Med historien som motståndare
SKP/VPK/V och det kommunistiska arvet
1956-2006

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Akademisk avhandling

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Abstract

This dissertation concerns Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti (SKP) [the Swedish Communist Party] – in 1967 renamed Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna (VPK) [the Left Party – the Communists] and in 1990 renamed Vänsterpartiet (V) [the Left Party] – and the Party’s process of coming to terms with history and its communist legacy. The aim of the study is to describe and analyse the SKP/VPK/V’s process of coming to terms with history for the period 1956-2006, and to set out and problematise the driving forces and constraining mechanisms of this process. The theoretical framework of the study consists of Gunnar Sjöblom’s theory about party strategies of political parties in multi-party systems and Michael Freeden’s conceptual approach to ideology analysis.

During the period of study the SKP/VPK/V has, like no other political party in Sweden, been ascribed historical guilt regarding its own party history but also regarding the effects of world communism. The Party has thus found itself in a situation where it has had history as an adversary. The process of coming to terms with history has mainly revolved around three issues: independence (1956-1977), international ties (1977-1989) and a broadening beyond the communist tradition (1986-2006). The internal debate within the Party has linked these issues to calls for change aimed at ridding the party of what is considered undesirable elements of the Communist legacy. By analysing the arguments pursued in favour of these calls, it is possible to pick out a number of the driving forces behind the Party’s process of coming to terms with history, namely an ambition to obtain vote maximisation, programme realisation and maximisation of parliamentary influence. The urge to distance the Party from certain aspects of its communist past has thus been related to fundamental goals that political parties in multi-party systems seek to obtain.

The results of the dissertation show that it is possible to pick out five main constraining mechanisms in the Party’s process of coming to terms with history. 1) The safeguarding of Party cohesion. 2) The safeguarding of the distinctive character of the Party. 3) The need to resist external pressure. 4) The desire to avoid unfair apportioning of blame. 5) The safeguarding of the right to define the substance of one’s own ideology. The existence of these constraining mechanisms help to explain why the process of coming to terms with history lingered on for several decades, and also why it seems to have been a process of such complexity for the Swedish Communist and Post-Communist Party.

Keywords

Communism, coming to terms with history, Vänsterpartiet, Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti, politics of regret, Swedish Communist Party, Left Party, West European Communist Parties, Post-Communism, Anti-Communism.