

Right-wing PSD carries Portuguese elections as neo-fascist vote surges

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Portugal's right-wing Social-Democratic Party (PSD) very narrowly won last night's Portuguese elections, as the vote for the neo-fascist Chega party surged. The vote was a resounding defeat for the ruling Socialist Party (PS), which lost the absolute majority of 117 deputies in the 230-seat legislature that it had held since 2022.

The PSD took 29.8 percent of the vote, the PS 28.7 percent, and Chega 18.2 percent of the vote. The right-wing Liberal Initiative (IL) took 4.9 percent, the middle-class Pabloite Left Bloc (BE) 4.4 percent, and the Stalinist-led Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) 3.2 percent. Compared to the last elections, which the PS carried with 41 percent of the vote, the principal change was a massive shift of the vote from the PS to Chega, which rose from 7 to 18 percent.

As of last night, with 11 seats, including those for overseas Portuguese not yet attributed, it was unclear what government coalition might emerge. The PSD carried 77 seats in parliament, the PS 75, Chega 46, IL 8, BE 5, and the CDU 3. As the vote counting began, PS officials declared they would remain in opposition, so that the next government would be a right-wing government, but the PSD had also earlier ruled out forming a government coalition with Chega.

Nonetheless, it is evident that, for the first time since the toppling of the regime established by fascistic dictator António de Oliveira Salazar in the 1974 Carnation Revolution, a Portuguese election has produced a victory for a right-wing coalition in which far-right forces play a central role.

This is the product of the reactionary role played by the PS and its middle-class, pseudo-left allies, the BE and the Stalinist Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). Since 2015, the pseudo-left parties supported successive PS governments that savagely attacked the

working class—imposing deep EU austerity measures, imposing policies of mass infection with COVID-19, and backing the NATO war with Russia in Ukraine. The PS repeatedly tried to ban and viciously attacked protests and strikes, including calling out the army to crush a nationwide truckers' strike.

The big-business PS and its pseudo-left allies are exposed as bitter and determined enemies of the working class. Without a Trotskyist opposition to the PS government in the working class, however, the political force that is left to exploit the deep anger and bitterness at the pseudo-left parties is neo-fascism.

BE official Fabian Figueiredo pinned the blame for the defeat upon the PS' record since the 2022 elections, in which the BE and PCP votes collapsed and the PS had an absolute majority. Figueiredo said, "The two years of absolute PS majority government imposed a deep turn to the right upon the country that the Left Bloc tried to oppose every day in this campaign, with propositions, alternatives, and the idea that it is possible to give Portugal another future and build a stronger, more united country where the absolute majority failed."

Figueiredo's claim that the sharp shift to the right began in 2022, after the PS no longer technically needed the support of BE and the PCP to rule, is a political lie. In reality, many of the most savage attacks on the workers—EU austerity measures, the use of the army against the truckers' strike, and the COVID-19 infection policy—were carried out before 2022, when the PS was still formally in its *geringonça* ("contraption") alliance with BE and the PCP. The affluent middle class academics and union bureaucrats of BE are exposed before the workers as tools of social reaction.

Even in the run-up to this latest election, by which

point the PS was carrying out violently right-wing policies by Figueiredo's own admission, top BE officials tried to ally with it. Indeed, shortly before the 2024 elections, BE leader Mariana Mortágua declared that she would be "happy to have an agreement" with the PS and applauded her party's *geringonça* alliance with the PS, declaring: "We did something important in 2015."

The lies and hypocrisy of reactionary, pseudo-left parties like BE enrage masses of people, and the neo-fascists are left to exploit that anger—which finds no left-wing outlet within the Portuguese political establishment.

Outgoing PS Prime Minister António Costa tried to dismiss the election result, claiming that it was "atypical" and blaming it on the rise in inflation that impoverished the workers: "This created a sensation of generalized unhappiness." He called to "understand what in the rise of Chega is structural, and what emerges from elections that we can see have a profoundly atypical conjunctural context." He dismissed the rise of the far right as only reflecting a "protest vote."

In fact, far-right parties are being put forward by the ruling class, exploiting mounting anger in the population, including in the working class, not only in Portugal but across Europe. The rise of Chega goes hand in hand with that of Vox in Spain, the National Rally in France, the Brothers of Italy, and the Alternative for Germany. This is above all because the historical roots of these parties in the legacy of 20th-century European fascism make them ideally suited to promote policies of war and authoritarian rule demanded by the imperialist bourgeoisies across Europe and beyond.

General António dos Santos Ramalho Eanes, elected in 1976 as the first president of the Portuguese Republic after the fall of Salazar's *Estado Novo*, bluntly warned that the world situation is bad and predicted disaster for the Portuguese people. "I believe these elections are particularly important," Ramalho Eanes declared, "as the world is in a bad state and is threatening to get worse." He cited "economic problems, financial ones, inflation, and, God forbid, we really don't need that, also military problems."

"We must prepare the country, its economy, the life of the Portuguese people for a situation such as that

one," he told journalists as he went to vote. He predicted that "the Portuguese people will suffer enormously."

Yesterday, during the voting, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa called on the population to vote while "paying attention to what is happening abroad." Sousa said that "what will happen out there, in future" will "end up determining all the rest." He listed decisive questions as: "The US elections, the European elections, what they will mean for the war in Ukraine, the Middle East, the tensions in the Red Sea, the world economy, and recently the rise in prices and interest rates."

Speaking from his official residence, the Belém Palace, Sousa declared that these concerns had been "almost silenced or spoken about only quietly," and "thought about by everyone but expressed only by very few."

This amounted to an admission from Portugal's president that the political establishment kept the decisive world questions—war, the Gaza genocide, the collapse of living standards and the explosive rise of social inequality—out of the elections. The pseudo-left, the PS, as well as the right-wing parties all aligned with the aggressive policies of the NATO alliance in Ukraine and the Middle East, even as thousands protested against the Gaza genocide in Lisbon and cities across Portugal.

Capitalism's continuing plunge into war, genocide, far-right rule and economic crisis cannot be stopped within the national borders of Portugal, or of any other country. The way forward is to build an international, revolutionary movement in the working class against imperialist war and for socialism, based on the International Committee of the Fourth International's opposition to the pseudo-left.



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