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The far right, the left, and the trap of electoral politics

Bound to capitalism and electoralism, the statist left has nothing to offer during a period of crisis and restructuring – leaving the field to the fascists

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Over the past decade, we've witnessed the resurgence of a familiar historical pattern, with segments of the working class and poorer communities increasingly turning to far-right figures like Trump and Le Pen. Austria was among the most recent examples of far-right electoral successes, with the anti-immigration, pro-Russia Freedom Party (FPÖ) securing the winning position in the election of September 29, 2024, which had an impressive 80% voter turnout. This confirms a growing trend seen before in countries like Italy, Hungary, Poland, Brazil, and France. Several other countries followed suit, including Argentina, which elected the far-right libertarian Javier Milei as president in November 2024.

Mainstream left-wing circles often interpret this shift as a result of their own perceived "failures" to address working-

class concerns.¹ A common argument is that a ‘class reversal’ has occurred, with leftist parties being co-opted by educated neoliberal elites.² Others contend that the left has abandoned economic analysis in favour of identity politics.³

However, the root issue lies in the failures of the electoral democracy system itself. The feelings of betrayal and disillusionment stem from the statist left’s historical failure to challenge the spectacle of electoral politics, which serves to maintain the class system at all costs. Instead, leftist parties co-opted periods of insurrection and unrest, during the collapse of social democratic ideals in the economic crises at the dawn of the 21st century.⁴ By doing so, the left (focused today on the Green New Deal, identity, and human rights) has positioned itself as one of the two pillars of hegemonic politics, the other being the right (focused on climate change denial, nationalism, and religion).

The modern statist left faces a fundamental tragedy. Bound to electoralism, it becomes entangled in the web of neoliberal governance, offering neither real alternative solutions nor effectively challenging the capitalist system during a period of crisis and restructuring — a time that should be a prime opportunity to steer forward on a new path. Meanwhile, the elite stays in control by diverting workers from direct action and steering them toward far-right electoral options or orchestrated xenophobic riots.⁵ These distractions buy time for the ruling class to restructure production and political

¹ <https://jacobin.com/2024/08/uk-far-right-riots-immigration-deindustrialization>

² <https://jacobin.com/2018/08/left-political-party-economists-neoliberalism-keynesianism>

³ <https://www.newstatesman.com/the-weekend-interview/2023/08/freddie-deboer-interview-elite-identity-politics-destroying-left>

⁴ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/crimethinc-syriza-can-t-save-greece>

⁵ <https://freedomnews.org.uk/2024/09/03/neo-fascisms-false-mantle-of-insurrection/>

systems to adapt to the grim realities of climate collapse and ecocide.⁶

Ironically, it is the far-right, not the left that thrives on false promises. Far-right leaders cloak themselves in anti-establishment rhetoric, positioning themselves as champions of the “forgotten” working class. By exploiting myths such as the ‘Great Replacement’ and the degeneration of Western civilisation, they channel working-class anger into nationalism and xenophobia. Their agenda once again fractures the working class, dividing it along racial, ethnic, and national lines. Once in power, the far-right capitalises on the economic desperation that initially propelled their rise, imposing austerity and anti-worker policies that further deepen inequalities.⁷

In this way, they reinforce both material and ideological barriers that protect the privileged within the citadel from the excluded ‘others,’ spreading fear and hatred on both sides. The excluded are denied entry into the zones of prosperity inside Fortress Europe, while the state exerts control over the ‘prospering’ population showing zero tolerance for anyone who falls outside the boundaries of depressive capitalist realism.⁸

The solution does not lie in reforming left-wing electoral parties to bring them in line with the ongoing collapse of the capitalist system. It lies in building a movement that rejects the entire framework of electoral politics. The answer is in direct action, mutual aid, and community-based organising that rejects both the xenophobia of the far-right and the hollow promises of the left. Only with radical class consciousness and

⁶ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alfredo-m-bonanno-the-insurrectional-project#toc6>

⁷ <https://unicornriot.ninja/2024/chainsaw-democracy-argentina-in-crisis-faces-an-authoritarian-president/>

⁸ <https://voidnetwork.gr/2021/07/11/a-future-with-no-future-depression-the-left-and-the-politics-of-mental-health/>

anti-authoritarian organisation can the capitalist and state structures that continually betray us be dismantled.