Portugal Election – Far Right Surges

First results

Party	% 2024	% 2022	% 2019
PS (Socialist Party)	28.6 77	41.68 120 seats	36.4
AD (Democratic Alliance: ,PSD/CDS/PPM Centre Right)	29.49 79	27.8 77 seats	27.8
Chega (Enough:neo-fascist)	18.06 48	7.15 12 seats	1.3
Initiativa Liberal (pro business)	5.08 8	4.98 8 seats	1.3
Bloco Esquerda (radical left)	4.46 5	4.46 5 seats	9.5
CDU (PCP:Communist) +green front)	3.3 4	4.39 6 seats	6.3
CDS (right-wing)	n/a in AD	1.61	4.2
PAN (animal rights)	1.93 1	1.53 1 seat	3.3
Livre (Free, green pro-EC)	3.26 4	1.28 I seat	1.1

Chega *[Enough!]*, the far-right party led by ex-TV football pundit Andre Ventura, was the big winner of the night, increasing its votes by over ten points but quadrupling its seats to 48. It now competes as the third major party, way ahead of the rest of the field. The biggest loser is the PS

[Socialist Party] which led the last two governments; it lost 13% of its vote and 43 seats. On the other hand, due mostly to the rise of Chega, the mainstream right of centre alliance, the AD (Democratic Alliance), which had been the main parliamentary opposition, only edged up by barely two points, with just two more seats. Even this small advantage could be altered once the overseas votes are counted. The pro-business, neo-liberal IL (Liberal Initiative) held on to its 8 seats.

To the left of the PS Livre (Free) a pro-European Greenish party nearly tripled its vote and went from one to four seats. The radical left Bloco Esquerda held on to exactly its last score and keeps its 5 MPs. However the PCP (Communist) lost a percentage point and two seats.

Government

Soon after the first projections, when the AD advantage was bigger, the PS representative accepted that the AD should form the government and they would go into opposition. The margin is wafer-thin although the previous governing party has clearly lost the most support. It is likely that the President will ask the AD to try and form a government.

Luis Montenegro has ruled out a government coalition with Chega even though the numbers are there. He has said that “no means no”, and has dubbed Ventura’s views as “xenophobic, racist, populist and excessively demagogic.” Probably the neo-liberal IL would join an AD government but their seats do not take the AD past 116 required. A lot depends on the PS sticking to its early position, already signposted in the campaign, that it would allow a minority AD government to be established. In that eventuality PS abstentions would mean AD would not require Chega votes to form a government. Given the final figures the PS could demand some political concessions or red lines from an AD government and perhaps anticipate new elections at some point. Certainly if the PS were not to be

accommodating then the AD could change its position on an alliance with Chega.



Andre Ventura Photo: Esquerda net

The Right

Chega, with a fifth of the seats, now has a substantial political and material basis for further growth. Ventura has consistently says he wants to form a government with the AD. Unlike in Italy there was no pre-election coalition between his party and the AD. Ventura repeatedly declares he is not neo-fascist or far right. He originally was an activist in the PSD, the main party of the AD. His main campaign slogan was to "*Clean up Portugal*." He railed against the two party caste that has ruled Portugal for 50 years since the end of the dictatorship.

The Costa government fell because of corruption in his leadership group. It has been prevalent for many years. I remember going on a tennis holiday in the Algarve and discovered that the huge hotel and golf complex development there had involved bribes and kickbacks for politicians. So a campaign centred on kicking out the corrupt caste has proved effective.

Ventura outlined a whole raft of new laws and actions to weed

out corruption – seizing assets, defining a new crime of illicit enrichment. AD failed to capitalise on the PS government failure to deal with low wages, declining health services and soaring housing cross because it was seen as a co-manager of a corrupt system. The previous right-led government had carried out hard austerity policies. Chega appears to have taken votes from both the AD and the PS.

The other part of Ventura's clean-up is his racist offensive against immigrants and the Roma community. He proposes restricting immigration and creating a new crime of illegal residence. Over recent decades Portugal has gone from a country of net emigration to net immigration. Around 13% of the population come from migrant backgrounds. 70% of the population identify as White.

Chega also defends what it calls the traditional family and attacks women and LBGTQ+ rights.

If you combine this reality with the problems of inequality and austerity and the inadequate response of any governments to deal with these issues then you can see how Chega is able to blame migrants for the cost of living crisis or lack of housing. Chega's big advance has taken place under the second PS government which has not continued some of the progressive policies it enacted during his first government when the radical left parties, the Bloco and the PCP had enabled its formation on condition it carried out such a programme.

Today being excluded from government could provide the conditions for Chega to further grow. An AD government permitted to govern by the PS would provide further confirmation of its claim that the two party system is a stitch up against the people. If there were to be a more formal programmatic agreement that could create an even greater opening. The AD might still want Chega votes to pass legislation if the PS opposes specific laws. Ventura has said he has contacts with PSD people and one tactic will be to step

up pressure on their MPs to be more open to an agreement with Chega. We are seeing this scenario of far right parties pulling mainstream right parties to more extreme positions or working to create internal splits elsewhere in Europe.

Chega has important financial supporters. During the campaign the Civic Front exposed how it relied more on unnamed private backers than the official state funds for political parties. The Chega surge is part of the general rise of the far right or neo fascists in Europe and globally. This “creeping fascism” is pulling the mainstream right-of-centre parties to more extreme policies too. Already, leaders of Vox, the Spanish state neo-fascists and other far right leaders in Europe are sending in their congratulations to Ventura.

Bloco

The Bloco campaign focussed on putting forward radical measures on wages, health and housing as well as defending migrants, women and LGBTQ+ rights and calling on solidarity with Palestine. Unlike the PCP it has managed to maintain its electoral support and five seats. It also campaigned to stop the rise of Chega and a right wing government by proposing a new left wing agreement similar to the first Costa government. where it would give limited external support without taking ministerial posts. Clearly the failure to increase its support and the PS defeat meant this option is off the table. In this respect, the left as a whole has been pushed back in these elections.

In her first reaction to the results, Bloco leader Joana Mortágua, who was re-elected in Setúbal, said that they “confirm a shift to the right”, as a result of a “negative assessment, which we share, of how a PS government with an absolute majority delivered.” As for the Bloco’s result, by keeping the parliamentary group and increasing the vote compared to 2022, “it’s a sign that there’s confidence in the

Bloco for whatever the political situation: whether it's to form a majority or to be a determined and fierce opposition to the right."

Livre (Free) a pro-European party with green credentials was the winner among the left-of-centre parties, tripling its vote and going from one to four MPs. Perhaps it is one reason why the Bloco did not succeed in significantly increasing its vote. It wins votes in the big urban areas and among similar demographics as the Bloco.

Austerity

Portugal remains one of the poorest and unequal countries in Europe, it is 24th in the Social Justice index in the EU. It has the world's fourth highest number of citizens over 65 years, 21.8% of the population. Recent governments have not protected the living standards of senior citizens. Rental costs have soared for ordinary people. One factor is the uncontrolled promotion of tourism means an explosion of Airbnb lets in cities like Lisbon and Porto which increases rental values. The gains of a national health service set up after the revolution 50 years ago have been very much eroded.

Now that even the social liberal left are out of power, defending social gains and the living standards of working people will need increased mobilisations in the workplaces and communities. increased polarisation and instability could increase rather than decrease with these election results.

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Bloco promises to be “the most combative opposition to the right”

In her election night statement, Mariana Mortágua emphasized that despite the turn to the right in the electoral results, the Bloco managed to resist, maintaining its mandates and with more votes than in 2022.
The Left Bloc coordinator’s reaction to the results of the legislative elections came at a time when “the parliamentary situation is still not entirely clear”, given the close result between the PS and PSD that could be altered by the emigration votes.

Mariana Mortágua said that the shift to the right resulting from this Sunday’s elections “is a reflection of the failure of two years of disastrous politics by the PS’s absolute majority”.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS RESULT IN A SHIFT TO THE RIGHT

But despite this shift, she emphasized that “the Bloc resisted and increased its votes by around 30,000. It stood firm in these elections, we kept all our seats”. And it is with this strength that “we will be part of any solution that removes the right from government,” she continued.

In this election, the Bloc re-elected two MPs in Lisbon (Mariana Mortágua and Fabian Figueiredo) and Porto (Marisa Matias and José Soeiro) and re-elected Joana Mortágua in Setúbal.

“I want the people of the left to know that they will have in the Bloc the most combative opposition to the right,” said the

Bloc coordinator, promising to contribute to “building an alternative to the left to defend our people”.

11 March 2024

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **Esquerda Net**->https://www.esquerda.net/artigo/bloco-promete-fazer-oposicao-mais-combativa-direita/90138].*

Main photo: https://www.bloco.org/

Razem: Building a left alternative in Poland

*It is not often realised that among Scotland’s population at the time of the 2011 census **Poland** was the largest non-UK country of birth, writes Mike Picken in this introduction for ecosocialist.scot.*

This was because of significant migration into Scotland during the period, now closed by the Tory Brexit, when Scotland as part of the EU was a member of the single market and free movement between EU states was possible. More recent data from 2021 in England & Wales indicates that Poland is the second largest country of birth there, after India. It should also be remembered that the xenophobic-fuelled Brexit referendum produced not only the assassination of a Labour MP by a racist extremist opposed to EU migration, but the murder of a Polish-born man in Essex and the tragic suicide of a Polish-born young woman in Cornwall following racist taunts.

Poland transitioned to EU membership in 2004 and was by far the largest of the former-soviet bloc eastern european states to do so (it is currently the fifth largest EU member state – after the western european states of Germany, France, Italy and the Spanish state).

But the transition from totalitarian stalinism to free market capitalism was fraught with contradictions. Despite the government of the right wing 'Law and Justice Party' and the rise of far right movements in Poland, there has also been the growth of a small but significant new broad left wing party – Razem ("Together" – also known as "Lewica Razem" – "Left Together"), formed in 2015 and now holding six seats in the Polish parliament, the Sejm (elected in 2019 as part of a left of centre coalition). As a left wing party, Razem has had to walk a difficult path between being critical of the capitalist and western imperialist basis of the EU and NATO institutions, while being understanding of the impact of stalinist totalitarianism on Polish society and the threat posed by Russian imperialism following the invasion of Ukraine. Razem champions the Kurdish struggle in Poland and is opposed to NATO's military interventions (see below). But Razem is also highly critical of many western leftist organisations who have abandoned the Ukrainian people in order to promote what has been called 'the anti-imperialism of idiots' by Ukraine 'Social Movement' left wing activist Taras Bilous. Razem has terminated its association with both the Progressive International and DIEM25 movements because of their refusal to defend unequivocally the Ukrainian people.

ecosocialist.scot is republishing below a wide ranging interview with a leading representative of Razem's international office, Zofia Malisz. There is much to learn for us in Scotland from this interview, particularly about the need to puncture the sometimes uncritical enthusiasm for the EU that exists in Scotland with an ecosocialist and left wing message, but also how to put across a consistent anti-

imperialist message that has real resonance with the populations of Eastern Europe.

The interview was first published by the Australian ecosocialist Green Left – this version is as republished by International Viewpoint.

Razem: Building a left alternative in Poland

Polish left-wing party Razem (Together) International Office member Zofia Malisz spoke to Green Left's Federico Fuentes about the party's history, Polish politics and Razem's views on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. (*Green Left*, 10 January 2023.)

Could you tell us about Razem's history and politics?

Razem was formed in 2015 by a group of leftist activists with years of experience in the Polish green and feminist movements, along with members of the Young Socialists.

The impetus for creating a new party was two-fold.

One was the frustration that emerged under the liberal Donald Tusk government (2007–14). Whenever voices started to demand the government focus on social spending instead of cuts and privatisations, Tusk's response was to say Poland was still in its transformation stage [towards a market economy] and that now was not the time to build up a welfare state.

Frustration grew as neoliberal policies were implemented at breakneck speed to indulge business elites, while people were denied even modest social benefits and public services were

being dismantled.

All this occurred as anti-austerity protests were taking place in Greece, something we supported and that inspired Razem.

The other major factor was the protests against the Iraq war and against Poland's participation in the occupation of Afghanistan. Several activists who went on to build Razem came from these protest movements.

The revelations of alleged illegal US prisons in Poland used to torture al-Qaeda members created huge outrage. Seeing the Polish government bow down to US imperialism unchallenged – and in fact encouraged by the mainstream, including former Solidarność activists – fuelled frustration on the left.



Razem was formed as an expression of this anger and frustration that had built up during the transformation process.

This particularly still concerns the young. Unlike the old Communist establishment or the new liberal elites aligned with business, they did not get the opportunity to enrich themselves during the transformation period.

Entering professional life, let alone starting a family, has become – and still is – a very difficult thing if you are living precariously.

Our co-leaders Magda Biejat and Adrian Zandberg have been highlighting the housing situation, particularly as rent and real estate prices have risen dramatically.

Poland is also facing depopulation, with the abortion ban discouraging women from getting pregnant and high cost of living pressures, which prevent young people from starting an independent life.

In terms of Razem's politics, I would say one difference between Razem and much of the Western left is that we do not use ideologised language and instead communicate left values organically.

This is because, after the 1990s [with the fall of the Communist regime], even using the word "socialism" became problematic. There was a backlash that the right wing and neoliberals gladly exploited to discredit any ideas of a social state.

This happened despite the fact that Poland's socialist tradition is much older than the Eastern Bloc's existence and played a hugely significant and positive role in the building of the Polish independent state. Not to mention that, contrary to what conservative ideologues want you to believe, the ideals of Solidarność were socialist.

Razem was [also] inspired by the modern left approach adopted by Podemos, who demonstrated how to communicate socialist ideas in a different way.

[Podemos] showed that it was very important to find new ways to break up right-wing duopolies. In the case of Polish politics, we have a duopoly between the liberal and conservative right that dominates the scene.

We had to first bring back the left and insert left issues into the centre of Polish political debate. We had to bring back social protest and unionising into everyday Polish political practice – and we succeeded. These were our motivations.

Since then we have engaged in an, at times dramatic, fight for space on the terrain of this duopoly. The duopoly manifests itself as a war of right-wing tribes that is a source of sustenance to their elites. So it was vital for us to avoid the trap of engaging in empty arguments.

Polish liberals reduce every social-political question to whether this helps defeat the conservatives, and vice versa, while never considering any problems on its merit. The Polish people are tired of this ritualistic fighting.

They appreciate the fact that our six MPs instead focus on talking about the issues. Parliamentary speeches by Adrian Zandberg, are something of a hotly anticipated public event because they give a rare sense of getting real among all this ruckus. They resonate because there is anger and people want solutions and real action. And they know they can depend on us for those.

People value Razem MPs showing up early at a strike to support workers' demands and to facilitate bringing the entitled bosses to the table. This is where we were able to make a difference in several industrial actions in recent years.

Poland is often grouped as part of a conglomerate of far-right authoritarian countries in Eastern Europe. How accurate is this? What can you tell us about the current government?

The same year Razem was formed, a conservative Christian government was elected. They found that the key to winning was to offer something that people wanted, some kind of social benefit – in this case a child allowance – but which the liberals had been refusing to give.

The conservative government only secured a majority because it incorporated social elements into their agenda.

Polish society, when asked about the policies they prefer, most often point to a form of social democracy with solid public services. The conservatives have exploited this need to their political benefit – but have clearly failed to deliver any comprehensive social agenda.

In any case, it is clear that to grab power they did not campaign on banning abortion or dismantling the judicial branch of the state. But right after they came to power, they attacked human rights and the state's institutions. They started stirring up culture wars in later campaigns, for example, scapegoating and harassing LGBT people.

Yes, these policies are supported by the Catholic Church. The conservative majority owes the Church huge favours – a lot of this stuff happens as a form of a clientelist exchange between the Church and the government. But these are not policies that have majority support.

Polls show the majority of the Polish people want legalisation of abortion and civil unions for same-sex couples. Polish society has been secularising dramatically in recent years. The conservatives have been losing this battle and the rabid reaction of fundamentalist groups embedded in the government's environment reflects this.

Unlike in Hungary, the Polish government has not been able to undermine the electoral system, and while attempts to take over the judiciary have been largely successful, they faced popular protest.

Moreover, due to the European Union's resistance to accepting these illegal reforms, the government has hit a wall of Polish EU-enthusiasm.

This is a major difference with Hungary: the government here was not able to find an easy way around the fact that people won't support any hint of "Polexit".

Neither will Razem, by the way, as we believe the EU badly needs social and democratic reform, but that Poland should stay and contribute to fostering integration and partnership on the continent.

This fact about Poland being pro-European integration helped

defeat the government’s attacks on our checks and balances.

The result was that all the Orbanite moves the government did, including the persecution of women and LGBT people, sparked a wave of unprecedented protest. The protests against the abortion ban were huge and spanned all levels of society.

This caused a dramatic dip in the polls and the conservatives are unlikely to win a parliamentary majority in this year’s elections.

As to the idea of Eastern Europe as essentially authoritarian and full of far-right nationalists, I would say this is the result of decades of dismissing Eastern Europe agency. It is often the default, convenient portrayal in the media that flatters egos in the West.

We all know what trouble Western European countries are in regarding right-wing threats, look at Italy or France with [Giorgia] Meloni and [Marine] Le Pen, or the recent plot by German extremists to overthrow the system.

But somehow the global media and Russian propaganda manage to draw exclusive attention to right-wing authoritarian tendencies in Eastern Europe, obscuring the fact that there are left movements and a progressive civil society, and disregarding the emancipatory and democratising impulse that is well alive in the people. This contributes to the image of Eastern Europe as an especially conservative backwater, hostile to progressive ideas, which is not really the case and certainly is not a constant.

Of course, there are elements of this, but it is being incredibly exaggerated in the West, including within the Western left. Look at Slovenia with Levica, Croatia with Mozemo, Latvia with Progresivie or Poland with Razem, and you will discover inspiring left movements implementing progressive change in their country and municipal politics – and there will be more surprises like that in the future which

should be acknowledged.

Particularly regarding Ukraine, it is vital movements such as Social Movement are supported in the context of resistance and rebuilding after Russian aggression is defeated.

How did Razem respond to Putin's invasion of Ukraine? Why does Razem insist on the need to come to grips with Russian imperialism?

Razem had no doubts about how to react given our countries' common historic experience with Russian imperialism. We had absolutely no doubts that this invasion represented an existential threat to Ukraine, that there could be no compromise, and that our party's reaction was crucial.

Unfortunately, we were very disappointed with progressive organisations, including ones that at the time we belonged to, that kept silent right up to and after the invasion, and even after the Bucha massacre.

This was disappointing but also, I admit, we may have been a bit blind to an obvious tendency that exists within part of the left to overemphasise US imperialism while letting Russian imperialism off the hook. It quickly became clear a big part of that left is not able to accept what for us are two existential issues: that Ukraine is a sovereign state and that there is such a thing as Russian imperialism.

In contrast, representatives of the left in Poland (Razem), Finland (Left Alliance), Lithuania (Left Alliance), Czech Republic (Alliance For The Future; The Left) and Romania (Democracy and Solidarity Party) met in Warsaw on March 8 with representatives of Ukrainian left organisation Social Movement to listen to them and ask them what they needed. The Danish left (Red-Green Alliance) was not present at the meeting but later indicated their support.

It became clear that we should campaign, first, to support the

left and Ukraine’s armed resistance. This was done against considerable pushback from the so-called anti-war movement in imperial or post-imperial Western societies.

We often found that Ukrainian leftists had to fight even for their right to speak at events organised by the Western left. So this was a struggle and remains a vital point: to assert the existence and amplify the voice of the Ukrainian left. Their voice, once heard, inevitably cuts through all propaganda smokescreens – they lead a righteous fight for self-determination against an imperialist aggressor, no doubt about it.

Since then, the unity initiated in Warsaw has extended to other Nordic and Central European left parties, and more recently to left groups in the Balkans. We are building a network to share information not only about our common experience with regards to Russian imperialism but also regarding the process of harsh neoliberal transformation in states of the former Eastern Bloc.

Together with Social Movement and other allies such as the Portuguese Left Bloc or the Swedish Left Party we also launched a campaign to cancel Ukraine’s debt, which is restricting Ukraine’s war efforts and the ability to maintain its economy afloat. We have had some successes: a bill has been passed in the US House of Representatives calling on the US government to influence lenders on behalf of Ukraine, and the issue has also been raised in the UK and European parliament.

This is a campaign we hope to build on as an example of concrete solidarity and outward campaigning. We prefer to offer concrete solidarity, work with parties, trade unions and movements that are accountable to voters, members and the public.

Debates on realist geopolitics regarding multipolarity perhaps

drive book sales, Twitter likes and invitations to panel debates, but they do not help the Ukrainian people who fight off genocidal aggression of a neighbour who wagering on neocolonialism in the 21st century.

How do you view the issue of NATO expansionism?

We are clear that the influence of Western militarism is not welcome in Poland. But we recognise that we are in a complex situation. Unlike the left that operates in the heart of an empire, the left in our part of Europe cannot afford to take a purely ideological stance that is divorced from the security realities of the peoples of our region.

On the one hand, given the lack of a proper European security architecture, NATO currently represents the only guarantee of protection for Polish citizens. The vast majority of Poles want this protection, because they know the threat Russian imperialism poses. That is why I do not think that we can honestly talk about NATO expansionism in our region. Instead, what we had was countries desperately applying to join NATO in the 1990s, while the US was initially not so favourable to us joining.

For people in our region, Russian expansionism is the existential threat. And it is Russia that is expanding towards and across our region – by invading Ukraine.

If you look honestly at the history of NATO-Russia relations regarding Europe, you will see it was Russia who regularly step forward first with the will to escalate.

Politically, you can speak of appeasement regarding Western European policy towards Russia in recent decades. Militarily, regarding troop and weapon deployments, you cannot speak of provocation.

On the other hand, Razem has actively opposed any Polish participation in NATO’s contemptuous, hardly legal,

interventions, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, etc. Any arbitrary action that is motivated by primitive extractionism or forced upon the alliance members via political pressure from the US is for us the true meaning of "NATO expansionism". And we oppose it.

We are also clear that such actions have only emboldened Russia, and provided it with precedents to carry out its own brazen imperialist actions.

Razem is aware that there are several imperialisms at play in our part of Europe and that we cannot afford to take sides supporting one imperialism over another.

10 January 2023

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Denmark: Red-Green Alliance win in Copenhagen

The radical left wing political party the Red-Green Alliance won the largest number of votes in the local elections in the Danish capital Copenhagen in November's local elections to emerge as the largest political party in the city.

Across the country, the Red-Green Alliance, or Enhedslisten ("Unity List", EL) as it is also known, won 114 council seats, an increase of 12 on its previous results.

The Red-Green Alliance was formed 32 years ago as a new broad left party contesting elections by an alliance of left wing

parties, including the Danish section of the Fourth International, SAP. It now has significant representation in the Danish Parliament, where it has 13 out of the 179 seats and is widely regarded as one of the most successful ecosocialist parties in Europe. The Red-Green Alliance is also part of the European Left Party.

Below we publish an interview with Eva Milsted Enoksen of the Copenhagen Red-Green Alliance by Andreas Thomsen of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation that has been widely published. You can also find coverage of the election here, from the US radical magazine Jacobin.

Scottish local elections take place in May 2022. Sadly, we don't have a political party in Scotland comparable to the Red-Green Alliance … yet … "unity" appears to be in short supply among the Scottish left, but through its links with the Fourth International, ecosocialist.scot is proud to be associated with the Red-Green Alliance's success and looks forward to the building of such a party in a future independent Scotland.

Danish municipal elections: Red-Green Alliance strongest party in Copenhagen

Interview with Eva Milsted Enoksen, Copenhagen by Andreas Thomsen

Nov 18th, 2021
Eva Milsted Enoksen

Andreas Thomsen: *The red- green Alliance achieved a very good*

result in Copenhagen with 24.6 per cent and 1st place. Can you briefly describe the political situation? What were the reasons for this success from your point of view?

Eva Milsted Enoksen: The Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten, EL) had the best election in our 32-year long history. With 24,6 % of the votes we are now by far the largest party in Copenhagen, the second largest being the Social Democrats (SD) who had a catastrophic election and only got 17,3 %. This is the culmination of a trend of more than 10 years. It is the first time in over 100 years that the Social Democrats are not the largest party in the capital.

There are a few reasons worth mentioning. First, there is the controversy of urban development in Copenhagen, where housing prices are exploding. Social Democrats, together with the right wing, the Social Liberal (RV) and Socialist People's Party are planning to build an artificial island at the entrance to Copenhagen harbor with housing for 35.000 people. Their argument is the crisis of affordable housing. However, the residential building planned on the island are to a large extent going to be sold on the free real estate marked, meaning very expensive flats that no ordinary worker, let alone student or unemployed person, will be able to afford. The real reason behind the project is that the city is in debt and needs money to pay for a costly metro system. Secondly, there a severe climate and environmental impacts of the project. Many are against the growth logic behind the it; more (expensive) housing calls for more investments in infrastructure (including for cars), which needs to be paid by selling off more building plots to build more (expensive) housing, needing more infrastructure etc. There has also been a huge environmentalist movement organizing against urban development in one of the very few nature areas in Copenhagen.

Also, voters are now more concerned about the climate emergency. Here EL has an advantage over S, being traditionally both red and green and having a very strong

support from the young voters. Finally, the Social Democrats did not field a well-known top candidate. The former Lord Mayor from S (Frank Jensen) was forced to leave politics last year after a series of sexual harassment cases and the new Social Democrat candidate is much less known in Copenhagen.

Andreas Thomsen: *How does the municipal system work in Copenhagen? Will we see a red-green lord mayor of Copenhagen now?*

Being the largest party does not necessarily translate into getting the lord mayor post in Copenhagen. The system is such that you need to form a majority of the 55 seats in the city council in order to become lord mayor. Copenhagen has one lord mayor and six deputy mayors, each with certain administrative autonomy. After elections, parties form loose alliances in order to form majority or minority groups who can then claim (deputy) mayor posts according to their size. A minimum of seven seats is required to name a deputy mayor, and 28 seats is required to name the lord mayor. The majority group gets to choose posts first. After this election, the Social Democrats quickly formed a group with three small far-right parties, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Social Liberals. This was not a major surprise as all these parties had previously declared that they would not tolerate a lord mayor from the far left. This majority group (32 seats) claimed the lord mayor post for the Social Democrat's Sophie Hæstorp Andersen and three deputy mayor posts for the largest right-wing parties. Enhedslisten together with the Socialist People's Party and the Alternative formed a minority group (23 seats) and claimed two deputy mayors for Enhedslisten and one for the Socialist People's Party.

However, the election leaves EL in a stronger position. The party´s two deputy mayors are in charge of urban development, housing, energy and environment, as well as social affairs. It is yet to be seen if this will mean a substantial change in the development and priorities in Copenhagen such as many

voters seem to have wanted. If the Social Democrats will choose to work exclusively with the right wing in the next four years, it will leave EL in a difficult position with a strong election result but difficulties delivering major results. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the Social Democratic power position in Copenhagen is weakened, and EL might succeed in including the decisive Social Liberals in forming alternative majorities on specific issues such as environment or climate mitigation.

Andreas Thomsen: *The agendas of progressive urban policy are similar in many larger cities, especially in the area of housing – what do you think can be achieved in the next few years? Do you follow the debates in Berlin on this issue? Is there cooperation?*

Eva Milsted Enoksen: Many in Enhedslisten have followed the successful referendum on remunicipalisation of housing in Berlin. That's a great inspiration. The model we propose as a radical alternative to the current market-based development in Copenhagen is partly inspired by Vienna. We are campaigning for a rent cap. We propose that the municipality shall provide low-interest loans to non-profit housing. And we want to create a municipal fund for housing construction and urban renewal. All in all, we want 75 per cent of new construction to be affordable housing.

Andreas Thomsen: *You are explicitly a red AND green party, an organisation that is committed to ecological transformation as well as socialist class politics. doesn't that create contradictions? How do you deal with them?*

Eva Milsted Enoksen: Actually, I don't' think there is a contradiction. The green transition is acutely necessary, and it is at the same time a unique opportunity to change the capitalist logics and the growth ideology defining most societies today.

Most parties in Denmark are painting themselves green. But solutions are quite different. While the right wing has just recently accepted that there is in fact a genuine crisis which is man-made, Social Democrats have long been vocal about the need to act. However, it has not been a priority in their politics, neither in Copenhagen nor in the national parliament. To a large extent, their strategy is the same as the right wing; we should invest in better technology and that way we don't need to change our society or the way we live and consume. This is also seen as a good business case for Denmark which is already strong in green export technologies such as windmills, waste-to-energy etc.

EL is not against having a focus on new technologies but is also saying out loud, that we need to fundamentally change the way we have organized our societies. In the city we don't need more parking spaces for private cars, we need more space for cyclists and pedestrians and better and cheaper busses and trains. Off course, not all workers who depend on a car for their daily commute agree with us on this point but here we choose the green focus over the (traditionally) red one.

In general, our green policies aim to benefit ordinary people not elites. The wealthiest countries, multinational enterprises and the extremely rich are also the ones with the largest carbon footprints. We need to make sure that they are also the ones paying the largest part of the bill for the transition.

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