

Portugal: 'We won't pay their debt!'

End the dictatorship of the capitalist markets

The latest eurozone country to face a default on its sovereign debt is Portugal, whose minority government of prime minister Jose Socrates collapsed on 23 March. The debt crisis reached crunch point after banks stopped buying government debt, tipping the country towards seeking a €60-70 billion bailout from the European Union. The price of this bailout will be that the incoming government carries through yet more draconian austerity measures on living standards.

Previous austerity measures were met with a one-day general strike in November 2010 and mass demos last month. New cuts will, provoke yet more resistance from Portugal's workers and unemployed as the statement (extract) below from the Socialist Party's Portuguese counterpart, Socialismo Revolucionário explains.

see www.socialistworld.net to read full statement

Socialismo Revolucionário (CWI in Portugal) is calling on the parties of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Left, and the youth and workers' organisations, to mobilise immediately in order to reject the intervention of the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the brutal austerity linked to this.

This intervention was requested when the national banks, which earned billions in recent years, posed an ultimatum to the government by withdrawing funding of the state - showing clearly who really runs the country - after having received billions in state guarantees.

This 'economic help' is aimed at helping the banks and big business, and will be accompanied by job cuts, more and more wage cuts, an accelerated destruction of public services and social cuts, devastating working class families, etc. In other

words, it will be at the expense of the misery of millions, as all commentators confirm.

We must remember that in Greece and Ireland, IMF and EU intervention has not resolved any of the problems of workers and youth. It has actually considerably worsened them!

In short, a bailout will mean endless austerity for millions of people only to enrich even more the untouchable fortunes of the bankers and speculators!

Political crisis

The hypocrisy of the capitalist parties has no end in sight. The PSD (Portugal's conservative social democrats), who rejected the PEC IV (austerity package), supposedly "because Portuguese people cannot stand more sacrifice", now announces that "this help is only an interlude, and the new government will negotiate terms that will restore confidence of the markets".

Passos Coelho (businessman and president of the PSD) took care to ask us not to go out in search of those responsible for this disaster. He did so because such a search would bring us to the doors of his party, the PSD, the conservative People's Party (PP) and the mis-named Socialist Party (PS) of Socrates, among others!

And Socrates himself is now seen playing the victim, "remembering" that he is "on the left", despite having imposed the first three PEC packages and implemented a regime of servitude to big business at the expense of working families.

Taking into account the inevitable response of workers and youth to coming attacks, these politicians - spokespeople for the ruling class - desperately want a majority government, including a possible PP-PSD-PS grand coalition.

It is in the context of a grave threat to the living standards of workers and their families that workers should participate in the coming elections.

Socialismo Revolucionário continues to defend the building of a working class political alternative. We defend a united front between the parties of the left, including the Left Bloc and Communist Party (PCP) (who together enjoy over 20% electoral support) and workers' organisations. Such a front could fundamentally challenge the idea that 'austerity is inevitable' which is pushed by all the capitalist parties.

Workers' alternative

We welcome the announcement of discussions between the leaders of the PCP and Left Bloc, who met on Saturday 9 April, with a view to formulating a common approach to the current crisis.

However, this must be built upon as elections approach. What is needed is a mass movement to reject this intervention and fight for an alternative to brutal austerity.

A Left united front should develop as the political voice of such a movement, calling mass meetings and rallies to build for the electoral battle, but also preparing for

the major class battles which must be fought out on the streets and in workplaces.

As well as this, a minimum programme of alternative proposals - for the rejection of the EU/IMF deal, against the payment of the private bankers' debts; for investment in jobs and services; and democratic public ownership of the banks and resources as an alternative to austerity - should be agreed and presented in common by the Left parties in the elections. This would open up the possibility of fighting for a left government, to break the dictatorship of the markets and IMF, and implement socialist policies.

It is certain that a government of the capitalist parties in any combination will have to be resisted by huge mobilisations. Neither the elections, nor the existence of a 'caretaker government' should in any way stall the mobilisations of the working class.

The trade unions must call an immediate general strike against the IMF/EU intervention, as the first step in a sustained programme of action and struggle, including a series of general strikes and coordinated actions.

The PS is responsible for years of anti-worker policies. And the PSD and PP represent the same policies, except with maybe an even greater ferocity and rhythm.

A mass, sustained struggle - with a perspective to win by workers and youth, and a serious left alternative being presented in the elections - could have an earth-shattering impact in Portugal.

The anti-democratic way in which this bailout (and the years of savage austerity attached to it) is being negotiated by an unelected caretaker government, shows the rotten nature of international capitalism and its institutions, including the EU and IMF.

Only on the basis of breaking the international dictatorship of the markets and IMF and fighting for a socialist Europe, based on the democratic planning of the economy to meet people's needs, can a road out of this disaster be charted.

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The Committee for a Workers' International

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated.

The CWI is organised in 45 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

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Edited translations of articles from Xekinima website (CWI Greece)

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