

Social Democrats concede defeat in Swedish election as far-right Sweden Democrats become second-largest party

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The last ballots were counted for the 2022 Swedish elections Thursday, confirming the lead of the right-wing parliamentary bloc by 176 seats to 173 in the 349-seat parliament (Riksdag). The traditional conservative party—the Moderates—has entered talks with the other right-wing parties to form a government based around their leader Ulf Kristersson as prime minister.

Current Prime Minister and Social Democrat leader Magdalena Andersson announced her resignation Wednesday evening. After a meeting Monday with Riksdag speaker Andreas Norlén, Kristersson stated that talks to form the new government could take several weeks.

The true winner of the elections, however, was not Kristersson's Moderates, but the Sweden Democrats. The party, founded by neo-Nazis in the 1980s, is now the second-largest political party in Sweden. Though the other three right-wing parties (Moderates, Christian Democrats, and the Liberals) have asserted, in the face of widespread popular hostility towards the far-right, that they do not wish to place the Sweden Democrats in government, they all bear political responsibility for integrating the far-right party into official politics over the past decade.

Whether or not the Sweden Democrats are formally included in the next government, it is already clear that they will play a decisive role in determining its policies. Kristersson is reportedly aiming for a coalition with the Christian Democrats or a three-party coalition that also includes the Liberals, with the Sweden Democrats backing the government on crucial votes from the outside.

The Moderates lost almost 1 percentage point of the vote compared to the last election in 2018, whereas the Sweden Democrats' vote rose by 3.1 percentage points—the largest of any party. The Sweden Democrats finished with 20.6 percent of the vote compared to the Moderates' 19.1 percent.

Around the world, fascistic leaders and news outlets celebrated the Sweden Democrats' victory. Steve Bannon,

the ex-strategist of Donald Trump, described it as “a political earthquake,” while the European Conservatives and Reformist Party, a coalition bloc of far-right parties in the EU, led by Giorgia Meloni, leader of the fascist Brothers of Italy, tweeted, “Let this be an omen and model for the rest of Europe.” Italy will hold an election on September 25, with the Brothers of Italy poised for victory.

Referencing Donald Trump, Sweden Democrat leader Jimmie Åkesson vowed at the party's election night celebration to “Make Sweden Great Again.” His party has proposed a series of vicious anti-immigrant, law-and-order policies. They include ending permanent residency for migrants, raids on welfare beneficiaries' homes “to find malpractices,” and the ending of residency rights through romantic partnership.

The only foreign press allowed into the Sweden Democrats' “raucous [election] party” was the *Financial Times*. Multiple foreign press requests were denied by the party leadership. The FT reported that there was “one word on the lips of many Sweden Democrats MPs ... revenge.” The party's chief of staff, Linus Bylund, stated that he was looking forward to “journalist rugby.” Asked to explain, he said this was where you “pushed journalists about.”

Later, at the same party, Rebecka Fallenkvist—a Sweden Democrat candidate for Stockholm—blurted out the Swedish version of the Nazi “Sieg Heil” salute as she drunkenly spoke to the far-right news site Samnytt.

One reflection of the ruling elite's embrace of this far-right filth was the forcing out of Annie Lööf as leader of the relatively small Centre Party. Lööf has been one of the more vocal critics of the right-wing, racist politics of the Sweden Democrats within the political establishment, and focused a considerable portion of her party's election campaign on a commitment not to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats in government. Under her leadership, Centre shifted from its traditional membership in the right-wing parliamentary bloc to support the minority Social Democrat government.

However, the party helped secure a majority in parliament last year for the national budget drafted by the Moderates and Sweden Democrats, which Andersson's minority Social Democrat government agreed to implement.

In July, Löf was the target of an attempted assassination by a member of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement, many of whose members have run on the Sweden Democrat ticket. Instead of killing Löf, the attacker murdered Ing-Marie Wieselgren, a well-known psychiatrist.

After Centre performed poorly at the polls, a concerted push developed from media outlets and political figures for Löf to resign so as to force a reexamination of the Centre Party's stance on the Sweden Democrats.

This development carries on the general rush of Swedish politics to the right, as all the major political parties have adopted the anti-immigrant, law and order positions of the Sweden Democrats.

The rightward lurch of official Swedish politics is being driven by powerful objective forces. The Swedish ruling elite has abandoned its long-standing pose of neutrality and flung itself behind the US-NATO war with Russia. Sweden's application to join NATO and a sustained military build-up since 2014 have helped transform Scandinavia into the northern front of the imperialist powers' war to plunder Russia's natural resources and subjugate the country to the status of a semi-colony.

At home, the Swedish ruling class intends to intensify its assault on what remains of the country's social programmes and continue its homicidal pandemic policy. This deeply unpopular programme of war abroad and austerity at home cannot be enforced democratically, which is why the far right are being cultivated and brought into the political establishment.

The financial press reacted to the Sweden Democrats' unprecedented political strength with offerings of reassurance that the party does not threaten the imperialist powers' interests. The FT's Tony Barber wrote, "What will not change are the fundamentals of Swedish foreign and defense policy. The Sweden Democrats support the nation's application to join NATO. ... The Sweden Democrats have also dropped their old hostility to the country's EU membership. Beyond that, Sweden's democratic processes and upholding of the rule of law remain strong."

Barber explained that the "Sweden Democrats differ from insurgent rightwing parties," claiming they "have expelled their most extremist members." In fact, a recent report by Acta Publica found that nearly 300 right-wing extremists were running in this year's elections, most of them associated with the Nordic Resistance Movement and running on the Sweden Democrat ticket.

It must be stressed, however, that while the Sweden

Democrats received 1.3 million votes—in a country of 10.5 million people—there are not 1.3 million fascists in Sweden.

The Sweden Democrats, to the extent that they have been able to gain a hearing among sections of the working class, have done so because of the bankruptcy of what is presented as "left-wing" politics in Sweden. Since the 1990s, the Social Democrats have spearheaded the charge to dismantle Sweden's much-vaunted welfare state and enforce privatizations. In power for 20 of the last 28 years, the Social Democrats have relied throughout this period on loyal support from the Left Party in parliament and the trade unions outside parliament to enforce its anti-worker agenda.

One of the most grotesque expressions of this political alliance is the criminal role the Social Democrats and Left Party played in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as they aggressively promoted the anti-scientific conception of "herd immunity." International finance capital latched onto the homicidal policies of Sweden's "left" government as a key means to justify the abandoning of all COVID-19 mitigation measures and allowing the virus to perpetually rip through the population.

The defeat of the far-right in Sweden requires Swedish workers to link their struggles with those of the international working class in Europe and around the world. Only an international movement of workers for genuine socialism, freed of the false friends of the corporatist unions and social democratic and Stalinist parties, is capable of offering an alternative to the impasse of capitalist politics.

The conditions for the emergence of such a movement are rapidly emerging. A wave of strikes in the United States and Europe has begun to demonstrate the social power of the working class. It is to this social force that workers in Sweden must turn in the struggle to defeat the threat posed to their democratic and social rights by the rightward lurch of the entire political system.



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