

Evaluation of the federal elections 2025

Interview with Gabi Fechtner, top candidate and chairperson of the MLPD, and Stefan Engel, head of the theoretical organ of the MLPD (Excerpts from a video interview with Rote Fahne TV):

The rulers had hoped to push through their reactionary turn with these elections, but also to solve their own open crisis. Did they succeed?

Stefan Engel: I am quite skeptical about resolving the open political crisis. After all, these election results are very complicated. If Friedrich Merz sticks to his statement that he does not want to form a coalition with the AfD, he would have to join forces with the Social Democrats. However, both the CDU/CSU and the SPD have mobilized their mass base during the election campaign - with arguments that are very contradictory. The SPD once again raised the social demands that it puts forward in every election, while at the same time dismissing Merz as unsuitable to be chancellor. While Merz has above all declared his “economic competence”, he has of course also made very reactionary statements. And that doesn't add up. I am very curious to see how the coalition talks will proceed.

This election result has also been influenced by many factors that are not really common during an election campaign. Firstly, the open political crisis. The global economic and financial crisis has exacerbated further, as has the global environmental catastrophe, and various wars are still taking place and threatening world peace. At the same time, foreign powers have interfered in the election campaign in Germany - directly and indirectly. Most openly, the Trump government by calling to vote for the AfD.

This has never happened before! At the same time, the war in Ukraine is still raging. What will the Europeans do now? Do they capitulate to Russia or do they continue their military and political support for Ukraine - even without Trump? It all involves a lot of money. Fighting the war themselves now without the support of the USA will cost hundreds of billions alone! And their economic programs and everything they have planned are also very problematic.

It is therefore to be expected that the open political crisis, which was essentially also a crisis of confidence among the majority of the population, will continue and also affect the new government. It faces the dilemma of overcoming the crisis on the one hand and restoring confidence on the other. So far, they have only managed the crisis by shifting the entire burden onto the population. How do they intend to do this in the future? If they continue like this, they will continue to lose trust.

Whether there will now be a reactionary turnaround, as Merz has announced, is also still written in the stars. If the SPD wants to join in, it will lose the rest of its mass base. It couldn't mobilize its entire mass base anyway. Because people were very skeptical after what they had experienced over the past few years. But the CDU couldn't mobilize its entire mass base either. The Christian-social wing and the Christian-liberal wing were very skeptical. This also explains why it was unable to achieve its actual election target of 30 percent plus. It indicates that the new government is entering the race with a very large millstone around its neck.

Everyone is talking about the election results of the AfD ...

Gabi Fechtner: It's true that we still have a worldwide fascist threat. It has increased significantly over this entire period and has become acute in more and more countries. Of course, this has also had an impact on Germany. After all, a whole section of the monopolies, in the USA even the majority of the leading monopolies, have switched to these fascist methods of rule and, with the Trump administration, to a fascist form of rule. J.D. Vance has called on European governments to help the AfD gain majorities, and this has not failed to have an effect in Germany. After all, the ideas of those who rule are also the ruling opinion.

The AfD was able to gain even more ground. It is now the second strongest party. In terms of the overall result, it has even become the strongest party in all of eastern Germany except Berlin. For the first time, the AfD also received the highest number of votes in two West German cities, Gelsenkirchen and Kaiserslautern, two working-class towns. This should not be underestimated and shows that there is an urgent need to further strengthen the fight against modern fascism and the educational work "If you vote AfD, you vote fascism!".

At the same time, it has to be said that the AfD had already reached 23% in the polls. Their goal was even to get 25% and become the strongest force. It then fell behind again and got just over 20 percent. The anti-fascist mass movement certainly plays an important role here. At the beginning of this year, over two million people took to the streets. This also set the AfD back to some extent. It is also questionable whether the support from the US government has helped them. At the very least, it was unable to make any gains during this period. This has raised and strengthened the anti-fascist consciousness.

Let's take a look back. A few weeks ago, when the AfD and CDU voted in the Bundestag together with the FDP and BSW in favor of the "Immigration Limitation Act", it also partially triggered these mass protests. What impact did this parliamentary decision have on the election campaign?

Stefan Engel: It was Merz's tactic to show that he and his party will consistently fight against migration in the future by introducing this law. Because he did not reach an agreement with the so-called "traffic light" parties, the SPD and the Greens, he introduced the law anyway and accepted that it would be passed with the votes of the AfD. This, of course, broke down the so-called "firewall". In November, he had declared that the CDU would not hold any votes or implement any policies where it was forced to work together with the AfD. This manoeuvre failed, even though the BSW, the FDP and the AfD agreed, yet they couldn't even mobilize all of their own people. In other words, the vote went down the drain, but the effect on their entire election campaign and ultimately the election result was devastating. Firstly, the CDU/CSU, which was already estimated at 33% in opinion polls, ultimately ended up with 28.5%.

The BSW with Sahra Wagenknecht was punished as a whole because they took part in this vote alongside the AfD. Now it has not made it back in anymore - very narrowly with 4.9 percent. The FDP has also been kicked out of parliament. All those who took part in this vote were rigorously punished.

It is interesting that this anti-fascist mobilization then emerged. There were mainly young people, it is mainly a youth movement. These young people then voted for the Left Party, which was estimated at 3 percent in January and has now reached 8.5 percent. It has staged a real rally and siphoned off votes from both the SPD and the Greens. It must also be said, from the MLPD! Because also the Left Party has told young people that they are the force that will take a consistently anti-fascist stand in parliament in the future. It won almost 25 percent of young voters and has become the strongest party here. The Greens lost the most votes: minus 11 percentage points compared to the last elections.

We have already talked a lot about the problems of the other parties and their election results. But we are particularly interested in how the MLPD fared in the elections?

Stefan Engel: The MLPD has said from the outset that it does not simply want to make election promises, but also wants to get to the bottom of things, apply scientific socialism and well-founded social criticism. And we wanted to run an argumentative election campaign. But we also wanted to warn against the fascist threat and the imminent shift to the right. We did that wonderfully.

This is also reflected in the election results: We won around 40,000 voters. Although we only had half as many direct candidates as in the last election, we got almost as many first-time voters as in the last federal election. What is striking is that the split was very large, i.e. we received a lot of votes for the first vote, but the second vote went more to the Left Party. So I believe that the Left Party also has to thank us for its election result, because it drew on this anti-fascist struggle, which we were very strongly involved in. We can take pride in the fact that we did a great deal to mobilize people for this anti-fascist struggle and that it was conducted in a very argumentative manner.

I think it's also important to remember that the election result is of course only a relative reflection of the consciousness of the masses. We know that this petty-bourgeois parliamentary mode of thinking often leads voters to think: "Ah, 5 percent, they won't make it. Then I'd rather give my vote to a party that gets into parliament." That has the greatest effect.

But there is also a petty-bourgeois, anti-communist mode of thinking, and this is particularly effective with people who don't know us at all. The MLPD ran a very offensive election campaign. But how many people did we effectively reach with whom we could speak directly? That was perhaps one percent of the population. We're not in the big media, so it's completely normal that this modern petty-bourgeois anti-communist mode of thinking also has an effect - in certain skeptical reservations. And these two factors have led to the influence that the MLPD has gained in recent months not being expressed one-to-one in these elections. But we have certainly gained a lot of influence, a lot of support in solidarity with Palestine, in the anti-fascist struggle, in the workers' struggles in the automotive industry, in the environmental struggle and so on.

Are you satisfied with the election result?

Stefan Engel: I'm not satisfied at all. I would like to see our efforts rewarded a little more, but that's just the situation: we have to swim against the tide; we have to work under the adverse circumstances and conditions that bourgeois parliamentarianism has in store for us and we have to take advantage of this. And we have made these points. This also shows that we are on the rise. We are a force to be reckoned with in various respects. That satisfies me; I am also proud of our party. But I would only be really satisfied when the role of the MLPD is actually expressed as it really is.

Gabi, as party chairwoman, how do you assess the MLPD's election campaign?

Gabi Fechtner: You can't just judge our work by the election results, you also have to judge the election campaign we ran. After all, we are a revolutionary party. We chose the slogan "Make Socialism great again!" as our main slogan and thus also made it clear that we do not rely on the parliamentary course, but are a revolutionary party. At the same time, however, we fought for every vote. We made use of every democratic right and freedom that can be extended for a while in an election campaign like this. Under these very complicated conditions, the election campaign was also a hard-won success.

We evaluated various characteristics: firstly, it was very offensive; secondly, it was very argumentative; thirdly, it was also an all-round election campaign. In other election campaigns, we have sometimes said: we are concentrating on a book or on a specific issue. This time it was very all-round. Fourthly, it was also very perspective-oriented, especially with the focus on socialism, with background discussions by Stefan Engel, who shed light on the whole issue and made accurate predictions. Fifthly, this election campaign was very rich in culture. And sixthly, it was really supported by the whole party and brought about a great mobilization, in which many new people also participated with great unity. It was not easy to do so in such a situation, with such a headwind and such a manipulated public opinion. We've never had that in this form before. You can really only congratulate the MLPD on this. We focused a lot on small-scale work. It was very important for us to lead the struggle over the mode of thinking on a mass scale. To do this, we chose slogans that were suitable for really challenging the mode of thinking: "If you vote AfD, you vote fascism!" or "Make socialism great again!" It wasn't something that simply stood there in a bold way, but challenged people to engage with us.

In terms of form, we also focused very much on addressing masses of people. If you look at how the bourgeois parties sometimes stand there with four men around their little party stand and we instead organize mass discussions with street marches. However, we don't do the demonstrations in such a way that we just make announcements to people, but we also ring doorbells, go into people's houses and discuss things at the same time. Other activities include our house visits and, of course, information stands and rallies.

This quality that we have achieved must be given even greater quantity - so that we can really reach the masses. We also need to look more closely at how these tried and tested methods can be broadened, for example among other anti-fascist forces, and then achieve a greater impact.

One key factor was certainly that we linked the election campaign with the people's and workers' struggles. These took place in the middle of the election campaign. In December, there were major trade union strikes at VW and at Stahl, but Ver.di also had various rounds of collective bargaining during this period. Then we have had this anti-fascist movement since the beginning of the year. It was essential that we put our election campaign at the service of these anti-fascist movements, that we did not bypass them in our election campaign!

This has once again highlighted the campaigning ability, clout and social relevance that the MLPD has acquired. Perhaps it has to be said that the discrepancy between the relevance and influence we have exerted in various movements on the one hand and how this is then expressed in the election results on the other has become even greater.

For example, we were the first to bring the term "fascism" back into the discussion. In the beginning, the bourgeois parties and media only used the terms "right-wing populism" or "extremism". This has now really been taken up en masse in the anti-fascist movement. Or the ban on the AfD: we are still the only party calling for the AfD to be banned. That was also an issue on a massive scale. We did not join in suppressing the environmental issue, but we made the global environmental catastrophe an issue as, of course, the fight against it. We made the genocide in Gaza an issue - contrary to all the agitation to denounce it as "anti-Semitism". We have set a marker and earned respect and recognition. We also need to reach the masses even better and the election campaign has given us important ideas on how to work in the future. Because there are tough and complicated times ahead and much of the experience we have now gained will stand us in good stead. But we will also evaluate this well to see how we can further improve our work.

You've just mentioned how we'll be working in the future. What exactly do you have in mind?

Gabi Fechtner: In the last few weeks of the election campaign it has already become clear that there is an increased interest in membership of the MLPD and the REBELL youth organization. New people have joined everywhere, people who attended the rallies and supported the campaign. Organizing these people will certainly be a focus now. That we help them to get to know the MLPD, to find the way to do organized work - in the MLPD, in the youth organization REBELL, but also in the non-party self-organizations of the masses. The latter have great social significance in such a situation. Alliance work has become increasingly relevant. We cannot simply solve such existential crises of humanity as a party, but we must improve our alliance work. In this direction, it is now very important to work with the people we have gotten to know and to strengthen our solidarity with them. We certainly need to continue to work with them on clarity, because there is still a great deal of confusion in society. We also need to work on this in greater depth. It also involves recovering our strength and recharging our batteries for what lies ahead. We will also strengthen ourselves organizationally, increase the effectiveness of all our work, the anti-fascist alliance work, pursue a united front policy or also a kind of militant opposition to this reactionary turn of preparing for world war and so on.

Thank you very much for the interview!