The meaning of our electoral success

Portugal: Left Bloc

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In the wake of the Left Bloc's 6.3% vote and 8 MPs won in the national elections, Francisco Louça - the central spokesperson of the Bloc - talked to the French revolutionary paper Rouge.

Rouge: What does the election result, with its overall Socialist victory and strong vote for the Bloc, mean?

Francisco Louçã: Over the last three years the rightwing coalition government imposed policies which led to a social crisis, the most visible effect of which is the biggest rise in unemployment in the whole EU. The country is socially very vulnerable, about 20% of the population lives under the poverty threshold and most unemployed receive no benefits. This result indicates that the vast majority of the population wanted to defeat a rightwing government with those policies.

What is the progress made by the Left Bloc?

In the last general election the Bloc got 2.9% of the vote, which showed a small rise in its influence after 5 years of existence. This time the Bloc got 6.6%, going from 150 000 to 364 000 votes. There are eight MPs elected, four men, four women and perhaps we'll get one more.

We've got four in Lisbon [Ana Drago, Luis Fazenda, Francisco Louçã and Helena Pinto], two (Alda Macedo and João Lopes Teixeira) in Oporto, the second city and two [Mariana XXX and Fernando Rosas] in Setubal a historical working-class town near Lisbon. This good showing is repeated throughout the country and is particularly strong in the four major centres(Lisbon, Oporto, Cintra and Braga) where the Bloc has a better score than the Portuguese Communist Party. The PCO has overall gone up by half a point and has a national score of 7.5%.

As for the social makeup of the Bloc's voters; it is particularly strong among youth - it is the third most popular party among young voters. Unlike previous elections it has had a working-class and popular vote throughout the country. This shows the impact of the Bloc's campaigns against the war and against the rightwing government's austerity policies.

What initiatives is the Bloc going to take in the coming weeks?

On election night we said we had two priorities:

- relaunch the proposals we put forward during the campaign against unemployment, against delocalisations, against fraudulent company bankruptcies, for the fight against corruption and for the abolition of bank secrecy, for a tax policy that is the basis for the redistribution of wealth and social justice;

- take an initiative on the question of abortion which is still illegal in Portugal, which leads to women being put on trial. Even though they are often acquitted, this shows a social vulnerability in relation to a repressive law. We are going to propose a referendum for people to vote on a draft abortion law and we will present it straightaway because the defeat of the right wing offers a favourable opportunity for such an initiative.