

Portugal: Boost for left representation

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Portugal's parliamentary elections, held on September 27, 2009 have changed the political landscape: the Socialist Party, which had an absolute majority in 2005, with 45 % of votes, lost more than half a million votes and fell to 36.56 %.

Even as the winner, it is in a minority in Parliament, the only political force which lost seats in relation to 2005 (96 against 121). The result for the PS is their lowest since 1991. This is undoubtedly the result of the anti-social policies of an arrogant absolute majority who chose to save the bankers from bankruptcy instead of establishing public policies for the banks; who passed an employment law which makes dismissals easier in a country that has nearly 600,000 unemployed, with half of them not receiving unemployment benefit and makes job insecurity the rule. A Government which has waged war on teachers and civil servants like none before.

The PSD (liberal centrist), while gaining 3 deputies in relation to 2005, has however recorded one of its worst ever scores. The beneficiary has been the right wing PP, which has become the third political force (whereas in 2005 it was in 4th place). The CP has gone from 3rd to 5th political force in terms of support.

The Left Bloc is the force that has had the biggest increase compared to 2005: more than half a million votes (557,109 in a country of just over 9 million voters), 192,679 more than in 2005, and from 5th to 4th biggest political force (3rd in a number of major cities). At the national level, the score went from 6.38% to 9.85% and the number of deputies has doubled from 8 to 16. In addition, while in 2005 the deputies elected came from Lisbon (4), Porto (2) and Setubal (2), this time we elected deputies in 9 of the 20 districts: 1 each in Aveiro, Braga, Coimbra, Leiria, Santarem and Faro; 1 more in Porto and in Lisbon. In all, 6 women and 10 men.

The Left Bloc will now weigh even more in Portuguese political life and in the upcoming struggles, in Parliament with its 16 deputies but also and especially in struggles, since we enjoy the confidence of more than half a million votes, the result of an intense campaign of continuous contact with workers and popular sectors and a clear anti-capitalist programme sectors with concrete alternative proposals to those of the Socialist Party and the PSD.

The three objectives the Bloc set for this campaign were all met:

- 1) to prevent a new absolute majority;
- 2) to increase the number of votes in relation to 2005;
- 3) to increase the number of deputies.

In Parliament, the Bloc and the CP have together 31 deputies, representing more than 18 % of the votes. Never has there been such a result to the left of the PS.

The Socialist Party, in a minority in Parliament, will be forced to choose between the proposals of

the left, as we will present them arising out of our programme and our mandate — among others, repeal of the employment law, a tax on large fortunes to finance social security - or join the PP on the reactionary right.

After these elections. the political framework is more polarized, right and left. The political and social struggle will intensify in future months. And the Bloc is stronger than ever.

P.S.

* Translation: International Viewpoint.

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