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Portugal

“We want to be able to look further than the end of the month”

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At the public meeting in Leiria, [Left Bloc coordinator Mariana Mortágua](#) looked to the future with a denunciation of economic inequality, while founder [Fernando Rosas](#) affirmed that Bloco is the left that “is not afraid of difficulties, that is confident, that has always dared to fight and will therefore dare to win’.

Mariana Mortágua began the evening by denouncing the dividends distributed to Novo Banco shareholders, explaining that these shareholders “take millionaire profits and invest in banking, cryptocurrencies, and real estate investment funds that appreciated 35% last year.’

“And do you know what will happen? House prices will rise, the price of Bitcoin will rise, shares will rise, and the rich will get richer,” said the Left Bloc coordinator. ‘Today I want to talk about who creates this wealth. If I ask you that, you will probably answer one of two things. The first is that it is the state, and you are not wrong. When it gives tax breaks to real estate funds, for example, it is enabling this accumulation.’

But the other part, the majority of these fortunes, “comes from wages that are not paid to those who work.” The Bloco leader made a distinction between call centre operators, factory workers, supermarket cashiers, shift workers on the one hand and the owners of large companies on the other.

“But isn't the economy doing well? We hear António Costa and Luís Montenegro say so. So if the economy is doing well, why are wages so low? Why are wages not increasing but the number of millionaires is increasing?” she asked.

Mortágua explained that this growing inequality exists because in parliament and in society there are more people defending employers than workers, this was interrupted by applause. “We want to have a future, we want to have a horizon that goes beyond the end of the month, that goes beyond a few months from now,” she said. “That’s what we call freedom.”

And on 18 May, the owner of supermarket chain Pingo Doce, “who earns two thousand six hundred and fifteen euros an hour but pays six euros an hour to the Pingo Doce cashier, will vote. And he has many people representing him in parliament. And I want to tell the cashier who works shifts at Pingo Doce that her vote is worth the same as his,” concluded Mariana Mortágua.

“The left that has always dared to fight and will therefore dare to win.”

Fernando Rosas entered the stage to the sound of his own remix, which repeated “50 fascists in parliament? We'll get them out!” to a standing ovation from the audience. The first thing he did in his speech was to greet the workers in the industries of the Leiria district.

“Unfortunately, their voices are not heard in parliament,” he said, pointing to the MPs elected by the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party and Chega in Leiria. “The Left Bloc's candidacy in this district aims to renew popular representation in the Assembly of the Republic.”

As for tactical voting, the founder of the Bloco guarantees that this cannot be the fate of democracy, an endless rotation between the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party. “We must say it without ambiguity: the failure of this rotation without alternation is at the root of the crisis in the democratic system” and that “it feeds the unscrupulous far right.”

“Voting tactically means breaking with this rotation on the left,” he argued. “We must choose between the warmongering arms race, which generates new imperial wars, or the defence and improvement of wages, pensions, housing and health.”

Fernando Rosas accepts the coordination of European military forces, but outside the framework of NATO and only in a defensive manner. Spending on armaments in Portugal can only mean “cuts in public services and a militarization of social life,” he warned. He insisted that the party is not the left that talks about peace and defends more weapons. It is the internationalist left that, from Palestine to Ukraine, defends the sovereignty and peace of peoples.

“We are not the left that the right likes. We refuse to accept that a mother should be separated from her children because she cannot afford a home,” said the Left Bloc candidate. “We propose rent caps as an immediate measure to tackle the housing crisis.”

Health, shift work and young people were also topics that Fernando Rosas chose to address in his speech, saying that “this is the left that does not forget that more than a million Portuguese had to emigrate to escape the poverty to which the dictatorship condemned them.” From the theme of emigration, he moved on to defend immigrant workers who, without rights and without regularization, are exploited in Portugal.

With Leiria in mind, the candidate for the Assembly of the Republic took the opportunity to denounce the “unpunished” exploitation of kaolin, which has “unspeakable” consequences for the environment and local populations, who are the only ones mobilizing to fight against this “crime”.

“Friends, in short, we in this district of Leiria are the left that honours the memory of 18 January 1934, when the workers of Marinha Grande rose up against the fascism that haunted the country. We are the left that remembers the example of the pressure exerted by the people in the district for the release of political prisoners in the Fort of Peniche. A left that does not give up and rows against the tide, that is not afraid of difficulties, that is confident, that has always dared to fight and will therefore dare to win.”

What is freedom?

Marisa Matias opened the Left Bloc debate on Wednesday, quoting Jorge de Sena on freedom, using the example of the blackout to talk about what is essential. “There are other blackouts on the horizon,” she warned, referring to Trumpism, the cultural wars of the far right and the genocide in Palestine.

“Beware of the figure of the tyrant father,” said the Left Bloc MP, firing shots at the authoritarian and totalitarian figures offered by the far right and contrasting them with the freedom for which women have fought. Social media was also a topic when Marisa Matias recalled how hatred spreads online and how it attacks women on social media.

José Manuel Pureza was the second to take the stage to defend socialism as a path to freedom and equality. Under the banner of defending freedom, he recalled that the socialist left does not trample on difference, but follows the

words of Sérgio Godinho: peace, bread, housing, health, education. “To be emancipated and self-determined people, we cannot be held hostage by a lack of conditions.”

He then opposed the liberals, saying that “the freedom of liberals is hatred of the state.” “For there to be freedom, bread is as necessary as housing, as is the recognition of each and every one of us,” said the former MP.

“I have always seen the Bloco as the party that seriously fights for freedom, for the freedom of those things that cannot have freedom. And what we have done in parliament is to give voice to this, to try to win majorities for this,” he recalled. In the fight for voluntary termination of pregnancy or in the fight to classify domestic violence as a public crime, in the dignification of the national minimum wage, in the fight against discrimination against homosexuals in blood donation, José Manuel Pureza sees the strength of the Bloco, which fights for the freedom of all people.

The Bloco leader also recalled the unfinished struggle for the decriminalization of medically assisted death, with Marisa Matias highlighting the role that José Semedo and José Manuel Pureza himself played in this struggle.

“I look at this Bloco campaign and I see the fight for housing, for shift workers, for the taxation of millionaires, and what I see there is the fight for freedom as a whole,” she concluded.

[Cucha Carvalheiro](#) was the third guest of the evening, taking the opportunity to talk about culture and how it reminds us that we must continue to fight for freedom, which is a constant struggle. “One thing we still need to achieve in Portugal is the democratization of culture,” said the actress.

This democratization means the funding and decentralization of culture to bring it “to more than just the coastal cities”. The artist recalled the achievement of the Left Bloc with the creation of the cinema-theatre network. “It is important that there are local companies producing and presenting their own shows.”

“Culture creates jobs, generates economic returns, and a country where the population is educated is a country that is not manipulated by populists, that knows how to distinguish fake news,” she concluded.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Esquerda.net](#).

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