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Denmark

A good anticapitalist policy agenda

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This statement on the new policy agenda approved at the annual national meeting of the Red-Green Alliance was adopted the national executive committee of SAP (Danish section of the Fourth International) on 23 May 2014.

The policy agenda the Red-Green Alliance adopted at its annual national meeting contains a Marxist critique of capitalist society and clarifies the eco-socialist goals of the party. It does not have a clear grasp of the strategy for the actual transition to socialism – neither reformist or revolutionary – but on the other hand it clearly maps out guidelines for a line of class struggle right now that does not limit itself to the framework of the capitalist system.

Perhaps, the most important difference of opinion was whether or not the Red-Green Alliance should “be a rallying point” for all who are opposed to the attacks of neo-liberalism or simply operate as a “driving force” and “prime influence” in popular movements based on this kind of broad-based platform. In other words – by and large: whether or not the Red-Green Alliance is to move away from being an anticapitalist party with a clear profile of political dissension and towards being a broader anti-neoliberal party, which limits its socialist politics to ease the task of attracting discontented social-democrats and members of the Socialist Peoples Party to become members of the Red-Green Alliance.

This vision was expressed in an alternative policy agenda of its own and in a proposed amendment to the original national executive that was backed by Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen, Pelle Dragsted, Mikkel Warming and several other people. But it was turned down by a considerable majority in both instances, and the Red-Green Alliance fortunately continued to be a party for socialists who consider a fundamental change of society their guideline and goal.

Removing capitalism

A group of proposed amendments aimed at introducing wordings such as “removing private ownership of the means of production” – but none of those wordings were balanced enough to save small businesses from instant nationalization so they were obviously turned down. However, we may still find comfort in the fact that fundamental “changes in the ownership to the means of production” is still demanded and that “capitalist exploitation must be removed”, that “collective ownership [will] be dominating”, that “sectors fundamental to society [must] be owned and controlled by the community” and so on!

Similarly it has been underlined that in a socialist democracy “regions, workplaces and public institutions [will be] controlled and organised far more directly by the people”. And due to a group of proposed amendments from the environmentalist committee we dissociated ourselves with the blind growth of the capitalist system - also when goes by the name “green” capitalism!

The state, the system and the class struggle

The topic that created most debate up to and at the annual national meeting was the public sector and two different proposals for this paragraph. A majority of the national committee had chosen Mikkel Warming's and Stine Brix's version, which, with expressions such as “sowing the seeds of socialism” in the public sector could be interpreted as

a vision of socialism gradually growing out of an ever larger state sector (see also <http://sap-fi.dk/side.php?id=1246>)

A vast majority (approximately 2/3) at the annual national meeting, however, decided to insert a proposed amendment from Per Clausen, Pia Boisen and Micahel Voss. It is obviously difficult to say if this can be taken as a mark of a strategic position on the subject of the bourgeois state or simply a rejection of an embarrassing option, which is looking at parts of the capitalist reality through rose-tinted spectacles. However, both reactions would be good signs for the Red-Green Alliance.

Strategically it was also a success that the excellent formulations about being prepared to break with capitalist limitations in the daily struggle – in the paragraph “the daily struggles are part of our struggle for socialism” – were allowed to stay in the text in their full meaning (even though this was due to a tied vote).

When it came to parliamentary tactics – and the risk of becoming part of messy trade-offs rather than a consistent line – we witnessed a clear defeat of the groups in our party that might have been prone to let themselves be seduced by trade-offs in order to reach “results” in parliament: the principle of always voting against – even minor – backlashes became part of the programme.

Some feminist proposals were turned down, but others had already been incorporated, so it was not disastrous. The fact that sentences about self-organization by women (and other oppressed groups) did not make it, does however reflect that the place of women's issues is still too small in the Red-Green Alliance.

Finally, there is good reason to be pleased with the long row of proposals that were also carried: about resistance to the EU and NATO, abolition of the military as we know it, abolition of the monarchy, etc.

Less revolution, better rooted among the members

A proposal from Michael Voss, which among other things hinted at the strategy for a revolutionary situation, was solidly turned down. And even though we obviously cannot extract any conclusions from the fact that the word revolution now is on the page once as opposed to the former 20 occurrences, there is no doubt when it comes to the transition to socialism, the question of revolutionary strategy, several babies (that we hold dear) have been thrown out with the bath water, when we compare it with the former policy agenda.

In this policy agenda the Red-Green Alliance has chosen not to pin down a precise revolutionary strategy for the transition to socialism. Only a proposed amendment about the constitution called this into question.

To propose that a new socialist society must have a new constitution that safeguards “a democratic takeover of sectors and natural resources fundamental to our society” is important and an improvement on the original draft.

Does the lack of a strategy for the transition to socialism then reflect that the “Red-Green Alliance has moved to the right?” that we used to be a revolutionary socialist party and now have a broader anticapitalist party?

No it doesn't. Any sober evaluation must conclude that a clear perception of a mass movement and extra-parliamentary struggles, the need for workers councils and dual power in connection with a revolutionary break is not and probably never has been part of the Red-Green Alliance's collective mindset. The new programme is –

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despite a debate flawed by mistakes verging on nothing less than democratic disasters – far better rooted in the membership base.

After the annual national meeting we have a relatively clear, Marxist and anticapitalist programme, which we believe that the members and the leadership of the party will actually use and defend – in the party as well as publicly when it comes to training and debates. It means that the Red-Green Alliance has taken a step forward – towards something good that we did not have before.

In SAP we believe that we have some historically and theoretically well-founded ideas about revolutionary strategy that cannot be found in the new policy agenda of the Red-Green Alliance. It is now – even more – important that we take responsibility for a further development of those ideas. And we will obviously share them with other members of the Red-Green Alliance in our discussions about our continued common cause to change society. At some stage in time the Red-Green Alliance will have to develop its strategy regarding this – and hopefully that will happen before we stand unprepared in the situation...

SAP national executive committee, 23 May 2014