



borderless

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Dutch Socialist defenders of welfare state leading polls

Editorial

After having agreed to numerous austerity attacks, Geert Wilders' far right PVV suddenly withdrew its support from the right-wing governing coalition and left the Netherlands without a government in April. The Socialist Party is doing remarkably well in polls and might become the biggest party after elections in September. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere on the continent, traditional politics are being shaken up by opposition to harsh austerity measures, which are being increasingly, and painfully felt by ordinary people.



Emile Roemer (SP Leader) and Evo Morales (Bolivia's President)

After more than a month of negotiations, the three parties that made up the coalition were unable to reach an agreement. The coalition was an alliance of two governing parties: the free-market, right-wing, liberal VVD and the conservative CDA. It was supported by the xenophobic, right-wing PVV, led by Wilders. The PVV combines a neoliberal economic agenda with anti-immigrant, and especially, anti-Muslim ideas. The PVV, however, also uses populist demagoguery, posing as the defender of some social rights, to attract voters who feel threatened by the economic

crisis and neoliberal policies.

After supporting a coalition that has implemented 18 billion euros of cuts through such measures as raising the retirement age to 67 years, Wilders pulled out of negotiations over another 12 billion euros in cuts. This was in reaction to polls predicting heavy electoral losses for the PVV, pushing Wilders to again emphasize his populist image.

Only a few days after the fall of the coalition, a slightly modified

version of the austerity package was accepted nonetheless by a majority in parliament. This new austerity package includes raising health care costs, raising the retirement age, further liberalizing the labor market, making it easier for employers to fire people, and increasing the standard VAT rate. These new cuts were supported by the VVD, CDA, and the three other parties, including the Greens (GroenLinks). GroenLinks, although it originated from a fusion of communist, socialist, and progressive parties in the early nineties, has moved in an increasingly liberal direction in the last few years.

Pressure on the government parties to introduce this new austerity package was high; without it, the Dutch budget deficit would exceed three percent of the Gross Domestic Product, a situation considered unacceptable by the CDA and VVD. Within the European Union, the Dutch government has consistently taken a hard line in favor of austerity. Together with the German government, the Dutch have insisted on drastic cuts in order to meet the EU standard that no country's deficit should be larger than three percent of its GDP. Most Dutch political parties insist that austerity is needed in order to lower the public debt (66% of GDP last year) and to address the economic crisis and have supported the European Stability Mechanism.

Erosion of traditional parties

The collapse of the coalition was a new step in the years-long process of eroding support for

the traditional governing parties of the Netherlands, such as the CDA and the social-democratic Labour Party (PvdA). The CDA, once the most influential party in the country, is in a crisis caused by disintegrating electoral support and the lack of a coherent project. Meanwhile, the PvdA has been unable to make itself visible as the largest opposition party and is divided between people who want to continue on its social liberal course (comparable to the British Labour Party or the German SPD) and those who want the party to 'return to its social democratic roots'. On the far right side of the political spectrum, Wilders' PVV has grown rapidly since its founding in 2005 and is now the third largest party in parliament. The PVV is now deploying nationalist and populist rhetoric against the EU in what polls suggest has been a relatively successful attempt to recover ground it lost during its time as a supporter of the government.

The most remarkable development on the Dutch parliamentary scene, and the most positive sign for the left, is the growth of the Socialist Party (SP). Originally founded as a Maoist party in the seventies, the SP has evolved into the major force of the Dutch left and has attracted increasing support for its anti-neoliberal positions and its defense of social security. Numerous polls indicate that the SP could become the largest party and lead the next government. It is likely that the SP will surpass the traditional left party, the PvdA. It remains unclear what the SP will be prepared and

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What is this?

borderless is a radical bimonthly paper written in English for non-Dutch speakers interested in Dutch progressive politics. It provides news and commentary from an anti-capitalist perspective on Dutch politics and on events and social struggles in the Netherlands and around the world.

borderless is written and published by a collection of Dutch and non-Dutch activists living in Amsterdam. We consider ourselves socialists, feminists and ecologists and we seek anti-capitalist solutions to the many economic and ecological crises facing working people worldwide. We oppose capitalism, a political-economic system that is based on exploitation and whose increasingly frequent crises are devastating communities around the globe. We oppose all attacks on the civil and human rights of citizens, immigrants, workers, and minorities both inside and outside the Netherlands. We stand in solidarity with all people engaged in the struggle against exploitation and oppression.

borderless is a supplement to our sister magazine, Grenzeloos, published by SAP, the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

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It is not just parliamentary politics that are changing in the Netherlands. The Dutch trade-union movement is also going through a profound transformation stemming from a controversial agreement made in 2011 by the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV) to raise the age of retirement. The agreement was made despite opposition by those unions in the federation that, together, represent a majority of the members. The agreement created divisions among trade unionists and the ensuing crisis has led to calls for reform of the federation.

On 3 December, the FNV made the decision to disband. A commission of 'independent personalities' was formed to make plans for a new trade-union federation. These plans were unveiled on the first of May.

The reorganization process is highly contested. The government and employers want a trade-union organization that will continue to support neoliberal policies but that has enough legitimacy to convince its members of the necessity of such policies. The right-wing of the trade-union movement shares this perspective and is trying to remodel the trade unions into apolitical support groups for individual employees. They call this 'modernization'. On the other hand, a growing minority wants combative trade unions that base their legitimacy not on negotiating with bosses but on defending their members' interests.



able to do with this unprecedented support. Its growth is not yet matched by a corresponding increase in social struggles or the development of left wing ideas in Dutch society. The Dutch trade-unions are going through a process of reorganization that has affected their ability to resist the attacks and there are no strong social movements challenging the right-wing course of the government.

Without doubt, it will be difficult for the SP to form an alliance with other parties without compromising its positions significantly. The most likely ally of the SP is the PvdA, which, under pressure of the growth of the socialists, has made a cautious turn to the left, but even together they will not have a majority in parliament.

The rise of parties on both the left and right flanks of traditional parliamentary politics has put strong pressure on the so-called 'poldermodel' – the Dutch model of consensus-oriented politics. This model has served to de-politicize fundamental social questions by bringing the mainstream right- and left together in discussions in which neoliberal principles are taken for granted and differences of opinion are often merely different ideas on how to best implement these principles. Two decades of such unquestioned acceptance of neoliberal policies by has alienated many people from the mainstream parties. The PvdA has been particularly damaged. Some of the votes of people who are dissatisfied with established politics go to the nationalist right but the growth of the SP proves that many people, instead of blaming immigrants, wish for a solution for the crisis in terms of social equality and justice.

Bertil Videt, Alex de Jong

One year of the "Spanish Revolution"



One year ago, hundreds of thousands of people gathered and camped in the main squares of all major Spanish cities calling for "true democracy" and organising horizontally in assemblies and commissions. What was then called the "Spanish Revolution", a movement which was inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings of last spring, was a spark that helped start similar movements in Greece and later in the USA.

The camps only lasted for a month and a half (in the best cases) and the chaotic way in which many of them ended left many observers with the feeling that the movement had just been a naive, over-hyped phenomenon triggered by social media, but unable to effect significant political change. These pessimistic analyses appeared validated by the election of a hard right-wing government a few months later.

However, the further

development of the movement into a neighbourhood- and popular assembly-based struggle has proven these analyses wrong. We had more proof of this on 12 May, when Puerta del Sol (as well as many other squares across the

For a year, local assemblies have been organising and struggling against the most urgent social problems in Spain

country) was once again full of indignant protesters, only this time they didn't arrive as individuals but in organised columns coming from all the neighbourhoods and towns in and around Madrid. For a year, local assemblies have been organising and struggling against the most urgent social problems

in Spain: unemployment, housing evictions, attacks on civil rights, and the privatisation of public services. They have also provided an inspiring message of political engagement and solidarity – an extremely valuable counterpoint to the misery of living under a corrupt, unjust, and crumbling political regime.

On 15 May, more than fifty Spaniards and dozens of supporters, gathered on Dam Square in Amsterdam to celebrate the anniversary of the Indignados (or 15-May) Movement and to chant slogans against capitalism and for revolution. Although modest, this gathering showed how the 15-M Movement has become a key reference point for an entire generation of Spaniards, a generation that is determined to make revolution a reality.

Alex Merlo



International Viewpoint (IVP), the monthly English-language magazine of the Fourth International, is a window to radical alternatives world-wide, carrying reports, analysis and debates from all corners of the globe. Here are summaries of a few recent articles from www.internationalviewpoint.org

'Greece: The IMF and Lagarde get it wrong' by **Éric Toussaint & Damien Millet.**

The recent Greek election results have sent the European Union, and its executioners – the 'Troika' (the IMF, EU, and ECB) – into a political crisis from which they seem to think the only way out is through the increased exploitation of the 'lazy Greeks' via an additional, but nicely wrapped, package of austerity. Toussaint and Millet, on the other hand, see it differently, arguing instead against that the IMF is part of the problem and not the solution. (article2635)

'Quebec: Students call for a social strike in solidarity with their struggle' by **Richard Fidler**

'Let us stop fearing the laws that fetter our discontent, let us collectively disobey and go together into the streets of Quebec' – these are the words of students resisting the 75% increase in tuition fees recently proposed as part of an austerity drive by the government of Quebec. As happened in Britain in 2010/2011, Quebecois students are being propagandised with messages about 'paying their fair share', and like the students in Britain, they are coming out onto the streets in their thousands in order to say 'non!'. (article2594)

'Turkey: Abortion is a Right, Decision Belongs to Women' by **Istanbul Feminist Collective**

From one explosive social movement to another: the women of Turkey have also been piling onto the streets in recent weeks in protest of a proposed ban on the

right of women to have an abortion (or even a caesarean section!). In this article, the Istanbul Feminist Collective put forward their argument that the aim of Prime Minister Erdoğan is 'to impose motherhood as the primary task of women, to equate women with family, and to insist on the secondary, submissive role of women'. A strong statement from a strong collective. (article2636)

'Environment: The issues in Rio+20: Policy statement of the organization committee of the People's Summit'

Last, but certainly not least, we have a report from the International Coordination Group of the Rio+20 People's Summit (taking place from 15 to 23 June), an alternative to the UN Conference Rio+20. Arguing against the so-called 'green economy', they put forward the argument that capitalism, with its incessant drive for growth, unsustainable levels of natural resource extraction, and rampant consumption, is

upsetting the natural cycles of the planet and pushing ecosystems to the point of destruction. Attempts at international negotiations purportedly set up to assuage the ecological crisis, such as the so-called 'COP' talks, are leading nowhere. How can they when they are upholding the damaging practices of global agribusiness with its tendency towards deforestation, destruction of biodiversity and emission of GHGs?, they ask. Their alternative? A peoples' summit to discuss, 'a radical change of the current model of production and consumption' and 'the collective construction of new paradigms based on food sovereignty, agroecology and non-profit economy'. (article2631)

Jamie S. Moloney

What's going on?

Panel discussion

Real World Economics: Greece, Goldman and the Wicked World of Derivatives.

18th June, 8pm
CREA Muziekzaal, Nieuwe Achtergracht 170 Amsterdam.

Screening

Crips & Bloods: Made in America.

20th June, 8pm
IIRE Lombokstraat 40
Documentary on Los Angeles gang warfare and its socioeconomical context.

Organised by [borderless](http://borderless.nl).

Conference

"Socialist Politics and the July 2012 Parliamentary Elections in Timor Leste"

by **Max Lane**

27 June, 8 pm
IIRE, Lombokstraat 40

Play

"Marx in Soho"
by **Howard Zinn**

28 June
Opens 8pm, starts 9pm
De Valreep, Polderweg 200

Screening

Ecumenopolis: City without limits.

11th July, 8pm
IIRE Lombokstraat 40
Documentary on the transformation of cities through neoliberal policies, focused on the case of Turkey.
Organised by [borderless](http://borderless.nl)

Concert

Calle 13: Entren los que quieren

18th August, 8pm
Paradiso

Storytelling

Mezrab

2nd + 3rd Fridays every month.
Open 7pm, starts 8pm.
Live storytelling in English + warm soup
check: www.mezrab.nl

Summer camp

International Revolutionnary Youth Camp

30 July to 5th August.
Besalu (Spain)
Organised by the Fourth International, this is the biggest gathering of revolutionnary youth in the world. Full with activists from all around the world, the program includes lots of debates, educationals, workshops, and of course party! Contact [borderless](http://borderless.nl) for more information.

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