

The renewal of social democracy...

... and a pragmatic, anarchistic approach to it

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The map of constituencies is shifting into the blue, as the AfD received between 32% and 46% of the second votes almost across the board in eastern Germany. However, this should not obscure the fact that the neo-fascist and right-wing populist party received 19% of the vote even in conservative-authoritarian Bavaria. This means that the AfD doubled its share of the vote to 20.8%, giving it 152 out of 630 seats in the federal parliament.

As frightening and momentous as these developments are, they were foreseeable. In this respect, it is legitimate to ask whether the AfD will be part of the government in 2029 or earlier, or even lead it. This is because the multiple social crises from which it draws political capital will continue to escalate. The BSW also achieved considerable success with 4.97% – but still failed to reach the authoritarian-democratic 5% hurdle. Whether their voters will once again pin their hopes on the left, become depoliticized or follow the simple solutions offered by the right remains to be seen.

Parallel to these trends, the Social Democrats in the Left Party are renewing themselves, achieving 8.77% and thus sending 64 MPs to the larger parliament. In their recent history, the Socialists have also been more strongly represented (2009: 11.9%, 2013: 8.6%, 2017: 9.2%). On the one hand, however, the long-delayed departure of the Wagenknechte dealt the project a severe blow. On the other hand, the Left Party was seen as divided and incapable of acting. The media were already calling it dead, but failed to recognize the effectiveness of grassroots commitment and the coincidence factor.

Like the AfD, the Left Party has succeeded in building a bridge between younger and older generations. It also presented itself as a consistent antithesis to right-wing authoritarianism and focused, among other things, on the issue of rent regulation, which affects its largely urban and educated clientele. What is relevant here is that it also managed to gain a foothold in left-wing milieus in West German cities that had previously voted for the Greens or SPD.

But the Left Party is not only back in the election results. In the course of its election campaign, it experienced a considerable increase in membership and passed the 100,000 mark. This includes many people who belong / belonged to the so-called “movement left”. They bring with them their knowledge and experience from feminist and ecological struggles and organizations. A large number of people who would consider themselves to be radical left-wingers – and were therefore rightly skeptical of party politics beforehand – also joined. It has slowly become clear

that you can no longer win a bouquet of flowers with left-wing sectarianism and that the current and upcoming social conflicts are too serious and immediate to afford the eternal bickering.

Nevertheless, we need to put our finger in the wound and ask what is going on here. For as remarkable as these developments may be and as hopeful as they may be for the changeability of social conditions, the whole thing is not really that special. In the Left Party, genuine social democracy is renewing itself and acting, at least in part, as a parliamentary-political expression of emancipatory social movements. This is contemporary political socialism in the geographical and social context of Germany in the 21st century.

Should anarchists now join the Left Party, organize themselves in it, because the signs of the times indicate that there is still something to be effectively defended or gained here? “In times like these ...” is it always said that as a committed person ... you have to join a party?

The question must be asked openly in order to be able to answer it seriously and soundly in the negative. And of course I deny it. It is not because I am an anarchist that I have to frantically maintain a difference to political socialism. Instead, a distance to renewed social democracy is very important if we want to maintain and develop a vision for a different form of society. To this end, it is important to form appropriate projects that embody, implement and fight for this vision. This positioning — and the resulting actions — are then anarchist.

The fact that anarchist approaches in their plurality (mutualist, individualist, communist, insurrectionalist, syndicalist, communitarian) do not currently appear to be particularly effective or successful does not make them wrong, nor does it necessarily result in an eccentric self-referentiality. What is needed among us very few, however, is continuity, common ideas, a shared perspective and the self-confidence to act as a factor.

I believe that it is possible in principle to renew anarchist projects. This requires finally leaving sectarianism and circling around one’s own identity behind and not worshipping objectives as abstract ideals, but outlining them in concrete terms. — In this respect, we could learn a lot from the pragmatism of the Left Party and its supporters. We should not think about next week — but improvise every day by thinking decades ahead.

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The following article comes from the German-language blog paradox-a.de, was translated with the help of deepl.com and therefore contains inaccuracies.

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