

Erik Moberg ©:

The Misuse of the Extreme-Right Label

In the present political situation it has become quite common to characterize politicians and political parties which stand for strong anti-immigrant opinions as being “far-right” or “extreme-right”. This, I contend, is utterly misleading. It is a misuse of the extreme-right label.

If the concepts of “right” and “left” are to have any meanings at all they should stand for the endpoints of some one-dimensional scale, and a possible, and quite common, such scale indicates the involvement of the state in society at large. An extreme left position thus favors a very large public sector and a planned economy, whereas an extreme right opinion favors a pure so called night watchman state, that is extreme liberalism. And along such a scale there is hardly any place for racism or immigration hostility. But if the scale, for some reason and anyway, should be used for such opinions the left end, rather than the right one, is the most appropriate.

Anyway, the characterization of anti-immigrant opinions as being to the right is quite common. Here in Sweden the party *Sweden Democrats* is for instance often characterized as extreme right or even as right-wing populist. And it is interesting to note that even utterly respectable and serious mass-media such as *The Economist* have fallen into this trap. A good example is the magazine’s leader and news article about the French *National Front* (*Front National, FN*) in the issue of March 14th, 2015.

That the *National Front*, with its leader *Marine Le Pen*, is anti-immigrant is obvious, that is not the problem, and it is also properly characterized as such by *The Economist*, or even as “fiercely anti-immigrant”. But then the magazine continues:

“The party’s wrong-headed economic policies still smack of its far-right origins. It is not just anti-immigrant but anti-globalisation. It opposes free trade and free markets, displaying a strong protectionist streak. Ms Le Pen rails against France’s membership of the euro and is hostile to the free movement of goods, services, capital and labour that lie at the heart of the European single market. She is anti-American and an admirer of Russia’s president Vladimir Putin, backing his annexation of Crimea and his actions in Ukraine. It is no coincidence that the FN has taken a big loan from a Kremlin-linked bank.”

All of this, that is FN’s opposition to free trade and markets, its favoring of protectionism, its anti-Americanism and its admiration of *Vladimir Putin* obviously testify to leftist positions rather than rightist ones. And the same holds true for FN’s proposals for higher wages and pensions, and of lower retirement age as reported in the

magazine's news article. In that article it is furthermore reported that "Ms Le Pen has increasingly drawn voters from the left, especially in formerly Communist-held towns in the industrial north. ... At last year's European election, hers was the most popular party among working-class voters." Thus, and again, clear indications of leftism rather than the opposite.

And, leaving *The Economist*, it is also interesting to note that some of the political parties nowadays characterized as extreme-right have some background or origins related to Nazism. That holds, for instance, for the *Sweden Democrats*. And that leads to the question about the characterization of the German Nazi Party itself. As extreme-right? No, certainly not! The German state's infiltration in main industries and its 1936 four year plan with the motto "guns rather than butter" make that impossible. It certainly was, as its official name, *The National Socialist German Workers' Party*, makes clear, a socialist party. And not only that; it was far-left; it was extreme in that sense.