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Croatia

Elections see emergence of first left pole since country's independence from Yugoslavia

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On Sunday 5 July, Croatia held early parliamentary elections. Turnout was only 46 percent, reflecting low levels of engagement with official politics.

Despite this, the ruling conservative party won handsomely. That was unexpected. Polls had been tight in the run-up to the election.

Green-Left Coalition

But, with almost 97 percent of the vote counted, the ruling centre-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won 66 seats out of 151. This contrasts with the centre-left's 41.

Since the two sides had been neck-and-neck in the last elections, this represents an unexpected triumph for the centre-right. It gained seats, while the centre-left lost seats.

The centre-right's success can partly be explained by the fact that Croatia has so far weathered the coronavirus comparatively well - officially, just 3,151 cases and 113 deaths - which compares favourably with countries like the US and the UK.

The centre-left's lack of transformative vision must also be part of the equation. Its technocratic and social liberal offering hardly excites. The centre-right Bridge (Most) also lost seats, gaining only eight.

By contrast, Croatia saw the rise of a right and left wing in politics. The nationalist Homeland Movement came in third with 16 seats.

Led by hardliner folk singer Miroslav `koro, the movement is characterised by a right-wing agenda: unfriendliness towards Croatia's Serb minority; a revisionist approach to the Second World War-era, fascist Independent State of Croatia; and its vocal anti-abortion stance.

Worryingly, the Homeland Movement may prove to be a king-maker in the new parliament, as the HDZ does not have enough seats to rule by itself. Whether or not it manages to enter government, it will remain a worrying opposition force.

Thankfully, the election also saw the emergence of a left pole in politics in Croatia for the first time since the country's independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

The green-left coalition won seven seats, exceeding expectations. It performed spectacularly well in the city of Zagreb and very well in several other regions, including in the traditionally left-leaning Istria.

Emerging from various civic and left-leaning initiatives and movements, especially in the capital city, the coalition was able to point to both a record of activism in the past and a transformative, left wing vision for the future.

This will be a boost to movements which will challenge the dominance of the neo-liberal and nationalist right in Croatia.

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It will not be plain sailing, however. There were tensions within the coalition between its left-liberal and openly anti-capitalist components during the campaign, which represent a real contradiction going forward. It is unclear how cohesive the new coalition will prove to be.

Nevertheless, the election of an openly anti-capitalist MP, Katarina Peovi of the Workers' Front, offers the far left a bridgehead in Croatia and the region.

The group's ability to use this bridgehead to raise the sights of working-class militants, strengthen extra-parliamentary campaigns, and crystallise a revolutionary socialist component in the labour movement in the coming period will be critical.

Source: [LeftEast](#). Note from **LeftEast** editors: We post this article in cooperation with Counterfire.

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