, but that is not very apparent when we look at the attention being paid to global issues within, for example, the EGP. Development is a topic that is painfully absent from most of the debates. Policy fields such as security, migration or the environment have a very strong development dimension, but the latter rarely occupies centre stage in discussions of these topics. With respect to armed conflicts, for example, we all too often confine the development aspects to the realms of either the conflict prevention, or the post-conflict reconstruction. In this way, we fail to adequately address the impact of humanitarian aid on development.

Furthermore, the green debates do not always do full justice to the tension that can exist between development and environmental objectives, at least in the short term. Whereas it is crystal clear that a global environmental and social justice goes hand in hand in the long term, it should be acknowledged that in the short or intermediate term, a friction between the two can occur. For example, demanding that all products entering the European market comply with the same environmental standards that are applicable in the EU is problematic for poor countries. In the same vein, attaining zero deforestation can only be non-detrimental to forest-dependent people if the latter are provided with



Action for fundamental rights in Vienna

alternative sources of livelihood and fuel. Our own “development” entailed the large-scale destruction of nature and climate deregulation. Whereas we can try to promote more sustainable ways of production and consumption in poor countries, we will need to do this mainly through positive financial incentives and technology transfer. As long as our own ecological footprint remains mammoth sized, we are not really in a position to reproach others for emulating our destructive path of “progress”.

We should also give a stronger emphasis to internationalism in our policy solutions. In the field of security and the regulation of the socio-economic system, we need especially to keep on pressing for global solutions, despite the discouraging difficulties in building sufficiently strong coalitions for accomplishing much needed reforms. It is essential that we remain visionary here. “Act globally, think locally” is as important as the inverse. This stronger international focus should be part of an overall commitment of the Greens to become a truly global movement, especially at the level of shaping thoughts and growing awareness. An occasional Global Greens’ meeting can make only a limited contribution towards this end. We must find ways to incorporate more structurally a global perspective into our actions. This is both a matter of rearranging priorities and of finding creative ways to increase interaction and communication in the larger Green movement. The resulting sharper global profile will be instrumental in giving the Greens a more pronounced political identity overall.

Green Morality: a Curse or a Necessity?

The issue of global solidarity can not be viewed in isolation from the lavish consumption patterns in

the Western world. The problem of tackling those leads unavoidably to the question of a Green morality. How are we going to accomplish the changes in behaviour and consumption patterns that are needed in order to drastically reduce our ecological footprint? Do we advocate prohibitive measures or do we rely more on other incentives such as moral persuasion? How do we reconcile our aversion of unnecessary state interference in people’s lives with the need for regulation from an environmental perspective? More importantly, how do we value people’s freedom of choice in light of the impact of their choices on other people’s freedom, whether for this or future generations?

Many Greens are understandably hesitant about pressing for far-reaching regulatory frameworks, such as a prohibition on SUVs. This is largely a matter of worldview, of how much you trust in the people’s own capacity for judgment or rely on their sense of responsibility. Another aspect of the Green morality debate is the preferred strategy of conviction. Departing from the view that people are capable of making the “right” decisions, provided they have access to sufficient and high-quality information, how are we going to convince them to do so? Many Greens argue that taking the moral high ground or adopting a position of moral superiority work in a highly counter-productive way. From this perspective, playing the moral card should be the exception rather than the rule. However, others argue that the message we are trying to bring is essentially a moral one. Therefore, a certain amount of morality cannot be avoided. It is however of crucial importance that the tone and style in which this moral message is being brought are right: a smiling moralism is much more palatable than the schoolmaster’s approach.

Personally, I think that we can not clear moral undertones entirely from the green discourse as part of our argument comes straight from the moral register. If we relegate morality to the background, we would turn into a sort of technocratic movement, presenting quick-fixes for quantifiable socio-economic problems. This would not only go against some of our basic principles, such as a belief in the inherent value of phenomena like biological diver-

sity, but also result in a great loss of electoral appeal. It is image-wise already quite a challenge to deal with what is sometimes called the green paradox: the fact that the Greens' penchant for freedom of choice appears to be at odds with their preference for more restrictive measures when it comes to the environment. Effacing morality from the picture would make this even more difficult.

Fast Green Forward

One of my reasons for joining the Greens was my background in the human rights movement. Whereas it was obvious to me that the Greens have the most credible human rights agenda, this is not always reflected in our external image. In many countries, the Greens are still being regarded as a single issue party. This is not only an unfortunate misrepresentation of the Green world view, but also a missed opportunity in terms of forging alliances and attracting voters. Therefore, we have to make human rights more visible in our political activity and external communication. We should especially become more vocal defenders of LGBTIQ¹ and Roma rights, in both Eastern and Western Europe. Furthermore, the Greens must acquire a stronger profile on the issue of migration and migrants' rights. The unacceptably harsh treatment of so called "illegally residing third-country nationals" is a blind spot in human rights protection efforts in Europe. Combating these abuses and especially the underlying fortress Europe scenario has to be a top priority on the green agenda.

However, the credibility of the counter-scenario that we are presenting depends to a large extent on how we apply the cherished value of diversity to our own organisations. How come that we remain so overwhelmingly an urban, white, middle-class movement of higher educated people, despite our commitment to diversity and our efforts to reach out to a wide range of groups in society? It is difficult to pinpoint the exact causes of what we might call the homogeneity riddle, but I suspect that the complexity of our message, incorrect out-reach strategies and a lack of sincere efforts all play a role here. Whatever the exact causes might be, redoubling our efforts to become what we want to represent is key to the long term survival of the Greens.

Diversity is not a luxury which we may or may not indulge in: it will become an issue of life or death in the future. Whether the Greens manage to stay an innovative, dynamic and influential political force largely depends on how we adapt our structures and mentalities to the changing environment. In the Young European Greens we feel sometimes that the vitality of the Greens is being gradually eroded. Apparently, we need to refuel our political movement, preferably by switching to renewables. Diversity, a stronger focus on the extra-institutional dimension, and becoming a real pan-European and global movement can certainly serve as such endless sources of Green energy. Hopefully, the Greens are ready to become empowered by them.



Judith Verweijen (28) worked until the beginning of 2008 as coordinator of the *Federation of Young European Greens* (FYEG) in Brussels. Before that, she obtained two MA's, did a year of graduate school in the USA and completed a year of *European Voluntary Service* in the Basque Country. During her MA in Conflict Studies and Human Rights at the University of Utrecht, she specialised in the interface between human rights, security sector reform and democratisation in (post) conflict areas. This brought her to northern Uganda and the DR Congo, where she did field research and worked as an election observer. At present, Judith works as Africa Policy Advisor at *Greenpeace International*, where she focuses mainly on forest-related policy developments in DR Congo. Her main political interests are peace and security, human rights and development policy.

1 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Queer.

REINHARD BÜTIKOFER

We the Greens Need Europe and Europe Needs Us

The German Greens' policy towards Europe has had its ups and downs. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for Europe. The Greens hid behind the rather hypocritical slogan of "Yes to Europe, no to the EU" (European Union) until the party conference in Aachen in 1993, after which it was dropped. In direct contrast to this earlier scepticism, the European Parliament (EP) elections of 2004 demonstrated that *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* were *the* party of Europe in Germany. The Greens stood for a change in European politics and with green parties in other countries pursued a common campaign throughout the EU. Polling almost 12% in Germany this was the German Greens' best ever nation-wide election result to date.

Today, just about one year before the 2009 European elections, the mood has changed once more. Euro-euphoria has long since vanished. The referenda results in France and the Netherlands and more recently in Ireland seem to have poured cold water on the European project. National governments have always paid lip service to the necessity of a more social Europe but have failed to deliver on their promises. Public reservation has grown as the EU has become ever more involved in local affairs while at the same time failing to protect the private citizen and human rights properly. Europe's ability to operate effectively in foreign policy is severely limited. The EU has the competence to negotiate trade affairs but does not use this power to promote equitable global development. In addition, there is the difficulty to comprehend the garbled mix of left leaning nationalist anti-EU slogans, conservative reservations on a melting pot Europe,

as well as the excuses of those who (mis)use the EU as a whipping boy and as an instrument for forcing through unpopular domestic policies. EU bashing is in. The EU hardly receives any credit for its greatest achievement – that of uniting the continent in peace. This is taken too much for granted. It is becoming ever more unlikely that the Lisbon Treaty, designed to make the EU operate more efficiently, will be ratified before the EP elections.

Only in one area has the EU been able to do something that awakens hope both within and without the Union: on climate change. This is especially important, particularly for the Greens as it will be a major issue for at least the next two European Parliaments. Admittedly, the Member States are wrangling over and tinkering with how to achieve their self imposed targets. There have been reverses, as for example in policies on cars. In spite of this, the EU is the driving force that will in any case achieve more against climate change in the member states than individual states acting alone. Europe gives added value to climate change efforts and the Greens in the European Parliament are playing an important role.

If *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* wants to have a credible image for the 2009 EP elections, we will need to have a serious and critical debate on a wide range of EU issues. The Greens must not shy away from valid criticism but reject Euro-phobia. Failure to debate the issues critically could well lead to further rejection of Europe. In concrete terms there needs to be a thorough examination of recent decisions by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) e.g. Ruffert, Laval, Viking.¹ This is justifiable and necessary to avoid these

1 These rulings cover the issue of a balance between economic freedoms and fundamental social rights. They strongly affect trade union rights such as the right to collective bargaining and collective action.

decisions being used as a pretence for anti-EU sentiments.

For the 2009 European elections the main platform for the Greens would appear to be climate change. Climate change is a green issue and Europe plays a vital role in combating it. Put another way, we can show that green policies are the best way for Europe to embark on the “green road”. The Greens are not only competent in this area but the public also expects much from us. This issue unites us as no other. Even the European Greens have more in common in this area than in others. Climate change touches the very core of Green identity and since last year it has attracted many people, who in the past kept their distance. Climate change affects all policies and is therefore a horizontal task that touches economic and social issues. It spans an arch ranging from practical life style choices to visionary policies for fundamental ecological change. In a nutshell, we need to make the European elections about climate change. The *European Green Party* (EGP) would benefit from setting itself clear priorities. As some member states have weak Green parties such a clear manifesto from the EGP would provide profile and weight. What could be more useful and appropriate than voting Green to combat climate change?

There are two obvious main areas of focus in such a climate change campaign. These issues will also be valid in the German federal elections of 2009. One area is the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency and the other is to fight the pro-nuclear lobby. A central political aim should be the proposal from former EU Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget Michaela Schreyer for the establishment of a *European Community for Renewable Energy* (ERENE). Some 50 years ago atomic energy was seen as the standard bearer of European energy policy and the EURATOM Treaty was signed. Atomic energy proved too dangerous but one can use the way it was promoted as an example. Whether ERENE has its own treaty or is part of an enhanced cooperation procedure is not important. What is more

important is that Europe works more intensively and systematically towards better energy efficiency and use of renewables, but this must be supported by proper funding.

The suggestion that ERENE should be at the core of the Euro election campaign in order to develop as a trans-European project is also an expression of the sentiment that the EU needs a new impetus that will allow some Member States to integrate further without having to wait for a consensus of all the other members. A core Europe in which there is a hierarchy of circles of integration should be rejected. But in a Europe of 27 (or more) members there are bound to be different speeds. This has already been the case with the Euro and Schengen. If the Lisbon Treaty does not survive, the idea of a multi-speed Europe will become even more attractive, especially as being stuck with the Nice Treaty is not an option and the European public will be loath to accept being tied to another constitutional treaty. More acceptance of Europe demands better policies, but achieving this without the Lisbon Treaty will be more difficult as pro-active EU policies for movement at different speeds need to be developed. ERENE would be a most suitable project.

For all the Green Parties, the Euro elections of 2009 will mark an important turning point. Will we grow or will we stagnate and be relegated to a position of little influence? The Green Parties have widely different positions in the various Member States. In some countries – Finland, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Ireland – there are Greens in centre right coalitions. In other important countries like Poland or Spain (not Catalonia) the Greens have been weak for some time or are rapidly declining as in Italy. Overall, the European Green Party has made significant progress during the last ten years. The common campaign fought in the 2004 EP elections was a pace setter for other European parties. But for the 2009 campaign all that will count is what new efforts will be made. Despite all its setbacks and mistakes, the European project is one of the world’s most hopeful undertakings in the last 50 years. Bearing this in

mind, we can make a green contribution to the future of Europe, particularly concerning climate change, by holding a lively, wide-ranging, sensitive and critical debate.



Reinhard Bütikofer has been chairman of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen since December 2002. Before that, he was the party's national executive director for four years. Mr. Bütikofer became a member of the Greens in 1984 and was elected to the City Council of Heidelberg. In 1988, he was elected to the State Parliament of Baden-Württemberg and became the Green parliamentary group's speaker on budget issues and European affairs. In 1997, he was elected chairman of the state-level party organisation of Baden-Württemberg.



In 1984 a colourful mixture of Belgians, Germans, Italians and Dutch, known as the *Green Alternative European Link* (GRAEL) formed the first Green group in the European Parliament. Since then a lot has happened. An increasing number of countries have seen Green parties gain parliamentary experience, in the course of which they have moved from being a protest party to one pursuing concrete change based on targeted reform.

In Western Europe, green ideas have found their way into the political and social mainstream. New political identities have emerged and in many countries there have been tectonic political shifts as the Greens have moved from being an anti-establishment party to one ready and able to take on the responsibility of government. In the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe Green parties are still a new element in the political landscape and often find it hard to

position themselves within the political spectrum and gain the trust of the electorates.

We have invited authors from eight European countries to write about the identity and ambitions of the Green parties in their home countries. What factors have influenced individual Green party development? How have they adapted to these influences and what are their future prospects? From the original Euro-Greens, who were part of the first "chaotic" Green group that entered the European Parliament in 1984 we wanted to know: What did Green politics mean at that time and how do they now perceive the results and future prospects of their policies? Finally, we asked some of the younger generation how they view this record and what they would like to see in the future. The answers to these questions can be found here.

Heinrich Böll Foundation
EU Regional Office Brussels

15 Rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels – Belgium
T +32 2 743 41 00 F (+32) 2 743 41 09 E Brussels@boell.be – www.boell.be

