Chega’s Ventura faces Socialist Party’s Seguro in run-offs of Portugal’s presidential election

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Portugal’s 2026 presidential election has delivered a stark warning about the state of the country’s political system. André Ventura, leader of the fascist Chega party, secured second place in the first round with 24.24 percent of the vote—well short of the 50 percent required for outright victory, yet sufficient to propel him into a second?round run?off. His opponent will be António José Seguro of the Socialist Party (PS), who topped the poll with 30.62 percent. Seguro previously led the PS between 2011 and 2014, during the Eurozone crisis, the Portuguese bailout, and the imposition of the troika’s austerity programme.

Ventura’s advance is not the product of a mass fascist movement, but of a political order that has exhausted its legitimacy. The result exposes a ruling class unable to resolve the social crisis it created and a working class that has been politically disenfranchised by the PS and reactionary, pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class.

Ventura’s rise is the direct outcome of decades of austerity, privatisation and wage suppression imposed by the PS and the Social Democratic Party (PSD), now in government. These two parties, alternating in office since 1976, have faithfully implemented the demands of the European Union, NATO and international finance capital. Their policies have produced stagnant wages, soaring housing costs, collapsing public services and a generation trapped in precarious work. The first?round vote is, in effect, a referendum on this record.

Yet Ventura’s support—hovering in the low 20s—also reveals the limits of his project. His vote does not represent a unified far?right bloc, but a protest against a political establishment that offers no progressive alternative. The run?off will pit him against Seguro, a representative of the same ruling class whose policies created the conditions for Chega’s ascent and whose programme will remain one of austerity, labour “flexibility,” and intensified militarisation brought about by the crisis over the war in Ukraine and Europe’s relationship with the Trump regime.

The election unfolded amid deepening economic and political instability. Portugal has held three general elections in as many years, each producing fragile governments incapable of addressing the structural contradictions of a society subordinated to global markets. The presidency—though formally limited—has become increasingly central as governments rely on constitutional manoeuvres to manage crisis after crisis. The first?round results reflect not democratic renewal but systemic decay. Eleven candidates stood, yet none offered a coherent response to the social catastrophe confronting millions. The fragmentation of the vote is the political expression of a society in which the traditional mechanisms of bourgeois rule are failing.

The most striking feature of the election is the collapse of the parliamentary “left.” The pseudo-left Left Bloc (BE) and the Stalinist Communist Party (PCP) were reduced to virtual electoral irrelevance. Their candidates—Catarina Martins for BE (1.98 percent, compared to 10.2 percent in 2015) and António Filipe for the PCP (1.46 percent, far below the party’s post-Carnation Revolution peak of 18.1 percent)—barely registered in the polls.

This collapse is not accidental. For years, BE and the PCP propped up PS governments, voted for austerity budgets, and integrated themselves into “social dialogue” with the unions, who have spent years

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suppressing militant strikes. The unions have channelled the enormous opposition to the government's attacks on key worker protections in the Labour Code that forced them to call a general strike by limiting it to one day and to pleas that the government negotiate "reforms" with them.

By thus demobilising workers, they paved the way for Ventura to posture as the only force challenging the status quo. Chega draws support from sections of the petty bourgeoisie and disaffected working layers whose living standards have been hammered by decades of austerity. It fills the political vacuum with reactionary nationalism. Ventura's demagogy—combining xenophobic scapegoating with neoliberal austerity and authoritarian social policies—serves a clear function: to channel social anger away from the ruling class and toward migrants, minorities, and the most vulnerable.

Chega's programme is not an alternative to austerity; it is a mechanism for intensifying it. Mass deportations, militarised policing, attacks on democratic rights, and cuts to social spending are designed to shift the burden of crisis onto the working class while protecting bourgeois rule. Ventura's rhetoric of "taking back the country" masks a project of deepening exploitation and repression.

Ventura's rise is part of a broader European pattern: across the continent, far?right forces are being integrated into political life as instruments of austerity and rearmament.

Ventura's first?round result will embolden far?right elements within the state and ruling class. The run?off will not resolve the crisis but intensify it. Workers face a choice between austerity and reaction—between the parties that created the crisis and the far?right forces that seek to exploit it. The danger is not only to immigrants and minorities but to the entire working class.

The central lesson of the election is clear: the working class cannot rely on any faction of the bourgeois political system. The union bureaucracies and the pseudo?left parties have subordinated workers' struggles to parliamentary manoeuvres, demobilising resistance and allowing the far right to fill the vacuum.

Workers must build independent, democratic rank?and?file organisations linking workplaces, sectors and regions. The December general strike demonstrated the capacity for mass action, but union bureaucracies remain obstacles rather than instruments of genuine struggle. The working class also needs a Trotskyist revolutionary vanguard, a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to oppose the reactionary manoeuvres of the BE and PCP.

Only an internationalist movement of the working class, armed with a socialist programme, can defeat both the pseudo-left alliance with the PS and the far right. The working class must prepare for decisive battles ahead.

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