

Portuguese Left Bloc appeals to big-business PS to form alliance based on France's New Popular Front

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Since the formation of the New Popular Front (NFP) election alliance in France, Portugal's middle class Left Bloc (BE) is trying to replicate a similar coalition in Portugal. It is promoting talks with other Stalinist or pseudo-left forces such as the Livre party and the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), but above all with the big-business Portuguese Socialist Party (PS). The objectives of this coalition are the same as those of the NFP in France.

In collaboration with the union bureaucracies, the Pabloite BE aims to block any mobilization of workers and youth against Portugal's right-wing Social Democratic Party (PSD) government, just as the NFP aims to block opposition to President Emmanuel Macron. They do this by systematically strangling the class struggle and demanding that opposition be entirely channeled through parliament. Their parliamentary maneuvers pose no obstacle, however, to the PSD's agenda of austerity at home and imperialist war abroad.

After the NFP's electoral victory in France, Marina Mortagua, leader and national coordinator of the BE, hailed the NFP. She claimed it showed that it is possible to find an alternative in a "country that was caught in a false choice between neoliberal policies, led by Macron, which degraded the living conditions of the French people, and Le Pen's neo-fascism based on hatred and division."

Mortagua equated Macron with "the liberal policies adopted by the Socialist Party in Portugal," and admitted that the rise of the far right is due to the fact that "the Socialist Party's policies contributed to concessions to neoliberalism."

Mortagua's solution lies in "left-wing dialogues" that

the Bloc intends to open and that seek to thereby "present an alternative that people can see as credible."

Mortagua's argument is a blatant fraud. She forgot the most important thing: the "liberal policies" were not adopted only by the Socialist Party, but were also promoted by the BE and the PCP themselves. They supported the minority governments of the PSP between 2015 and 2022 in the so-called "*gerigonça*" agreement. This pact, although it officially ended in 2019, in practice continued until 2021 when, amid a growing wave of strikes against collapsing living standards, both parties could no longer maintain the farce and had to vote against the PS government's 2022 budget.

The PSP government alone only continued the policies of the years of the *gerigonça* that slashed the living conditions of Portuguese workers. This was the breeding ground for the rise of extreme right forces like Chega in Portugal and the National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen in France. These parties rely on exploiting the widespread anger in the population against their living conditions and the manifest bankruptcy and hypocrisy of the BE, PCP and similar pseudo-left parties of the affluent middle class.

Contrary to what Mortagua says, repeating this *gerigonça*, now in opposition, would not lead to great victories for the workers. Like the NFP in France, which is seeking an electoral alliance with Macron, it would hand the mantle of opposition to the PS and PSD to the neo-fascists.

The BE aims to once again draw workers behind the PS, as they did between 2015 and 2021. Since March, after the elections, the BE has been holding talks with different political forces, including the PSP in

particular. According to Mortagua, this was in order to “debate the elements of convergence, not only in opposition to the right-wing government, but also in building an alternative.”

The importance that the leaders of the Bloco attach to the PSP being part of this Portuguese-style New Popular Front was stressed by another member of the BE national leadership, Manuel Afonso. In an article, Afonso advanced his justification for openly resuming the permanent alliance between the BE and the PS:

At a time when the country (and Europe and the world!) is turning to the right and the far right, having a firm PS in opposition, giving voice to left-wing alternatives, would be important, even knowing that it would always be insufficient and that it is therefore essential to strengthen the anti-capitalist left. Conclusion: we must demand that the PS change course. It is not the left that must decide whether to converge with the PS, the latter must decide between the government and the left.

Afonso is aware that it will be impossible to try to whip up illusions in the PS and deceive workers about its class character by promoting a front controlled by the PS, if the latter in the meantime openly supports the right-wing PSD government. The PS is not concerned for now about the pleas and complaints of the leaders of the BE or their allies like the PCP. In April they voted in favour of the PSD candidate for the presidency of the National Assembly, without caring that they in turn put a neo-fascist from Chega as vice-president.

PS President Pedro Nuno had already expressed his willingness after the elections to work with the Executive to “build an agreement that would allow solutions to be found.” Nuno has now said he is prepared to negotiate next year’s general budget with the PSD by making concessions. Failure to approve these budgets would mean new elections, something the PS is hoping to avoid.

In this way, the PSD can rely on both Chega and PS to approve the budgets as it sees fit at the time and to be able to carry out its austerity policies and its support for NATO’s imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine and

the Israeli genocide in Gaza. The BE tries to complete this form of parliamentary dictatorship by creating a front with the PS that will strangle the working class and leave the path clear for the PSD.

Notwithstanding Mortagua’s promotion of it, the NFP in France is already visibly going bankrupt, with various factions close to the French Socialist Party proposing that the NFP be the junior partner of Macron, who would effectively control the government. Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s France Unbowed party, the French allies of the BE and PCP, is equally guilty of this betrayal, having been the one who promoted the widely-despised PS of former French President François Hollande as a part of the NFP.

In Portugal, if a front were formed with BE, PS and other forces that have already shown themselves in favour, such as Livre, and even the Communist Party (PCP), that front would not play a significantly different role than France Unbowed and the French PS. It would seek to suppress the class struggle, abandon its social promises and turn to the right, promoting war and blocking protests against genocide with the excuse that this is the only way to avoid leaving power in the hands of the extreme right.

The construction of a movement in the working class against the NATO war with Russia, genocide in Gaza, and austerity and fascistic police-state rule at home can only proceed by mobilizing the working class in struggle, based on Marxist, internationalist opposition to these pseudo-left forces.



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