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European Constitution

Denmark: The Case for a Red 'No'

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During this round of EU-debate in Denmark, the left wing has had a clear and distinct presence - with a marked internationalist perspective.

With the setback for the traditional Danish "no"-movements in the 2004 EU-parliamentary elections serving as background, the past six months has been characterised by the appearance of a range of clearly left wing initiatives - notably related to the break-up of the "June Movement", the political struggle within the Socialist People's Party (SF) and finally the rise of the Red-Green Alliance and its wish to confront the equally self-confident Dansk Folkeparti on the far right.

The June Movement

After more than 12 years of existence, the traditional split between the June Movement ("pro-European, anti-European Union") and the Popular Movement ("Denmark out of the EU"), seems to have given way to new and more complex relations.

Whereas the Popular Movement has been a member of the left wing GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament for years, the June Movement - under the chairmanship of veteran MEP Jens Peter Bonde - gradually has been trying to position itself as a more centre-oriented political group, even allying itself with the far right United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).

[<http://internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L320xH211/den4enheds3b-9c96e.jpg>] Supporters of the Red-Green Alliance

In the end, this became intolerable for the left wing in the June Movement, counting among others the veteran members Drude Dahlerup and Niels I. Meyer. With the loss of two MEPS and more than half of their votes in the 2004 elections, the dynamic was set for split on the congress in April 2005.

In the weeks and months after the congress, former members of the June Movement formed two parallel organisations - the "think tank" Ny Agenda ("New Agenda") and a political association called Udfordring Europa (a name which is hard to translate into English, but basically referring to Europe as a "challenge", underlining the case for a positive and socialist answer to the European integration).

The two new groups has quickly attracted members and activists from other groups fighting against international neo-liberalism, such as Attac, the Red-Green Alliance and SF, and made their voices heard in the national debate.

The Socialist People's Party

On February 8th 2005, the Danish parliamentary elections resulted in yet another blow to the Socialist People's Party. With only 6% of the votes and 11 MPs, SF is now only half the size they were at their peak in the 1980'es. During the 1990'es - under the chairmanship of Holger K. Nielsen - the party has gradually (and not without heavy infighting) been transforming itself into a "pro-European" party, or more correctly as an EU-reformist party.

In January 2005, a vote among all party members resulted in a 63,8% victory for the Yes-side, confirming this tendency. On April 28th, however, a new vote among the party members resulted in 59% for Villy Søvndal (52) as new party chairman and successor to Holger K. Nielsen. The tricky thing is that Søvndal only recently converted to the Yes-side and is a respected and well-known left winger in the party.

Now Søvndal has to balance between the two wings - and at the same time he has to woo the youth wing of the party, which (after some flip-flops during the 1990'es) is now back on the No-side. The young SF'ers follow their own agenda, however, having allied themselves to SMOT (the official No-faction within SF, called "Socialists Against the Treaty"). Now both these groups are teaming up with the more radical members of the Red-Green Alliance and other activists in the new Udfordring Europa.

The Red-Greens vs. DF

For the Red-Green Alliance (RGA), the February elections meant two more MPs (up from four) and the best results ever with 3,4% of the vote. Since then, the party has gained more than 1.000 new members, an effective increase of more than 40% in only a few months.

Having rounded 3.600 members and booming with self-confidence, the RGA had ambitious plans for its intervention in the EU-debate. One year ago, the party ran an independent campaign for its eight socialist candidates, standing on the lists of either the June Movement or the Popular Movement.

[http://internationalviewpoint.org/local/cache-vignettes/L130xH185/alternativ_maj2005-e16eb.jpg]

This time the plan was to set its own agenda - arguing for a 'no from the left' with a marked internationalist perspective. In the end, the party had a series of effective interventions and happenings, with a clear focus on left wing solidarity with the French and Dutch 'no'-voters.

In part, the motivation for this increased focus on the 'no from the left' is the wish to confront the far right populist Dansk Folkeparti (DF). With SF having planted itself in the Yes-camp, there are only two political parties in the parliament with a No-agenda; namely the RGA to the left and the DF to the right.

With the DF posing as a socially oriented, but basically xenophobic and rightist party, the RGA has found it increasingly imperative to develop its own argumentation and to present a clearly socialist and anti-nationalistic alternative. In addition, there is a growing understanding that there is a need for more coordinated internationalist answers, debates and campaigns across the borders in order to make way for a radically different Europe, ie. more social and democratic.

LINKS:

[The Red-Green Alliance](#)

[SAP \(4th Internationalists\)](#)

[New Agenda \(think tank\)](#)

[Udfordring Europa](#)

[Socialists against the Treaty \(SMOT\)](#)

[Socialist People's Party - youth wing \(SFU\)](#)