

Wilders' election victory in the Netherlands: How can war and fascism be stopped?

Christoph Vandreier
30 November 2023

The election victory of the right-wing extremist Geert Wilders in the Dutch parliamentary elections is the product of the complete bankruptcy of the former left-wing parties and expresses the shift to the right of the entire political establishment. It demonstrates that the struggle against fascism and war requires an independent and socialist movement of the working class.

Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV), which is notorious for its hate campaigns against Islam and against migrants, doubled its share of the vote to just under 25 percent. The PVV thus became by far the strongest force in the fragmented Dutch party landscape.

Wilders even has a chance of becoming the next head of government in the EU's fifth-largest economy. The right-wing liberal VVD of the still incumbent Prime Minister Mark Rutte and the newly founded NSC of the renegade Christian Democrat Pieter Omtzigt have indicated their willingness to provide him a majority.

Whether Wilders will ultimately lead the government is not the decisive question. The policies of the fascists will be implemented and the shift to the right of all parties of the bourgeoisie will continue to accelerate. As always, the established parties and the media will justify the adoption of the far-right programme by saying that the "concerns of the population" must be taken seriously. In reality, it is the promotion of the far right by the ruling class that paves their road to power.

Whatever the outcome of the government negotiations in the Netherlands, workers across Europe are facing a sharp swing to the right by the entire ruling class. Fascist forces have long been integrated into several governments, and their program of war, refugee agitation and dictatorship is being implemented across the continent.

All European governments and all established parties support the genocide perpetrated by the far-right Israeli government in Gaza. The entire population has been taken hostage, starved and subjected to a permanent bombardment, which has already cost the lives of up to 20,000 people, including at least 7,000 children. Across the continent, this essentially fascist policy is accompanied by a disgusting incitement against Muslims—which the far right has placed at the centre of its

programme for years—and attacks on opponents of war. Fundamental democratic rights are being abolished.

At the same time, these same governments are working in Ukraine with the heirs of Nazi collaborators, antisemites and fascists to wage their proxy war against Russia. Seventy eight years after the end of World War II, German tanks are once again rolling against Russia. A horrendous rearmament is taking place all over Europe. Germany and the Netherlands have already doubled their military budgets in recent years and integrated their armies very closely.

This insane policy of war is accompanied by extreme social devastation in all European countries. Inflation is decimating workers' wages, health and education budgets have been slashed, and the last social programs are being eliminated. Even according to official figures, real wages in the Netherlands have fallen by 7 percent in the last year.

However, this policy of war and austerity meets with enormous opposition in the working class. The million-strong protests in France against Macron's pension cuts, mass strikes in Britain against real wage cuts and strike bans, and the huge demonstrations against the genocide in Gaza are only the beginning of all-out class struggles.

The far right is deliberately being built up by the ruling class to brutally suppress this opposition. In Italy, they brought to power Giorgia Meloni, whose political pedigree goes back directly to Mussolini. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) is working closely with her to organise the mass deportation of refugees and implement social cuts. In France, Macron's ministers marched together with the fascist Marine Le Pen to promote the genocide in Gaza. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is fully integrated into parliamentary work and right-wing extremist terrorist networks in the state apparatus are backed by the highest authorities.

Wilders was also systematically courted in the Netherlands during the election campaign. All parties adopted his programme and placed immigration at the centre of their campaigns. It was a transparent attempt to make refugees and migrants the scapegoat for the deep social crisis, the acute housing shortage and rising health care costs—the results of a policy pursued by all major parties in the interest of finance capital.

The fact that Wilders and the other far-right parties still manage to pose as an anti-establishment force and channel the frustration about politics in a reactionary direction is the result of the complete bankruptcy of the official “left” forces. They are so openly in the war camp that even far-right forces that criticize the NATO war against Russia from a nationalist-militarist point of view can exploit the anti-war mood among the population to a certain extent. Today, there is literally no established party that even partially represents the interests of the working population.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, British Labour Party leader Keir Starmer and US President Joe Biden—who poses as a friend of the workers in the US—all stand for the politics of genocide, war and social attacks. The Dutch Labour Party (PdA) played a pioneering role in this. The so-called “polder model,” which established close cooperation between the trade unions, business associations and government in the 1980s, served as a blueprint for the social-democratic heads of government Tony Blair (Britain) and Gerhard Schröder (Germany) in their comprehensive social counterrevolution.

The PdA stood in the latest parliamentary election under the leadership of the long-standing vice-president of the European Union (EU) Commission, Frans Timmermans, who embodies the anti-worker policies of the EU and strongly supports the Ukraine war and the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Although the PdA merged with the Greens, the two parties together only reached 15.5 percent of the vote.

The central role in denying workers and young people the opportunity to vote for a left-wing opposition to the xenophobic hate campaign was played by the former Maoist Socialist Party (SP). This party, which received up to 30 percent support in various polls in recent years, received only 3.1 percent of the vote. During the election campaign, the party agitated for a tougher policy towards asylum seekers and called for “a temporary halt to economic migration.”

Its sister parties in the European Parliament, wherever they have been involved in governments, have enforced the policies of militarism and social cuts in a particularly aggressive manner. Syriza formed a coalition with the far-right Anel in Greece in 2015 to impose the most brutal social cuts. In Spain, Podemos joined the Socialist Party government in 2020 and has been actively supporting austerity and war policies ever since.

The trade unions have transformed themselves into corporate police forces that suppress the resurgent class struggle and enforce the dictates of governments. This year alone, they have stifled strike movements in France, the UK, Germany and many other countries, forcing massive real wage cuts on workers.

This suppression of the class struggle and the absence of any left-wing alternative in the official party spectrum means that in the midst of the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s, the most right-wing forces can dominate and even win elections.

Unlike the 1930s, when the ruling class used fascist mass movements to crush the organized workers’ movement, the

right-wing extremists today have no mass organizations. But that does not make the situation any less dangerous. They wield considerable influence and control large parts of the state apparatus of repression used against the working class to suppress and terrorize any opposition.

Whenever far-right parties form or participate in the government, the anger and opposition in the working class takes on even sharper forms. But the fight against the right-wing extremists can only be successful if it has a clear political perspective. The movement must be directed not only against Wilders, Meloni and Co., but against the entire capitalist order, its parties and its state apparatus, and for socialism. The central question facing workers and young people is how to build their own revolutionary leadership.

When “liberal” and pseudo-left politicians call for the “unity of the democrats” against right-wing extremists in occasional Sunday speeches, they are concerned with maintaining the suppression of the class struggle and enforcing the most right-wing policies. This does not serve to fight against the extreme right, but to strengthen it.

The united front of all parties in its genocidal and criminal policies has deep objective causes. “Under the impact of class and international contradictions that are too highly charged, the safety switches of democracy either burn out or explode. That is what the short circuit of dictatorship represents,” Leon Trotsky wrote in 1929. Then as now, the capitalist crisis offers only two alternatives: dictatorship and war or socialist revolution.

The mass protests against Israel’s genocide and the strikes that are developing everywhere must be developed into a powerful movement against capitalism and for a socialist society. This is what the Socialist Equality Party (Germany) is fighting for together with its sister parties in the UK, France and Turkey in next year’s European elections. Support our election campaign now and build the International Committee of the Fourth International as a new mass party of the working class to stop war and fascism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact