

Netherlands parties strike agreement on most right-wing government since 1945

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Six months after the Dutch general election, three far-right parties—Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV), Pieter Omtzigt’s New Social Contract (NSC) and Caroline van der Plas’ Peasant Citizens’ Movement (BBB)—together with the Liberals (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD) of incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte, have agreed on a new coalition government. It will be the most right-wing Dutch government since the Second World War.

Wilders and the leaders of the three other parties will not be part of the government themselves. The decision on the head of government and the distribution of ministerial posts is to be finally made by mid-June. However, even if he does not personally take on a ministerial post, Wilders will be the strongman behind the new government. With 37 out of a total of 88 MPs, his PVV is the strongest force in the government alliance, and Wilders, the only formal member of the PVV, can freely determine its policies and personnel.

Wilders is one of the best-known and vilest far-right figures in Europe. He is notorious for his Islamophobia and maintains close links to neo-fascist circles at home and abroad. Back in 2015, he took part in a demonstration in Dresden, East Germany, called by the xenophobic Pegida movement. Four weeks ago, he took part in a conference in Budapest together with 3,000 far-right figures from all over the world.

The 26-page coalition agreement named “Hope, Courage, Pride” is a declaration of war on the working class and all forms of social and left-wing opposition. The agreement has two central goals—the introduction of the “toughest asylum law ever” and the establishment of a police state. The document clearly bears Wilders’ signature.

In foreign and security policy, on the other hand, the Dutch bourgeoisie has demanded guarantees that the new government will not deviate from the current NATO and EU course. The coalition paper is fully committed to supporting the European Union and Ukraine in the war against Russia. Wilders had previously questioned both commitments. With regard to Gaza, however, the Islamophobic Wilders has always been one of the most vehement supporters of the Israeli genocide.

An unmistakable message

The message sent out by the government programme is unmistakable. In the face of growing social tensions and fierce protests against the genocide of the Palestinians, the ruling class is bringing the far right into government to intimidate and suppress all

opposition.

Having already brutally cracked down on anti-genocide protests in recent weeks, the Dutch bourgeoisie considers Wilders, who has called the opponents of war and genocide antisemitic scum, is ideally suited to suppress protests with a heavy hand.

The tightening up of the country’s asylum law serves the same purpose. Asylum seekers and migrants are being made scapegoats for the social crisis and deprived of their rights. This is how the dismantling of all democratic and social rights of the working class is being prepared.

The coalition paper promises to introduce “the strictest admission regime for asylum and the most comprehensive package for control over migration ever.” It blames refugees and immigrants for all social problems. The Netherlands is “one of the most densely populated countries in Europe,” in which the significant increase in migration “has had a major impact on housing, health, education, finances and social cohesion in our country,” the document states.

It then proposes measures to drastically reduce all forms of migration. Admission procedures are to be tightened, border controls intensified and existing EU rules disregarded in order to make the Netherlands “less attractive for asylum seekers.” Automatic family reunification is to be stopped indefinitely and reunification is to be significantly restricted. Asylum procedures are to be streamlined, indefinite asylum permits abolished, access to legal assistance restricted and procedures shortened. “Deportations” of migrants are to be stepped up and those who do not cooperate severely punished. The admission of labour migrants and students from non-EU countries is to be significantly restricted. The agreement goes on like this for pages.

While some members of the new governing coalition tried to exploit dissatisfaction with the acute housing crisis, low pensions, inadequate healthcare and chronically underfunded public education during the election campaign, hardly any of these issues feature in the coalition programme. And when they do crop up, e.g., in the case of a promised reduction in health insurance contributions and day care centre fees—they remain empty promises for which there is no funding.

Significantly, the official minimum wage is to remain unchanged despite inflation and the rising cost of living. The duration of unemployment benefits is to be reduced from 24 to 18 months.

The second dominant theme of the coalition agreement is the militarisation of society and the arming of the state security apparatus. Of the 10 chapters in total, one is titled “Good governance and the strong rule of law,” and another “National security.” They envisage a massive increase in the police force and far-reaching resources and powers to establish a police state.

“Our democratic constitutional state is threatened by Islamic terrorism and directly undermined by organised crime,” a section reads. “Our security is under pressure from social polarisation and discontent. Security and a resilient society are top priorities. This requires tough action against anyone who threatens freedom and security. For an effective security policy, prevention and repression are two sides of the same coin.”

This is followed by a long list of repressive measures and new powers for the security services, giving them free rein for repression and provocations. These measures include “tougher detention based on the Italian model,” “expanding working under a pseudonym for the police, public prosecutors and investigating judges,” along with “increasing visible presence and more police stations in neighborhoods, communities, and regions.”

The powers of the police and intelligence services to spy on digital communications are to be significantly expanded. The criminal offence of membership in a terrorist organisation is to be extended and penalties increased. In anticipation of a broader radicalisation of young people, the document states that “juvenile justice for 14- to 16-year-olds will be tightened, including increasing maximum sentences.”

In view of increasing social discontent and the recent student protests, the coalition is planning a massive restriction on the right to demonstrate. A sharper distinction is to be made “between (peaceful) demonstrations and disruptive actions.” It goes on to say: “Disturbances of the peace, threats against others and public violence will not be tolerated. The public prosecutor’s office, local authorities and the national police are called upon to intervene decisively when demonstrators overstep the boundaries of the law.”

The European “firewall” against the right disappears

The entry of Wilders’ PVV into the Dutch government exposes all the talk of a European “firewall” or “cordon sanitaire” against the far right for what it really is: a fraud, an attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the population and sabotage any serious fight against fascism. Such a firewall never actually existed and is now being officially removed.

The decision to bring the PVV into the government was taken at the highest political level. Without Mark Rutte’s approval, the coalition agreement would not have been possible.

Rutte is not only well connected in the Netherlands, which he has governed for 14 years, but also in the European Union and NATO. He is one of the leading figures in the European Council, the body of EU heads of state and government, and is considered the most likely candidate to succeed Jens Stoltenberg as NATO Secretary General. His party, the VVD, is a member of the liberal Renew Europe group, which also includes French President Emmanuel Macron’s Renaissance and German Finance Minister Christian Lindner’s Free Democratic Party, FDP.

The alliance between Rutte and Wilders confirms the warning made by the WSWs for a long time: the far right is being deliberately developed by the ruling class to intimidate and suppress the class struggle and all resistance to its war policy. The far right is not a foreign body in an otherwise healthy organism, but rather an expression and product of the shift to the right of the entire ruling

class.

This development is well advanced throughout Europe. The EU is preparing to give the far right an important political role after the European elections in June. At the end of April, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen already expressed her willingness to be elected for a second term with the votes of the far right. The leader of the conservative EPP group in the European Parliament, Manfred Weber, has long endeavoured to work more closely with the extreme right.

In Germany, too, ruling circles are preparing to include the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the PVV’s sister party, in state governments after elections in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg scheduled for September. A commentary in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* leaves no doubt about this. The newspaper describes the integration of Wilders and his PVV into the government as the “only logical conclusion from the election results of recent years” and states: “Firewalls did not help, on the contrary.”

The FAZ tries to reassure its readers with the assurance “that participation in power has a civilising effect,” but the opposite is the case. On Sunday, the Spanish Vox party, which stands in the tradition of the fascist dictator Franco, gathered 10,000 supporters in a bullring in Madrid. Marine Le Pen (France), Giorgia Meloni (Italy), Viktor Orbán (Hungary), Mateusz Morawiecki (Poland) and other representatives of ultra-right parties in Europe addressed the gathering directly or via video.

The star guest was Argentinian President Javier Milei, who sparked a storm of enthusiasm with a fascist tirade. “Socialism is the cancer of humanity,” he said. “Socialism is the enemy. Let’s not let the dark, black, satanic, disgusting, atrocious, carcinogenic side—which is socialism—defeat us.”

The main responsibility for the rise of the right lies with the nominally left-wing parties. The Social Democrats, the Greens and also the trade unions support the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, seal Europe off from refugees and organise the dismantling of jobs, social benefits and wages. Their policies are not fundamentally different from those of the far right. This also applies to the Left Party in Germany and other pseudo-left organisations. They enable the far right to channel some of the frustration with official politics into support for their utterly reactionary policies.

The fight against the far right requires a clear political perspective. It can only be successful if it is directed against all parties that defend the capitalist order. The strikes against wage and social cuts and the protests against Israel’s genocide must be united into a powerful movement against capitalism in the struggle for a socialist society. This will sweep the ground from beneath the fascists. This is the perspective of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei in the European elections.



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