

Far-right parties forge alliance for the European elections

Christoph Dreier
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On Wednesday, the leader of France's *Front National* (FN), Marine Le Pen, and the head of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), Geert Wilders, held a press conference in the Dutch parliament. The two far-right politicians announced that their parties will participate jointly in the European elections in May 2014 as the Alliance for Freedom. Other right-wing parties have signalled their support.

Le Pen and Wilders will place their opposition to the European Union (EU) at the centre of the campaign. "It is a historic day, because freedom begins today," Wilders said at the press conference. "Liberation from Europe's elites. Liberation from the monster from Brussels. We want to bring back sovereignty from Brussels and return it to the nation states."

Le Pen said the EU meant we had ended up in a sort of "slavery." Countries should again be able to decide on their own currency, their own laws, their own borders. She called for France to withdraw from the EU, or for a referendum that will decide the issue. The EU will collapse, and France must be prepared, according to Le Pen. The PVV will examine what an EU collapse would cost the Netherlands.

The Alliance of Freedom is to expand, with other members joining. Late last week, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) held a private meeting with the FN, the Belgian Vlaams Belang, the Italian Lega Nord, the Sweden Democrats and the Slovak National Party (SNS).

According to FPÖ chair Heinz-Christian Strache, the meeting witnessed an "intensive exchange of ideas on common goals and policies for cooperation at the European level." The central points of a common programme were the fight against immigration, the threat of "Islamization", and the "faulty design of the euro". The representatives of the six parties agreed that

the euro should be replaced by national currencies in the long-term.

The new alliance will seek faction status in the European Parliament, which would require 25 MEPs from at least seven countries.

The right-wing Alternative for Germany declined an invitation. "Both parties do not come in question for us, now or in the future," party leader Bernd Lucke told the broadcaster *n-tv*. "We will have nothing to do with the extreme right."

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) also distanced itself from the Alliance. Collaboration with the overtly fascist British National Party (BNP) and the Hungarian Jobbik, however, was rejected by the Alliance for Freedom. Differences also exist between the potential members of the Alliance. While the FN has clearly anti-Semitic roots, Wilders' PVV has so far taken a strong pro-Israel stance. Earlier combinations of right-wing parties in the European Parliament, such as the Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty faction founded in 2007, quickly disintegrated as a result of national tensions.

Now the extreme right senses a change in their fortune. Five years of intense social attacks in almost every European country have discredited the EU and its institutions among broad layers of the population. The far right want to exploit this massive opposition to impose their own reactionary agenda.

For several years, the individual far-right parties have sought to combine their reactionary positions with social demagoguery. Wilders has pushed his extreme neo-liberal economic policy demands into the background and now is aiming his fire primarily against the EU. He had dubbed the 2012 Dutch elections a "referendum on Europe, the euro, the ESM bailout fund and the dictates of Brussels and its bureaucrats."

The FN is increasingly criticizing the austerity

measures of the French government, calling for the nationalization of flagging enterprises and speaking about higher social benefits for French-born workers.

The far right's opposition to the EU has nothing in common with the interests of workers. The Alliance for Freedom articulates the interests of a section of the bourgeoisie and well-off upper-middle class who, in the face of growing national conflicts, are looking for a return of the national currency and national economic policy. This is aimed directly against the workers.

Economic protectionism and a return to national currencies, as demanded by the Alliance, would have just as catastrophic consequences for workers as the EU's austerity measures and the euro.

With the FPÖ, the Lega Nord, the SNS and PVV, a majority of the seven potential Alliance members have already participated in national governments. All these coalitions distinguished themselves by vicious attacks on workers' social rights. From October 2010 to 2012, the PVV supported the Dutch government, which implemented brutal laws against migrants and increased state powers against the protests of workers.

Other right-wing parties that have not been involved in national governments are being courted in ruling circles. For example, for quite some time, France's conservative UMP has been wooing the FN and is discussing possible cooperation.

In Greece, the openly fascist Golden Dawn has been systematically built up by the state to terrorize workers and suppress their resistance.

Despite this clear record, the far-right parties use their anti-EU stance and social demagoguery to win votes from desperate elements of the petty-bourgeoisie and confused workers. According to current opinion polls, the PVV, with 21 percent of the vote in the Netherlands, and the FN in France, with 24 percent would emerge as the largest parties in their respective countries in the European elections.

The ultra right can pose as opponents of the EU's social attacks and increase their influence because all the establishment parties and organizations defend the EU and its institutions. Across Europe, the social democratic parties are at the forefront of imposing social cuts, and the unions help impose mass sackings and wage cuts in the factories.

Ostensibly left-wing organizations such as the Left Party in Germany and the Coalition of the Radical Left

(SYRIZA) in Greece defend the EU and make every effort to tie workers to the old bureaucratic apparatus and prevent any independent movement of the working class. This prepares the ground for the far right.

The more social contradictions intensify, the further to right the pseudo-lefts move, clinging to the state. They react to the growing opposition of the working class to the EU by defending the EU's reactionary institutions.

The European Left grouping has recently called for the direct election of the EU Commission president by the population, attempting to lend this completely undemocratic institution a democratic veneer. The Commission is primarily responsible for the social attacks of the EU. SYRIZA leader Alexis Tsipras is being talked about as a candidate for the office of EU Commission president.

The chair of the German Left Party, Katja Kipping, has lined up behind the EU and claims it can be transformed into an instrument to improve workers' social conditions by agreeing to the European social pact.

Under these conditions, the right can grow and appeal to popular hostility towards the EU. A struggle against the far-right threat is therefore inseparable from a struggle against the pseudo-left tendencies and for the independent mobilization of the working class. It must be directed against the EU, the banks and corporations, and fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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