

Walter Baier's notes on the 2024 European Elections outcome

SUMMER UNIVERSITY 2024 – PLENARY 1

1) The victory of the popular front.

A victory with great significance for Europe, a victory over the neo-fascist right, but a victory that was won under the hegemony of the left.

Just as in Spain, it shows that victory can be achieved if the fight for democracy, freedom and human rights is combined with the fight for social and ecological justice.

What does left hegemony mean?

The fundamental issue of social policy

2) But the battle has not yet been decided. Not in France and not in Europe.

New powerful parliamentary group: formation of the new right-wing group, which becomes the third strongest group from a standing start.

Total number of seats 175 = Conservatives.

On the other side of the political spectrum: Good examples.

There are some good examples: LFI, Italy, Left Alliance, PTB, Syriza, KPÖ.

The left was able to defend **its position in the EP**. It is still the smallest group, and the gains made by the right, but it's **respectable**.

3) But there are also defeats: Germany, Spain, Portugal

Score shows also the strategic weakness of the Left which is fragmentation at national level.

In Germany, France, Italy and Spain, left-wing parties presented itself split. In some cases, they presented themselves in competition.

Until now, we agreed to preserve unity at European level. Good political program. And with good reason, because we need unity.

The balance of power within the group has shifted.

The PCs are weaker, and the green/left parties from the North are stronger: and there is a temptation to oppose this current against each other.

This is a mistake. We need to unite and not to split our forces.

Duty of the EL to unite.

We need to listen carefully to what these comrades are telling us. To simplify, they say: The current **leadership structures and working arrangements no longer reflect the changed balance of power within The Left. And this is true. We have PCF but not LFI, we have Rifondazione Comunista but not Sinistra Italiana.**

This is a general problem: Are the structures and the work mode of the EL flexible enough to reflect these changes?

A **dialogue** on all issues relating to the composition of the governing bodies has started. **Perhaps an extraordinary congress in winter.** But structural debates must not obscure the view of the political essence of the problem. We are in a new era.

4) Addressing the political core: What policy is required for the for the people and the working classes not in the 21st century but in 2024?

There is a lot of Common Ground: Socio-ecological transformation, progressive industrial politics, feminism.

We took a step forward in the election campaign and in our election manifesto and in the Campaign.

Days after the elections, ETUC called on the progressive parties to put forward a project of hope to deliver quality jobs in every sector and every region: improved living and working conditions, investments for just transition and for our social and environmental objectives. We support these objectives.

But there is a context. **Wars are raging in Europe and in its immediate neighbourhoods.** These could **escalate** into an all-out war in Europe waged with nuclear weapons.

The fight for peace is one of the centre pieces of every progressive policy.

No apocalyptic scenarios. The hand can still be stopped. But millions of people are living in apocalyptic conditions. Think of this week's **devastating attack by the Russian air force on Kiev.** These attacks on densely populated areas are no less heinous than the terror of the Israeli armed forces against the Palestinians. **Think of the genocide which Israel commits in Gaza. We cannot be silent. Moral condemnation. As for the Ukraine.**

Russia has broken international law. I don't know anyone who would try to justify the Russian aggression. But after 500.000 – no decision on the battlefield. How do we get out of this. EU seems to believe in the continuous enhancement of weapons. To be clear: Inside the left it is not even a question of whether weapons should be supplied. Some of the left parties are in favour and some are opposed. There is a **fundamental question** behind this:

On 29th February the EP has adopted a resolution in which the EU reaffirms its support for consistently providing military aid to Ukraine for as long as necessary and in whatever form necessary for Ukraine to win. The EP believes that there should be no self-imposed restriction on military assistance to Ukraine.

This is what the EP resolution says. Let us put this beyond dispute, that Russia has broken international law.

Do we, the left, believe in military victories? Are they the only means of ending wars and resolving international conflicts, or do we believe in politics, negotiations and political solutions?

Who decides on whether millions of young men and women are sent to die on the battle fields? Who reaps the profits when the states arm themselves?

Who suffers in wars? Who pays for the armament programs? It is the working classes. It is the ruling classes, the arms industry, the financial investors and the politicians, who only know a battlefield from a thousand kilometers distance.

That's why: Don't prepare for wars: **END THE WARS.**

If you only read the liberal media, you are mistaken about the mood of the people. People know this.

31% of Germans: Supply the UA with weapons until the final victory, but 41% exert pressure to come to negotiations. A relative majority in France.

Peace is a winning strategy.

Ending the war in Ukraine, avoiding a major war in Europe and a new security order are the fundamental political issues.

Not only about the worst-case scenario of a nuclear show down in Europe. But the war atmosphere **affects our daily lives.**

Europe is the fastest warming continent; the 1.5° target has been exceeded for 12 months.

At the same time, we know the war in Ukraine causes emissions.

Armaments programs: NATO the world's largest CO-2 emitter.

There is no way to reach the climate goals under the condition of war and arms race.

Two weeks before the European election on the new **fiscal rules.** These fiscal rules are nonsense: seven countries now have deficit procedures.

However, we need - It is estimated at **€600 billion per year.**

At the same time, increase defence spending to **2 %.**

We must talk about this, and we must talk about this publicly.

NATO spent around 1.3 trillion US dollars in 2023 for armament.

More than three times as much as China and Russia combined.

The defence budget of the European NATO members amounts to 400 billion Euros which is **four times as much as Russia.**

As we said before:

You can only win against the radical right if you fight for social rights.

If we don't put an end to armaments, there will be no stopping them.

5) Most left-wing parties in Europe are against divisions.

The attempts to impose conditions for the preservation of the group failed in the EP.

Unified parliamentary group – M5S.

Today more than ever: unity. The unity of the people is the strength of the left. The task of the EL is to establish the unity of the left at European level.

A broad dialogue initiative. The slogan also works the other way round: the unity of the left is the strength of the people.