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Political and social situation in Portugal

Defeat of PSD/CDS Government

The last Government PSD/CDS proceeded and increased the right wing policy that destroyed rights, impoverished our people and staked our sovereignty. All these attacks against the workers and the people were confronted with great struggles. The workers and the youth were the vanguard of many struggles, but also other groups of our society were mobilized. These processes allowed us to gain forces to build in the future the alternative that is needed for our country.

At the General Election of October 4th, the workers, the population in general and youth defeated with their struggles and their votes the PSD/CDS Government. This defeat and the new correlation of forces in Parliament has made possible the attainment of concrete, although limited, objectives like the return of the cuts on salaries or the restoration of some rights that had been taken away.

PCP assumed its responsibility with the people and understood that in this phase we should stop the quick degradation of people's life and the destruction of the country. A patriotic motivation – and the respect of the will of the people expressed on votes – led us to deny the formation of a Government PSD/CDS and to allow that a Government PS was formed. To this solution we understood that PS would have to compromise in solving some of the most urgent needs of people. On this basis we achieved to have a "joint position of PS and PCP on a political solution" which allows a general inversion of the policy of decline, exploitation and impoverishment imposed over the last four years by the PSD/CDS government. We are in this process and in this phase certain and aware of our Project, of our class position and our historic role, conscious of the distance and indisguisable differences regarding the macro-economic policy and class position. We are compromised with the workers and the people to guarantee the inversion of the aggressive policies against the rights of our people. Which is only possible with the continuation and intensification of the struggle for rights and for social transformation, that is already taking place.



On the outcome of the Presidential Election

Our candidate Edgar Silva built the only campaign that was committed to defend and to the full compliance and respect for the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic. No other campaign spelled out and committed itself so clearly to the Constitution political, economic, social and cultural principles and provisions. Our campaign was unique in stressing and expressing its commitment towards the rights of the workers and towards our sovereignty and national independence.

It was a left-wing and patriotic campaign that had no commitments whatsoever towards economic groups and financial capital and that could unambiguously, in an authoritative and coherent manner, reject the dictates coming from the European Union. The campaign embodied a project of freedom, democracy, social justice, development and sovereign rule. It was a campaign that without hesitation defined itself as the workers' campaign. A campaign inspired by and committed to the values of the 25th April 1974 Revolution. The campaign of Edgar Silva confirmed the importance of PCP making its own voice heard in debates about the national political situation and about the role of the President of the Republic on defending, enforcing and ensuring the enforcement of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic.

The votes obtained by Edgar Silva's campaign (182 905 votes representing 3,95% of the total vote) do not accurately

reflect the worth of its project, both with regard to the stated objective of this election. Regarding the fact that it represented a coherent and unique approach aimed at promoting interventions and struggles now and in the future to change the course of the country's political life. It was a hardly-won result though, against the backdrop of unequal access to the media which promoted and favoured other campaigns and of appeals to populist and anti-democratic feelings.

The election of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa as President of the Republic on January 24 represents a negative development in the country's current political circumstances and raises legitimate concerns.

Marcelo and other candidates benefit from high exposition in the media (Marcelo was an opinion maker for 15 years). This Presidential Election revealed the persistent nature of anti-democratic currents and their growth, as a result of the populist approach systematically adopted by various candidates, and was reflected in voting patterns as well as a low turnout. Trends emerged devaluing popular participation on the campaign. Also, attempts that were made at downsizing campaigns and limiting voters' role, promoting acritical and passive attitudes, turning voters into mere spectators and receptacles of the dominant message. As well as the anti-democratic pressure against the rolling-out of election campaigns, with the argument that costs had to be reduced. This had nothing to do with exaggerated expenses, which should be fought. On the contrary, this was to hide the manipulation and silencing by dominant media aimed to conditionate or prevent the political message of those, as we, that defend a sovereign country free of European Union constraints and menaces and a policy that is compromised with the rights of the workers and the people and the development of Portugal.

Restoring rights, increasing the struggle

Throughout these first few months since the parliamentary elections, despite the seriousness of the issues that the people and the country face and being perfectly aware of the limitations that come from the political options of the PS Government



– a Government that does not question constraints such as the public debt, the country's submission to the Euro or the sway that monopoly groups hold on national life – it was possible to solve some issues:

1. Stop the concession and privatisation of road/rail public transport companies;

2. to repeal measures that affected the dignity of teachers and to adopt new means of evaluation to improve learning and education outcomes;

3. to reinstate womens' right to abortion without pressures or constraints;

4. to reinstate the supplementary retirement pensions that had been take away from workers in State-owned companies;

5. to protect family homes from seizure in tax enforcement procedures; to prepare legislation aimed at banning banks from unilaterally changing interest rates and clauses in contracts for the provision of electronic communication services;

6. to reverse the decision to abolish holidays thus putting an end to four days of unpaid work.

In all these developments, and others, PCP played a decisive role.

It was also possible, although in an insufficient manner, to achieve other important measures that had been proposed by us: to reverse the wage cuts that had been imposed to civil workers in State-owned companies; to ensure a reduction of the additional tax, doing so in a gradual manner and abolishing it by 2017; to take steps aimed at establishing a 35-hours working week for all state workers, regardless; to increase the National Minimum Wage to 530 euros, although well below the 600 euros proposed by PCP.

However this progresses should not mask the deep options associated with right-wing policies and that led PS to continue

processes that collide with the national and the peoples' interest. As examples consider the "BANIF resolution" with handing over this bank to an foreign economic group costing billions of euros of public resources and the threat of handing over the New Bank to big capital and financial speculation; achieving the privatization of CP Carga (freight trains), a strategic company for the rail sector, the economy and national production; the concession of benefits regarding social security payments to big business, using as a counterpart the increase in the National Minimum Wage; the insufficient and unacceptable of the increase in the current levels of retirement plans and pensions that does not break with the path of impoverishment imposed over the last years to this sector of the population, by freezing their values.

These PS Government options, in addition to what they reveal regarding the constraints and limitations of the current political solution, give visibility to the need for an effective rupture with a right-wing policy and the need to build a patriotic and left-wing policy. A policy that really responds to elevate living conditions of workers and the portuguese people, the promotion of economic growth and development, the defense and affirmation of national sovereignty and independence.

As reality demonstrates, without freeing the country from its submission to foreign limitation it will not be possible to consolidate a policy of sustained growth and social development. Factors favorable to a foreign conjecture can give room to a response to more immediate questions and problems, can alleviate the asphyxiating situation its been subject to, but can not guarantee the development of the country.

PCP and JCP also alerts and denounces the operation of pressure and blackmail and that, from the European Union and national circuits associated with it, will aim to maintain intact the policies of exploitation, impoverishment and extortion of national resources, and reaffirms that the only and decided attitude to face it

resides in its straightforward rejection and the affirmation to of the right of Portugal to a sovereign development.

JCP considers that the future developments of the political situation, in particular the objective of defending, restoring and conquering rights, are and will be inseparable from the struggle and intervention of the Portuguese workers and people. The moment calls for broadening the struggle to potentiate the new conditions to respond to the desires and aspirations of the Portuguese people. A struggle that will count not only on the solidarity and action of communists, but also a broad and combative political intervention to defend everything positive that can be achieved and fight measures and options that reveal to be negative to the people and the Country.

JCP also highlights the action development by the our organizations and militants, in the defense of the interests of the workers and people, in the development of their struggle and organization, in answering their immediate problems, in affirming the need for rupture with right-wing policies and the adoption of a patriotic and left-wing policy.

The struggle continues in schools, with an action not only to organize students and to solve the problems of public schools, but also to defend democracy and participation of students, working hardly to construct students assemblies, that have been attacked in many ways. Also, for University students, a big petition and local struggles have been developed, for social support, and to defend public high education. The young workers among other have been in struggle and in strike also in energy sector, public sector and other companies.

Also it is important to point out to the need to strengthen the organizations and broad mass movements and our compromise with the intervention and contribution towards the success of the 13th Congress of CGTP-IN, on February 26-27th.



FESTA DO AVANTE!

40th Anniversary

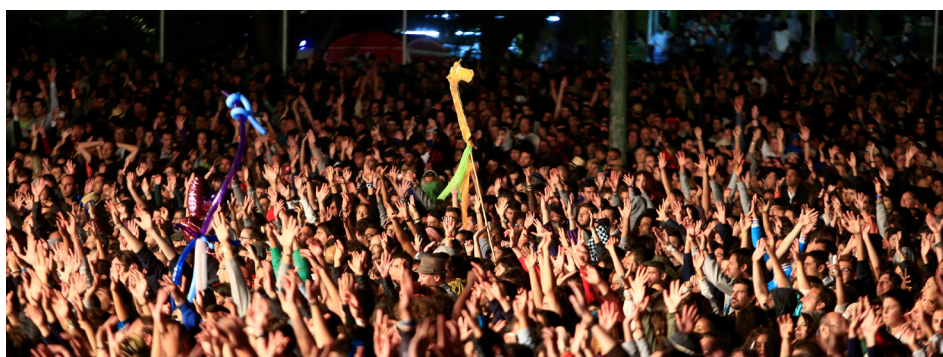
Festa do Avante is the the annual fest organized by the Portuguese Communist Party. It's the biggest political and cultural event in Portugal and it's an extraordinary construction of the communists and the people of Portugal. In Festa do Avante everything is organized and made with militant work. During the summer lots of militants and friends go to Quinta da Atalaia to build it. Its bigger value is the fact that this fest is completely independent from corporations, from the state or other organizations.

The 3 day's event gathers the struggle, the resistance and the solidarity of portuguese people towards the aim to build a better country with the values of our Party. Along with music, dance, theatre, cinema and gastronomy of the entire country. The Portuguese Communist Youth has it own space, the "Youth's City", which is a meeting point of youth, with several bars and stages. Festa do Avante is the fest of the youth and thousands of youngsters from all over the country come every year. As Festa is a very importante political meeting for

the youth, every year lots of young students and workers join our organization during the days of the Festa and the construction journeys that precede it during the summer. One of the hot spots of the "Youth's City" is the "New Values Stage" where the finalists bands of the National Band Contest that JCP organizes do their concerts. These contest involves every year hundreds of bands and young musiciens towards the struggle of the right to culture.

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Festa do Avante. It will be a glorious mo-

ment since the Party afforded a new space "Quinta do Cabo" which is going to aloud to enlarge and improve the Festa. Untill this moment Festa took place in Quinta da Atalaia and now we will have more space to a prettier Festa. This was only possible by the National Campaign "More Space, More Festa" that's itself a great achievement of all portuguese people because they were all called to contribute to a bigger and better Festa do Avante. It's an achievement that goes beyond the Party and that's capable to unite the portuguese people.



Information

New site and e-mail of JCP

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