

Neo-fascist Wilders wins Dutch general elections

Parwini Zora, Daniel Woreck

25 November 2023

The November 22 Dutch general elections have yielded to Geert Wilders' fascist Party for Freedom (PVV) an unprecedented electoral gain at the polls. The PVV doubled its parliamentary seats in the Dutch Tweede Kamer from 17 in 2021 to 37 of the 150 seats, with 25 percent of the votes cast. This must be taken as a serious political warning to the Dutch and the international working class.

The election was a debacle for the right-wing parties in the caretaker coalition government of Prime Minister Mark Rutte, which all suffered humiliating losses. Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), led by Dilan Yesilgöz, collapsed from 34 to 24 seats. Similarly, the Social-Liberal Democrats (D66) fell from 24 to 9, the Christian-Democratic Appeal (CDA) from 15 to 5, and the Christian Union (CU) from 5 to 3.

The discredited Greens and the Labour Party (GL, PvdA) tried to position themselves as the lesser evil than the right-wing parties, issuing a joint manifesto and electoral slate led by former European Commissioner Frans Timmermans. However, this was insufficient to profit significantly from the collapse of Rutte's allies. Tactical voting saw their totals rise from 17 to 25 seats, far behind Wilders' PVV.

The newly-formed National Social Contract (NSC) party, led by former CDA parliamentarian Pieter Omtzigt, won 20 seats based on its empty calls for "good governance."

After the elections, Wilders spoke at a café in the North Sea town of Scheveningen, saying: "The Dutchman will be back in first place. The Netherlands has hope ... the people of the Netherlands will get their country back, and the tsunami of refugees and immigrants will be limited."

Wilders addressed local media on Thursday and declared his ambitions to be prime minister, saying he was "in favour of a referendum on whether the Netherlands should leave the EU." He added, "the first thing is a significant restriction on asylum and immigration. We don't do that for ourselves, we do that for all Dutch people who voted for us."

Far-right outfits across the globe congratulated Wilders, including Hungary's Viktor Orbán, who said, "The winds of change are here!" and far-right Flemish politician Tom van

Grieken, who declared, "Parties like ours are on their way in the whole of Europe."

The *Guardian* called the Dutch election results "chilling," *Politico* called it "the EU's worst nightmare," while the *New York Times* warned it could "send shockwaves throughout Europe." Similarly, in the Netherlands, *De Telegraaf* declared that "the Netherlands turn right" and spoke of "a shockwave to the other parties." *De Volkskrant* called it a "startling comeback of the PVV that creates major dilemmas," with other media outlets following suit.

While the international press painted Wilders' victory as a "shock" outcome, it was in reality the product of the policies of the entire Dutch and European ruling class.

Wilders' win comes just two months after the arrival in power of Slovakia's Robert Fico, who also pledged to cut immigration, and of far-right Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni. During his campaign, Wilders pledged to close the borders to all immigration, calling for a "Nexit," the Dutch version of Brexit, and to "de-Islamize" the Netherlands. He called for a stop to providing arms to Ukraine and a staunch pro-Israel stance amid the unfolding war in Gaza.

The Dutch ruling elite and the major parties and media overwhelmingly ran the election campaign based on foul, anti-immigrant propaganda. The result was a poisonous election climate of distortions and confusion. According to certain estimates, as many as 60 percent of the voters were unsure whom to vote for, given that no candidate clearly articulated the real political questions of social austerity, war, and genocide in Gaza facing workers in the Netherlands and internationally.

The establishment parties legitimized Wilders not only by promoting anti-immigrant hatred but also by declaring their willingness to ally with him. In this, Rutte's VVD played a leading role. In August, during the campaign, VVD leader and Justice Minister Dilan Yesilgöz emphasized that in regards to Wilders, she did not "want to keep the door shut as a matter of course." She said, "I am more interested in who will be at the [negotiations] table and with what

intentions."

Later in the campaign, as it became clear that such positions strengthened the PVV at the VVD's expense, Yesilgöz shifted her position again to deny plans to form a coalition with Wilders.

In Dutch official circles, it is admitted that not just the right-wing or social democratic parties but also the political forces tied to the parasitic Dutch trade union bureaucracy all joined in a xenophobic campaign that ultimately turned Wilders into a clear favorite.

"The main reasons voters have supported Wilders in these elections is his anti-immigration agenda, followed by his stance on the cost-of-living crisis and his healthcare position," University of Amsterdam Professor Sarah de Lange told *Politico*. The mainstream parties "legitimised Wilders" by making immigration a key issue, she added. "Voters might have thought that if that is the issue at stake, why not vote for the original rather than the copy," she said.

The central role in denying workers and youth the opportunity to vote for left-wing opposition to anti-immigrant hatreds was played by the ex-Maoist Socialist Party (SP). This party, which in recent years has in various polls won as much as 30 percent support, ran based on calls for harsher policies against asylum seekers. It was not spared by the broader election debacle, falling from 9 to 5 seats in parliament. Indeed, its election manifesto declared:

Uncontrolled labor migration currently leads to exploitation, the exodus from other countries (the so-called "brain drain") and the uprooting of communities. ... In this way we break the social isolation of many migrant workers. Anyone who wants to work in the Netherlands and is not a resident must be in possession of a work permit. Depending on the situation, the maximum number of work permits per year can be adjusted. Until this is in order, we will temporarily stop economic migration.

Broad sections of the Dutch ruling elite are now maneuvering aggressively to install Wilders in office. Not even 24 hours after the elections, Timmermans of the GL/PvDA suggested that he might lead the opposition, paving the way for the formation of a government coalition between Wilders' PVV, Yesilgöz's VVD, and Pieter Omtzigt's NSC that would have 81 seats in all. The newly-formed right-wing populist party BBB (Farmer-Citizen Movement) has already declared its interest to join Wilders with its 7 seats.

NCS party leader Omtzigt said, "We are available to

govern. This is a difficult outcome. We will discuss on Thursday in what way we could best contribute."

Netherlands public television NOS also reported: "VVD leader Dilan Yesilgoz, who earlier this week said her party wouldn't join a government led by Wilders, said it was now up to the winner to show he could get a majority."

Irrespective of which capitalist parties form the ruling coalition and which postured as a so-called 'opposition,' the incoming Dutch political establishment will mount a ferocious attack on the working class. It will respond to growing social protests against genocide, war and austerity with an attempt to impose neo-fascistic, police state rule. This is true whether the Netherlands are ruled openly by Wilders, or by a coalition drawn from the Netherlands' other anti-immigrant parties.

In the Netherlands, as in around the world, there is deep opposition in the working class to capitalist governments' policies of war, genocide, austerity and police-state rule. The Netherlands has seen mass protests against the genocide in Gaza, including large rallies around Amsterdam's central train station. After Wilders' election victory, several thousand people turned out to protest in the Netherlands' largest cities, Amsterdam and Utrecht.

Such sentiments find no conscious genuine political expression outside the International Committee of the Fourth International's (ICFI) principled, Marxist and internationalist opposition to the capitalist ruling classes of Europe. The urgent task facing the Dutch working class is the establishment of a section of the ICFI and, based on a socialist and internationalist perspective, building a movement across Europe to fight the capitalist establishment and transfer power to the working class.



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