

Social Democrats return to government in Denmark with xenophobic programme

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Social Democratic leader Mette Frederiksen is expected to head the next Danish government and replace Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen from the conservative-liberal Venstre party.

The Social Democrats won only one seat more in Wednesday's parliamentary elections compared to 2015 and even lost votes, winning 25.9 percent of ballots cast. However, the collapse of the far-right Danish People's Party, as well as significant gains by the Social Liberals and the pro-Greens Socialist People's Party give the so-called "red bloc" a majority of 91 in the 179-seat parliament. At 84.5 percent, turnout was slightly lower than four years ago.

The big loser in the election was the Danish People's Party, which had supplied the Rasmussen government with its majority. The extreme right-wing party dropped from just under 21 to 8.7 percent and only has 16 instead of 37 deputies in the new parliament. However, the Social Democrats have completely adopted the xenophobic programme of the right-wing extremists and want to continue it in government.

In addition to three more radical right-wing parties, which together won 5 percent of the vote and one of which, the New Right, now has four deputies, Venstre has also benefited from the collapse of the People's Party. It gained 3.9 percent and now has 43 instead of 34 deputies.

In the election four years ago, the parties of Rasmussen's "blue block" had won 90 seats, the "red block" parties 89 seats, with the extreme right-wing People's Party joining the government. In November 2016, it withdrew but continued to support the Rasmussen government.

Rasmussen mercilessly intensified the devastation of the welfare state initiated by the previous Social Democratic government, for which Denmark and the

other Scandinavian countries have long been known. Spending on pensioners was cut, one in five schools and one in four hospitals were closed. However, the world's highest taxes on working-class families, who had funded the welfare state, were not lowered.

According to Christian Hallum of Oxfam Denmark, basing himself on figures from the Danish statistics office, inequality in Denmark has risen by 20 percent over the past year. That is more than in most other countries. Six out of seven "reforms" in the past year have increased the income inequality of Danish citizens, Hallum told the newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad*. The number of children now being raised in poverty has increased by 25 percent as a result.

Immigrants are being made the scapegoats for these anti-social policies. The Minister for Foreigners and Integration, Inger Støjberg (Venstre), imposed one law after another making life increasingly miserable for foreigners and immigrants.

For example, refugees arriving at the border have their jewelry and other valuables taken away; a ban on the burqa has been issued. Children who live in districts officially classified as "ghettos" face being taught compulsory courses in "Danish values."

Two years ago, Støjberg celebrated the fiftieth measure tightening up immigration law with a cake bearing 50 candles. A ticker on her ministry's web site shows the number of new restrictions; there are now 114, with the result that hardly any asylum seekers come to Denmark.

The Social Democratic Party under Frederiksen voted in parliament for all 114 of these measures. Even when the government planned to house "criminal asylum seekers" on an uninhabited island late last year, the Social Democrats remained silent.

The refugees are to be deported to the island of

Lindholm, which was previously the location of a university laboratory where researchers investigated animal diseases. For this reason, the only ferry to the island bears the name “Virus.” Now, the university must decontaminate the island, because refugees are to be accommodated there from 2021. “You are not wanted in Denmark,” Minister Støjberg wrote on Facebook, “And you will feel that.”

The Social Democrats abstained on the vote on the plan in parliament. Already in 2000, the then Social Democratic Interior Minister Karen Jespersen had planned to intern asylum seekers who had committed a crime on a remote island.

Under the Social Democratic Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, from 2011, Frederiksen was labour and later justice minister. After defeat in the 2015 general election, she took over the party leadership from Thorning-Schmidt and copied the racist policies of the People’s Party.

“Nobody is a bad person just because he is worried about immigration,” Frederiksen said. Like the far-right, she too blames refugees, and not the decisions of big business and politicians, for the dismantling of the welfare state. “Our welfare model is under pressure,” she wrote in a programmatic statement, “as is our high level of equality and our way of life.” She told her biographer that it was “increasingly clear that the price of unregulated globalization, mass immigration and the free movement of labour is being paid for by the lower classes.”

The Danish Social Democrats want to limit immigration from non-Western states and set up reception centres for asylum seekers outside Denmark.

In the election campaign, Frederiksen had already announced that in the event of an electoral victory, her government would continue to work with the People’s Party on immigration issues. She is seeking to form a social democratic minority government that secures parliamentary majorities on a case-by-case basis. This is not uncommon in Denmark, but still requires firm agreement with other parties.

Frederiksen touts her right-wing extremist path as a model for the whole of Europe and has called on European Social Democrats to do the same.

The rightward shift of Danish Social Democrats once again underscores the fact that there is no limit below which it would not go. The party stands for massive

social cuts, militarism, police state and openly racist politics. They are seeking to make the right-wing superfluous by taking their place.



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