

In European elections across Nordic region, ex-Stalinist and pseudo-left parties benefit from opposition to war and far right

Jordan Shilton
2 July 2024

Governments across the Nordic region have systematically transformed their countries into frontline states in NATO's war on Russia over the past two years. Finland and Sweden have joined NATO, and a series of bilateral agreements with US imperialism have resulted in a massive expansion of its military presence across the region.

Last month's European elections gave distorted expression to the mounting opposition to this eruption of militarism and war. Nominally "left" parties are seeing their support grow at the expense of the establishment right and far-right organisations, which currently hold power in Finland and Sweden.

These parties were undeserving beneficiaries of the widespread protests in the Nordic countries against Israel's imperialist-backed genocide, growing hostility to the subordination of society's resources to the waging of war on Russia, and alienation from the traditional social democratic parties. The Danish, Finnish and Swedish representatives of the pseudo-left and ex-Stalinist parties are all full-throated supporters of the imperialist war on Russia, and have at best taken an equivocal position on the Gaza genocide.

The ex-Stalinist Socialist People's Party (SF), also known in English as Green Left, emerged as the largest party from the Danish vote, with 17.4 percent. SF finished ahead of the governing Social Democrats, who achieved a miserable 15.5 percent, and the Liberals, Denmark's main right-wing party, with 14.7 percent. The pseudo-left Red-Green Alliance, which includes the Pabloite Socialist Workers Party, saw its share of the vote rise by about a third to around 7 percent.

SF has its origins in a split with the Stalinist Danish Communist Party (DKP) led by long-time Stalinist Aksel Larsen following the Soviet Union's crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956. In line with ideas later associated with Eurocommunism, SF initially claimed to be pursuing a "third way" between the Social Democrats' open support for US imperialism and the DKP's alignment with the USSR in the Cold War. But it helped prop up a Social Democrat government as early as 1966, and subsequently emerged as a key prop of support for Social Democratic-led governments that have imposed austerity programmes and boosted military spending.

SF associated itself last year with the mass movement that developed against the Social Democrat-led government's move to abolish a public holiday in order to raise funds for the Danish military. A major demonstration of 50,000 people in Copenhagen in February 2023 underscored the depth of opposition to the decision, which was part of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's plan to reach the NATO

target of spending at least 2 percent of GDP on defence by 2030. Frederiksen leads a three-party coalition that includes the right-wing Liberals and moderates, the first time in over four decades that parties from the official "left" and "right" of bourgeois politics have formed a government in Denmark.

SF's support for the protest was hypocritical in the extreme. It was one among many parties that backed a cross-party defence agreement in March 2022 to hike Danish military spending to 2 percent of the GDP by 2033. After Frederiksen concluded her coalition agreement with the right-wing parties following the November 2022 national election, she accelerated the timetable to 2030.

Although the party refused to condemn Israel for committing war crimes with its genocidal onslaught on the Palestinians in Gaza, SF party leader Pia Olsen Dyhr criticised the Zionist regime in a speech to her party's national congress in March for a response that was "out of all proportion" to Hamas' October 7 attack.

The growth in support for Finland's Left Alliance was even more substantial. Having secured just 7.1 percent of the vote in last year's general election, the successor organisation to the once-influential Stalinist Communist Party of Finland took 17.3 percent of the vote. Even with the significantly lower turnout compared to last year's national election, the Left Alliance secured around 100,000 more votes.

Left Alliance leader Li Andersson won the most votes ever of any single candidate in a European election in Finland with nearly 250,000. The party gained support under conditions of a sweeping attack on public services, welfare benefits and collective bargaining rights by Finland's right-wing government, which aims to save €6 billion during its first four-year term to invest in defence.

The Left Alliance offers no alternative to this agenda of pro-imperialist militarism and war. Ahead of the European election, Andersson denounced any let-up in the fuelling the imperialist-backed bloodbath in Ukraine. She attacked the Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW) in Germany for its advocacy of a ceasefire and an end to weapons supplies for Ukraine, saying that her party would not sit in the same group in the European Parliament as BSW members.

The BSW combines firm support for German remilitarisation with a vicious anti-immigrant programme. However it advocates, unlike the dominant sections of the German ruling class, the view that Berlin should direct its military operations more against the United States and NATO by easing tensions with Russia. "My party and the Nordic Green left, we are not willing to sit in the same group as the Wagenknecht," Andersson said. The Nordic Green Left includes

Finland's Left Alliance, Denmark's RGA and SF, and Sweden's Left Party. Parties from the non-EU states of Iceland, Norway, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are also members.

A similar though less dramatic growth in support for nominally "left" parties was visible in Sweden, where the ex-Stalinist left Party achieved one of its best results for years with over 11 percent of the vote. The Greens also gained ground, winning 13.9 percent of the vote. The Social Democrats remained the largest party, with its share of the vote rising slightly to 24.7 percent.

The Left Party's Jonas Sjöstedt responded to the gains of "left" parties across the Nordic region and the drop in support experienced by the Nordic far-right parties by describing the results as a "ray of hope" for Europe amid the growth of the fascistic right. This could not be further from the truth. The reality is that the role of the pseudo-left parties in suppressing the working class by keeping it politically tied to Social Democracy has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the far right.

Sjöstedt was Left Party leader from 2012 to 2020. From 2014, his Left Party secured a parliamentary majority for Stefan Löfven's Social Democrat-led minority government. Löfven's government implemented the budgetary framework of Sweden's right-wing parties and embraced the far-right Sweden Democrats' anti-immigrant programme. The Left Party justified its political support for this arrangement by arguing that it was the only way to block the rise of the Sweden Democrats, which have their origins in Sweden's neo-Nazi movement. On the contrary, it led to the fascists gaining the political initiative.

Popular opposition grew as the Social Democrats, supported by the Greens and Left Party, imposed a homicidal "herd immunity" policy during the pandemic that saw Sweden experience a much higher death rate than its Nordic neighbours. The Social Democrats also boosted military spending and initiated Sweden's application to join NATO. After the Social Democrats lost the 2022 elections amid growing hostility to its right-wing policies, Moderate Party leader Ulf Kristersson formed a right-wing coalition minority government resting on the support of the Sweden Democrats.

The same basic political issue was raised in Denmark and Finland by the actions of the pseudo-left parties now benefiting from opposition to militarism and the far right. The SF and RGA have backed a series of Social Democratic governments with the argument that only in this way could the far-right Danish People's Party (DF) be stopped. After four years of a right-wing Liberal Party government backed by the DF from 2015 to 2019, the SF and RGA supported Frederiksen's Social Democrat minority government, which adopted the far-right's anti-immigrant agenda and implemented major military spending increases. Far from stopping the political right, this policy paved the way for the Social Democrats' first coalition with right-wing parties in over four decades following the 2022 election.

Andersson's Left Alliance joined the Social Democratic government led by Prime Minister Sanna Marin in 2019. At the time, Andersson made a show of insisting that the Left Alliance's participation was conditional on the issue of Finland's NATO membership not being raised during the parliamentary term. Following the US-incited Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Andersson and the vast majority of the Left Alliance leadership performed a 180-degree turn, declaring that they would not make Finland's application to join NATO an issue over which they would resign their government posts. At a joint meeting of the party council and parliamentary group in May 2022, Andersson and her fellow

warmongers secured an overwhelming majority for this pro-NATO line, which has transformed the country with a 1,300-kilometre border with Russia into a garrison state in US imperialist war plans.

Workers and young people across the Nordic region who are serious about taking up a struggle against war and the fascist threat cannot take a single step forward by backing any of the region's "left" parties. Through their subordination of the working class to Social Democracy, and enthusiastic endorsement of the imperialist war on Russia and austerity, these parties bear joint responsibility together with the rest of the political establishment for the growth of fascistic forces.

Moreover, the attempt to hold up the "Scandinavian exception" as a "ray of hope" for Europe is a fraud and politically reactionary. It blinds workers to the fact that the world capitalist crisis is driving official politics in the Nordic countries just as sharply to the right as in the major European imperialist powers of Britain, France and Germany. The Nordic region has two governments, Finland and Sweden, involving the direct participation or support of the fascistic right, and ruling elites in all of the region's countries that have subordinated their entire societies to the interests of the North American and European imperialist war machine.

In every Nordic country, the Social Democrats have led the transformation of societies with relatively low levels of social inequality and extensive public services into outposts of imperialist war where the gap between rich and poor is growing more rapidly than across the rest of Europe. Yet it is precisely these Social Democrats that the pseudo-left parties incessantly claim are allies in the struggle against the political right. What Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish workers require is a political orientation to their class brothers and sisters across Europe and internationally, who confront the same threats of war, austerity and authoritarian forms of rule. This demands the adoption of a socialist and internationalist programme, not the thin gruel of a "progressive" Scandinavia, which long ago passed its sell-by date.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact