

Former Labourite intelligence chief Schoof heads far-right Dutch government

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On July 2, 2024 after far-right politician Geert Wilders' win in last November's elections, former Dutch intelligence and security service (AIVD) boss Dick Schoof was named prime minister. His nomination epitomizes the deep connections between neo-fascism, police-state rule and imperialist war with Russia that are at the heart of Dutch and European imperialist politics.

The unelected Schoof was not a candidate in the November election and has not participated in any parliamentary sessions, but will now succeed the 14-year prime ministership of Mark Rutte. Rutte himself has been appointed the next NATO secretary general and awarded the knighthood by the Dutch king. Schoof, for his part, has a notorious political record spanning decades of attacks on democratic rights and advocacy of aggressive foreign policies, especially war with Russia. This made him the "man of the hour" for the Dutch ruling class.

Schoof is a longstanding member of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), but he heads a coalition of far-right populist parties together with Rutte's liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). His three far-right government coalition partners are Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV), Pieter Omtzigt's New Social Contract (NSC), and Caroline van der Plas' Peasant Citizens' Movement (BBB).

Geert Wilders' PVV, which joined the ultra right-wing "Patriots for Europe" alliance amid far-right gains in last month's European elections, is the largest party in the governing coalition, holding 37 of a total of 88 seats. As a result, his fascistic PVV party dominates the new government. It outlined a draconian police-state agenda in its 26-page coalition agreement titled, "Hope, Courage, Pride."

While Wilders himself does not hold a ministerial

position in Schoof's government, the new cabinet and its decisions, be they on foreign or domestic policy, unmistakably bear his fingerprints. His PVV party holds crucial positions within Schoof's government, including asylum and migration, economy, infrastructure and transport, foreign trade, and health care.

Rutte's VVD secured the finance ministry, the second-most influential position in the Schoof government, alongside the ministries of defence, ecology and justice. The newly-established NSC presides over both home and foreign affairs, as well as the ministry of education, science and culture as well as social affairs. The BBB is responsible for housing and agriculture in a 29-minister cabinet made up of former diplomats, military officers, judges, and corporate and media executives.

The PVV minister for asylum and migration, Marjolein Faber, is a notorious racist and right-wing provocateur infamous for her use of Nazi phraseology.

On July 4, at the first parliamentary debate with the new government, Frans Timmermans, who leads the opposition coalition between the Green Left and the Labour Party (GroenLinks-PvdA), whitewashed its decade-long record that paved the way for the rise of the far-right. Downplaying the dangers posed by the Schoof government, he said: "This is a circus, not a serious cabinet."

In reality, an examination of the coalition agreement reveals that the policies this government seeks to implement both at home and abroad reveals that it is far from being just a "circus." Its brutal crackdown on anti-genocide protests in Dutch cities is a foretaste of its far-reaching implications for the working class.

The Dutch bourgeoisie's momentous decision to install a government including Wilders' far-right PVV

is rooted in global processes. In all the NATO countries, the ruling elites seek to build police-state regimes because they are setting out to wage imperialist war abroad and class war on workers at home. The rise of Wilders, like that of Trump in the United States or Le Pen in France, is bound up with deep popular anger and disillusionment with the ruling establishment, bound up with decades of betrayals of working class interests by parties like the Dutch PvdA.

The Dutch Labourite Schoof is coming to power as prime minister at the same time as, across the English Channel, Sir Keir Starmer is taking office at the head of a UK Labour government. The fact that Schoof is taking office at the head of a far-right government is a warning on the reckless and deeply reactionary policies all the NATO governments will pursue.

Even before the first cabinet meeting, the Dutch ministry of defence told the parliament it had obtained all necessary permits to export 24 F-16 fighter jets and 7 F-16 aircraft engines to Ukraine. Since the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine began, the Netherlands has played a pivotal role in persuading other imperialist powers to provide Ukraine with F-16s that can strike deep inside Russia. The Dutch government previously supplied F-16s to a training facility in Romania, where Ukrainian pilots and ground staff were trained.

The global war plans of Dutch imperialism and its NATO allies are inseparably linked to the rise of the far right. It is accompanied by a twin policy of austerity to finance the rise in military spending and the witch-hunting of refugees and immigrants as scapegoats for the resulting social misery.

While €4.4 billion euros (US\$ 4.7 billion) have been already allocated by the Dutch treasury to arm the Ukrainian military, the Dutch ruling class is now calling to prepare for war and mass death. As Geoffrey van Leeuwen (VVD), a former national security adviser to Mark Rutte, bluntly declared earlier in April that the Dutch population should “get used to ... civilian casualties and body bags.”

At the same time, funding for public services including health care, education, and housing is consistently slashed, while workers face rising food and utility prices.

The new right-wing coalition is determined to implement the most draconian asylum and migration policies in Dutch history. At a press conference to

explain their coalition agreement, Wilders predicted more police-state measures against asylum seekers and migrants, including implementing the “strictest asylum policy ever” and abolishing the distribution law. Additionally, the new government will implement border controls as a top priority, Wilders emphasised. The PVV, VVD, NSC, and BBB parties also plan to significantly restrict family reunification for refugees.

The appointment of Schoof and his right-wing government have deepened the gulf between the ruling elite and the population, but also set them on a collision course with an increasingly militant Dutch working class.

While the bourgeoisie and the political establishment more and more embrace fascistic forms of rule, the Dutch working class has undertaken growing struggles for improved wages, working conditions, and housing with students. The Netherlands have seen mass protests against the genocide in Gaza, isolated by the corrupt Dutch trade union bureaucracy, that defied brutal repression by police and right-wing denunciations in official media.

Amid the explosive class battles that will emerge, the way forward is building an international socialist movement in the working class against war, genocide and fascism and their source, the capitalist system.



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