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Portugal

# A congress against the Troika

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**On November 10- 11, 2012, Portugal's Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) held its 8th congress in the context of the preparation of demonstrations against Angela Merkel's visit to Lisbon on November 12 and the general strike of November 14.**

The congress itself was preceded on Friday evening by a "Europe against austerity" international meeting with speakers from Germany's Die Linke, Izquierda Unida from the Spanish state, a video of Alexis Tsipras from Syriza and the reading of a statement from Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

Under the slogan "Vencer a troika" nearly 600 delegates were present, representing more than 6,000 members. The congress was very well covered by the media and was the subject of lengthy reports on news channels and newspapers.

## Breaking with the memorandum

The model the Bloco identifies with is that of Syriza. But with electoral results which are clearly less significant and above all a very different social relationship of forces, the Bloco relies on a rapid transformation of the political and social situation initiated by the demonstration of September 15 which succeeded in forcing the government to back down. It defends the proposition of a left government breaking with the memorandum of the troika based on several points: the cancellation of the illegitimate debt, the defence of public services and the right to education, health, social security, the nationalisation of the banks which have been rescued by the state and the sectors which have been privatised (energy, telecommunications and so on), a new tax system cracking down on fraud and shifting the tax burden from labour to capital.

Today the perspective of a left government opposed to the troika indicates the will to bring down the Passos government and the urgency of a policy of rupture, but it remains at this stage very algebraic, with a PCP which is still strong and extremely sectarian and which reject any alliance with the Bloco, and a PS with which no left policy is possible.

## Government and movement

Motion A received 80% of the votes and motion B 15%, with the remaining 5% being shared between the anti-capitalist platform and local platforms. The differences of orientation are hard to detect in the texts. However numerous interventions supporting motion A stressed that a left government breaking with the troika cannot be created with the PS, thus indicating the underlying debate. Motion B defended a more "movementist" option and pointed to what it considers as democratic problems.

The Bloco enjoys a local implantation and an influence in the trade unions and in the social movements like that which initiated the September 15, 2012 but this dimension was relatively little present in the interventions, which centred on numerous denunciations of the troika, austerity, poverty, the destruction of public services and so on.

This congress also saw the end of the term as coordinator of the political bureau of Francisco Louça, a central figure

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and founder of the Bloco, whose public spokespersons will now be Catarina Martins and João Semedo.