

Speech to the Avante! Festival

Our friends and guests often ask us how we do this, how we mobilize so much militant, manual, intellectual, ND artistic labor?

As the poet said, here we have a festival of workers in construction, where every individual feels fulfilled because his job is part of a remarkable collective work.

A fraternal greeting to all the builders and all those who ran this three-day city! And to the youth with all they represent in terms of hope and change!(Here we stand on this ground and this festival, which although ours, is at the same time of all those who, in different corners of the world, continue the struggle to defend of the rights and interests of the workers and peoples.)

From this rostrum we would like to send our solidary embrace to all those who, during the course of these three days, with their presence, with their cultures, with the testimony of their struggles, armed with a friendship without borders and a great solidary spirit, once again made this “Avante!” Festival a Festival of solidarity, peace, cooperation and friendship among peoples, making it once again one of the most important moments of a meeting of communist parties and other progressive forces from all over the world.

To all those who embrace us with their presence every year and to those who contacted our festival for the first time, we would like to affirm our commitment to strengthen the bonds of friendship that unite us. Bonds that we are certain will strengthen further with the deepening of our cooperation and the intensification of our common and convergent action against imperialism and the construction of a true alternative to capitalism – socialism. To all of you we say, come back more often!

Portugal faces a very serious economic and social crisis with tragic consequences for the country and dramatic for the life of the Portuguese: brutal(unemployment; a deep and destructive economic recession; a process of widespread impoverishment; a drastic reversal in the living conditions of the popular classes and strata; an increase in injustice and inequality; rampant situations of poverty and social exclusion, a growing foreign dependence of the country.

We are witnessing today a brutal regression of the country in all fields. A situation that is the accumulated result of years of right-wing polices at the service of big economic and financial groups and an illegitimate Pact that made everything worse, established between those who have governed the country during these last years – PS, PSD and CDS-PP and the foreign troika of IMF/ECB/EU.

From this very rostrum, a year ago we said that the Pact imposed by the bankers, speculators and big business for their own benefit was a disaster that the country would pay dearly, that there was a different course and an alternative capable of defending the country and the living conditions of the Portuguese. We said that it contained an unacceptable programme of exploitation of labour, extortion of the Portuguese people and of national resources.

That such a Pact was not a programme of aid, but a Pact of Aggression against the country and the Portuguese.(We said so and life confirms it. The dimension of the problems has reached unimaginable levels. If the country had long been in a bad state, now everything became worse.

Measures of an attack on wages, pensions, incomes and the living conditions of the workers and the people. Increase in taxes on labour and consumption.

Deliberate and drastic cuts in public and private investment. Waiving of a policy of development and promotion of national production. Huge and widespread increase in the price of energy, transport and all production factors – sectors dominated by large economic groups -, as well as a financial strangulation of the micro, small and medium –size companies, are the dark traits of a policy of plunder dictated by an ideological dogmatism at the service of powerful interests, and whose negative effects on the country and the life of the Portuguese are well beyond the most pessimistic forecasts.

One year of government by PSD/CDS-PP and of the application of the Pact of Aggression, which in its main aspects had the support and connivance of the PS, clearly shown by the adoption of changes to the Labour Code or the approval of the Budget which, once again, not only laid bare the failure of the prescriptions of right-wing policies to solve the national problems, but made them worse.

This is clear in the uncontrolled burst of unemployment that continues to grow and is mortgaging the future of the country and the new generations and is creating a growing mass of socially excluded people. Over a million and three hundred thousand unemployed! Our youth, all our young people, better prepared and better qualified today, do not have, or see any prospect of future in their country!

This is clear in the depth and breadth of the economic recession that assumes increasingly worrying dimensions and with no end in sight with the bankruptcy and annihilation of thousands of companies, dismissals, wage arrears, indiscriminate lay-offs, lives destroyed.(Record levels of unemployment! Record levels of recession and destruction!

We must put an end to this policy of ruin!

The economy cannot just serve a minority, unfettered exploitation, the speculators, big economic groups.

The economy must be at the service of the people, of the country's development, of our youth, of our people!

And it is possible! If man and his needs are placed at the centre of the concerns and options of the economic and social policy. And this is a patriotic and left-wing option of policy that we defend for the country!

A year of PSD/CDS-PP government marked by an overwhelming offensive against the social rights and popular interests that became the butt of the attack in all fields – in labour, in healthcare, in education, in social security and protection, in housing, in transport, in justice, in local government and many other fields of our collective life.

A brutal and unparalleled attack on the great popular achievements of the April Revolution. An attack that meets a strong resistance, protest and struggle of our people.

From this rostrum we salute the workers and their big or small struggles, sectorial, regional and national in defence of the working and living conditions, in defence of their right to work and work with rights.

From this rostrum we salute all those who all across the country assume the defence of the National Health Service (NHS). Who do not accept nor give up as lost the battle for our people's right to healthcare and hence fight against the closure of services and medical specialities, blind cuts in the NHS, responsible for lack of budget in public hospitals and medical centres, lack of professionals and increase in waiting times for medical appointments, surgeries, tests and treatments. A fight that has PCP's full support and hence we reiterate the urgency to adopt an Emergency Plan to protect the health of the Portuguese.

From this rostrum we salute the populations, the teachers and other professionals, the young people from basic, secondary and higher education who fight in defence of the Public Schools, against the elitisation of education, a school that enables the students to be the builders of an advanced, conscious, democratic and sovereign country, a school linked to life that teaches to question, a school that educates for life and not for the market.

All those who oppose and struggle against the transformation of a State which guarantees rights into a charity State, offensive to human dignity, imposing its demeaning policy of alms and extended hand, also in unemployment, illness, old age, disability!

A greeting to the creators and artists, to all workers in the field of culture for their resistance against a cultural policy of asphyxiation and blocking of their projects and who aspire for the democratization of culture and the affirmation of their role in the process of human liberation and emancipation and transformation of the world.

We salute all those who stand on behalf of the need for a justice that is speedy and affordable to the popular classes, against the increase in fees and costs and closure of courts all over the country and all those who justly question: where is the end of impunity of the powerful, that madam minister never tires of preaching? When what we see are lawsuits that just fizzle into the air and “tax benefits” to the offenders!

We salute and support those who fight in the courts for more and better justice, for more independence to the judicial power and greater autonomy for the Public Prosecution in the combat against crime, corruption and impunity.

We salute those who protest against the iniquitous law of housing evictions; those who fight and affirm the right of mobility for the populations, for a quality service in public transport and against the privatisations and huge increases in fares.

A greeting to the small and medium-size farmers and their valiant struggle, demanding fair prices for production, control of the prices of production factors and sale of their products, for a fair distribution of aid linking it to production, for a different CAP and a different national policy in defence of livestock production and of the national forest!

A greeting to all those who take part in the important struggle in defence of the parishes and local government, today threatened by financial strangling and a vast plan to end its autonomy and its more progressive members.

A massacring and painful year of sacrifices for the workers, for the pensioners, for the intellectuals and technical cadres, for the farmers, the micro, small and medium-size entrepreneurs from catering, commerce, industry and construction who are witnessing an abrupt drop in their income and their life going backwards with policies that bring down the domestic market.

Sacrifices after sacrifices and not a single problem of the country solved! Not even the one with which they justified this destructive action and brutal attack on the life of the Portuguese: the control of the public accounts deficit.

The goals of the deficit, under whose name this government set the country under fire and sword, will not be met and history repeats itself, as it was repeated under Socrates. The policy of full priority to the deficit and full blown austerity on the workers and people brought down the economy and tax revenues.

It is an across the board failure: the country is sinking, the deficit is yet to be solved and the debt goes up to 6.6 thousand million euros!(The Motion of Censure tabled in the Assembly of the Republic by the PCP was just and timely!

It expressed a justified feeling of outrage and protest by the Portuguese people!

And, there we have them saying that not everything went as they foresaw!

And with an unbelievable cheekiness announcing new and even more brutal measures, in the name of solving the problems that they deliberately worsened and continue to worsen. Surpassing everything imaginable and all limits of shamelessness and cynicism, we have just seen Prime Minister Passos Coelho poignantly announcing a brazen theft of the wages of the workers and pensioners, in the name of combat against unemployment! Unemployment they themselves promoted and allowed to grow to bring down the wages and impose the law of the jungle in the job market!

Now the issue of National Defence. On the issue of National Defence, the government has just announced a series of conferences on the new Strategic Concept. At the same time as it was drawing up the new Strategic Concept, the government was announcing the privatisation of TAP [national airline], RTP [national TV], ANA [airports company], the Viana do Castelo Shipyard, and other companies that are of strategic importance for Portugal. It makes sense to ask: What kind of strategy is this, that makes Portugal more vulnerable? What kind of strategy is this that binds Portugal to foreign interests?

This is a strategy not for national defence, but for a national capitulation.

At the same time, through the Strategic Concept, they are seeking to justify using the Armed Forces on missions banned by the Constitution of the Republic. They want to involve the military in police-type missions. (Security problems – actually problems due to the prevalent insecurity, and in particular violent crime – can be solved with more prevention, more locally-based policing with more support for police professionals, who are demotivated by the attacks on their rights and by the reduction in the number of police stations and precincts (due to increasing concentration)).

We would like to make it clear here that any steps taken toward involving the military in police missions will be denounced and opposed by the PCP. Any such steps will also surely be opposed by many in the military, who – regardless of their political or ideological stances – consider that the Constitution of the Republic must be respected, especially by those who have sworn to defend it.

At the same time, many of the military equipment purchase deals already made need to be clarified. At a time when the government is spending all its time making cuts affecting those who already have little or nothing, the Portuguese people need to understand very clearly where the 2,200 million euros' worth of compensatory benefits promised to Portugal as a result of the deals have gone.

We are also reasserting here that Portugal does not need resources to serve NATO and the EU's militarist path. Rather, it needs policies that correspond to the nation's needs and abilities.

But the onslaught against national sovereignty is also clear and obvious when it comes to European policy.

This onslaught against national sovereignty is based on the stance taken by the government, but also by the PS [Socialist Party]: Connivance and constant submission to the policies and measures of the European Union, its monopolies and its directorate of big powers.

The goal of these policies is to conduct a fierce settling of capital's scores against the struggles and achievements of Europe's peoples throughout these last two centuries.

This offensive is anti-social, and therefore anti-democratic. It is increasingly jeopardising peoples' freedoms and democratic rights, won through hard struggles. Since it runs counter to peoples' rights and seeks to hijack their countries' chances of social and economic development for decades, it is being effected through supra-national imposition and federalism – in a process that is reenacting in today's world the colonial domination relations that the world has witnessed in the past.

This offensive makes clear what this big-business – and increasingly neo-liberal, militaristic and federalist – European Union is and whom it serves. Some, like the PCP, have always maintained that all the high-sounding speeches about solidarity and social and economic cohesion are nothing but empty slogans, repeated over and over so as to open up the ideological field to the furthering of capitalist integration in Europe and to asserting the European Union as an imperialist bloc. This offensive shows that they have been right all along.

As we have repeatedly stated, the furthering of the capitalist integration process would eventually reveal its true nature and deepen its contradictions.

Reality now stands before us, proving that we were correct. The crisis in the EU is not the result of this or that problem or detail. It is in fact the outcome of the EU's policies and line, and is therefore a crisis of the European Union itself. These policies and line are present in the various European treaties imposed on the peoples, now reinforced by the infamous budget treaty – which is really more like a colonial mandate established by big business and the big powers against our people – a treaty that the PSD, CDS and also the PS [parties] shamefully adopted in the Assembly of the Republic [parliament].

Now, with the incessantly deepening crisis, and with the euro exhibiting cracks on various sides, they are bombarding us with hour upon hour of newscasts about this or that negotiation, about the need to save the euro, about this or that measure that the ECB may or may not adopt (such as the Eurobonds bait), or about the importance of European unity, of solidarity, of cohesion, against nationalisms. All this is pure hypocrisy! In fact, all discussions in the corridors of Brussels are about only one thing: How to create the conditions for more exploitation of working people, how to continue to fatten

the mega-banks, how to maintain the euro as a tool of economic domination of the weak by the powerful; basically, about how to strengthen even more the European Union's neo-liberal and federalist nature.

But all those who are suffering more and more hardship in their lives have already understood that this cannot be the way forward. The way forward involves questioning the whole capitalist integration process, and fighting for another – completely different – road ahead for Europe. This road involves ending the supra-national impositions introduced by the Stability Pact, the budget treaty and the economic governance system. It involves cooperation (between sovereign states with equal rights). The way forward involves the right of peoples to decide on their own futures and to fully exercise their sovereignty.

We want to state here very clearly that our party will never surrender the Portuguese people's right to decide on its own path of development. And also that in respect of potential changes to the European Union arising out of the deep crisis that is corroding it, we will do all in our power to prevent further punishment of the Portuguese people by the consequences of eurozone membership. As the PCP has always said, eurozone membership is seriously detrimental to the interests of our people and our country.

Considering the undeniable seriousness of the country's situation, implementing an alternative to right-wing policies is not just a pressing and nondeferrable need if we are to save the country from impending catastrophe, it is also possible, a possibility that the struggle can materialise.

It is an actual and real possibility. As a result of the struggle and steadfast opposition of those who, like the PCP, do not accept submission to the (dictates of big business and its Pact of Aggression, we are witnessing the opening of cracks among the forces of collaborationism and submission to foreign countries as well as a drastic dwindling of the government's social and political support base.

It is an actual and real possibility that is gaining strength, by virtue of denunciation and struggle. Those who only just recently assumed that it was inevitable to comply with the Aggression Pact are now trying to distance themselves and shirk their responsibilities.

It is true that these distancing attempts include a lot of manoeuvring, but they also show that what is gathering strength among Portuguese society is a refusal to continue on this path toward ruin. They show that the Pact's consequences have made it unfeasible to support it in front of the people. In the same way, the government's arrogance in reasserting the need to fulfil the Pact and its goals shows not strength, but weakness. We must urgently turn this weakness into defeat! Defeat for the government, defeat for the Aggression Pact, defeat for right-wing policies!

There is an actual and real possibility of bringing to life an alternative, at a time when more and more voices and broader strata of our people are questioning the path that has been imposed on them, and desire change and a break with this path of exploitation and national impoverishment.

The struggle has opened up new prospects. The struggle is breaking the siege of “inevitables”, and furthering the struggle is now even more decisive to advance demands for change and to build an alternative.

To further the struggle we must broaden the convergence in action and the initiative of all sections of democratic opinion that consider that to set the country on a new path it is indispensable to break with the right-wing policies and reject the Aggression Pact.

The conditions are there, and it is possible to go further in terms of joint action among democratic circles and personalities based on a true and loyal dialogue, accepting and respecting natural differences of opinion, but at the same time denouncing and rejecting false alternatives, such as the “intelligent austerity” that talks about growth and jobs and seeks to put a new face on the old policies, or those alternatives that ignore the causes and the guilty parties and just flounder, amongst ambiguous goals and proposals, and anti-communist prejudice.

The conditions are there, and it is possible to build a political alternative and implement alternative policies, by strengthening the most determined and combative organisation that is resisting against right-wing policies; the PCP. The PCP is the bearer of patriotic and left-wing policies, and is sincerely engaged in enlarging the torrent of those who seek a true alternative.

This true alternative will emerge from, and be the embodiment of, a confluence in action and the convergent work of mass organisations and movements, of democratic circles and personalities. Expanding the PCP's influence is an unavoidable factor in creating the conditions to implement this alternative.

That is why we say to those Portuguese people who want a turnaround and want to change Portugal: Support the PCP! Strengthen the PCP, and the alternative will emerge!

Right-wing policies are not inevitable. Portugal is not bound to accepting their solutions, that have already proved to be disastrous.

It is possible to implement different policies, based on a patriotic and left-wing government that will congregate the forces, circles and personalities who are ready to support a policy to recover national dignity and respect workers' and the people's dignity.

This will be a policy and a government that will undertake a program, with a new direction for the country, that will:

Immediately undertake a renegotiation of the public debt, rejecting the Aggression Pact. The current Pact's signatories and those who benefit from it have all labelled this solution as unacceptable or unfeasible. But debt renegotiation is not just a serious proposal, it is a feasible solution. It would not be the first time, nor will it be the last, that this happens in the life of a nation, including even Germany itself. This the solution of those who want to pay only what is fair, reviewing repayment periods, interest rates and amounts, so as to save the country and protect people's living conditions. It would be a debt renegotiation whose goal would be to safeguard national interests, ensuring that resources are channeled toward the promotion of public investment, job creation and other national needs.

Nationalise banking. This would recover into State hands a tool that is essential for economic revival and to support small and medium businesses. They tell us that this too, is impossible. It isn't. The 6,000 million euros already handed over to banks for recapitalisation would have sufficed to acquire the social capital of all commercial banks.

Support national production and effectively protect the productive apparatus, making good use of our natural resources, and especially re-launching a public programme to reindustrialise the country with full employment as a goal. Implement a policy to counter the agricultural and food deficit, with support for agricultural production and for the multiple sea-based activities.

They tell us that we are a poor country with scarce resources. It's not true. Our country has resources and potential that have long been left to waste.

There are significant resources in our subsoil, our sea, our forests, our farmlands. What is needed is a State policy geared toward their full usage!

A new road is needed. The people's rights and income that have been extorted must be returned to them, improving salaries and pensions – essential to revive the domestic market and enhance domestic demand – must be improved. Policy priorities must be focussed on fairer redistribution of wealth, and on recognising the value of labour, social security and social justice. (Unemployment that they promoted and let grow in order to lower wages and impose the law of the jungle on the job market!

Some say that, given the failure of this policy of national disaster, we have sorcerer's apprentices, victims of the ricochet of they own spell.

Big mistake!

They are no beginners! They are masters in the art of exploitation of workers and peoples, at the service of the lords of money. In their majority, they learned in the schools of neoliberal thought, among the carpeted corridors of the European Union, in the infamous administrations of the economic groups and the big financial institutions, whose doors are always open to their return, after a "sacrificial commitment to public service". They are the experts in the art of mystification. They never get the recipe wrong and the spell never turns against them, nor against the interests of those they serve, but (against the workers and against the people.

That is why they are already preparing a new plan for 2013 with the same answers, same solutions, and returning to the beginning of this vicious cycle that is leading the country towards decline and turning the lives of the Portuguese into hell.

The announcement of Passos Coelho [the prime-minister] of perpetuating the thievery of two months wages for the public administrations workers and the pensioners, and one month's wage in the private sector is an unspeakable blow.

A pillage estimated in 4 billion euros, significant part of which will go directly into the coffers of the private companies.

An additional seven percent of worker's contributions to social security, and authentic tax and a windfall for capital!

With this measure we will not have more jobs, as Passos Coelho cynically and demagogically stated, but more

unemployment and more exploitation – a continuation of disaster for the country.

Workers are right to demonstrate their indignation and revolt! So much so because we know that Passos Coelho did not reveal all the measures being prepared against the workers and the people for the 2013 state budget.

The country need to put a stop to this suicidal policy and the pillage of the workers and the people!

It is necessary to say NO to the plundering of the people!

It is necessary to put an end to the farce of equity in the distribution of sacrifices!

It is time to collect from those that have gained rivers of money over all these years, exploiting the workers and people and pocketing millions with the crisis! (~It is time to say ENO--UGH! The struggle is the only path! An additional reason to hold the national day of struggle, called for by CGTP-IN for next October 1st, and large event of repudiation and struggle!

And they still dare to state that the end of the crisis is around the corner, next year! End of the crisis for whom? For those who have never felt it!(End of the crisis, and, can you believe it, the end of “binging”!

Whose binge?

It is this government that just announced it will transfer millions into the pockets of capital that states it will put an end to excessive indulgence!

It is this government that just guaranteed further fiscal amnesty and money laundering to those that place their millions abroad, with the consent of the bankers, in order to escape taxes, that is announcing the end of the bacchanal!

This scandalous operation that made "legal" 3.4 billion euros, subject to the insignificant tax rate of 7.5%! A promotion of swindle and crime.

Whose binging is Passos Coelho speaking of? Those of the excessive rates of the EDP [the main electrical supply company] that, with a small and (insignificant) cut, attempt to throw sand in our eyes; those of the public-private partnerships (PPP), whose renegotiations entails, in essence, by halting investment and transfer, in the case of roads, the maintenance of private consortiums to the state, in an obscure process that maintains the high profit rates of PPPs.

Those of banks and big economic groups that are not only secluded from sacrifices and paying taxes, but still receive millions from the state budget that the contributor will pay for, and the same time they do everything to deepen the exploitation of the people. (Those of the managers that spend their lives defending the lowering of worker's wages in order to princely increase their own?)

The shindig of the BPN [Portuguese Business Bank], after so many millions siphoned from the Portuguese and they are already announcing a further 350 million for the near future.

Passos Coelho is not thinking of putting an end to corporate binging. He is thinking of how to continue it at the cost of exploiting the nearly two million Portuguese living below the poverty line, victims of low wages and pensions and that would be 4.4 million [X1] were it not for the social benefits and at the cost of dispossession and impoverishment of the majority of workers and people.

With this government there is no end to the crisis and no end to corporate binging!

The end of the crisis can only come about with the end of this policy and the government that enforces it!

We are faced with a devastating action that articulates, in close cooperation, national and international capital, its main centers of political decision and (that, under the guise of abiding the Pact of Aggression and of the crises, have launched an unmeasured campaign of effective subversion of the Constitution of the Republic and of deepening the exploitation of work.

A cooperation made clear by the EU, IMF, ECB and OECD's approval of the current PSD/CDS-PP government's offensive against workers wages, labor laws and collective bargaining; the destruction of the state's social functions, the state's business sector and all the instruments of protection and affirmation of the country's economic and political sovereignty.

A program of exploitation of our people and alienation of our country that is accompanied by the fascistic and cynical apology of the virtues of a poor Portugal. That is why we see them praising the reduction of the foreign deficit, not by increasing national production, but by drastically reducing the living conditions of the people!

This is the strategy of the government of Passos and Portas: impoverishing the country as a solution to the crisis.

A strategy of an economy of misery based on low wages and jobs without rights, in name of a false competitiveness of the country.

It was with this objective that they conceived the changes to the labor laws, approved by the majority PSD/CDS-PP, with the explicit support of the PS [Socialist Party] and the complicity of the President of the Republic. (Changes to the labor law that, since being enforced, big capital tries to use, destroying all that is enshrined in Collective Labor Contracts and Company Agreements, abusively assuming the labor law as a law of maximal rules for working conditions.

The workers that opposed and continue to oppose this aim are correct, and gave a courageous response with the struggle in many companies throughout the country. Important and victorious struggles that from this festival we lively salute – a month of August like we haven't seen in a long time!

It is very clear that the battle is won in the field of struggle and resistance, but also in the by demanding and achieving better wages and more rights, breaking the straight jacket that big capital and the right-wing policies want to impose on the world of work. A struggle fought in the workplace, where the conflict begins and ends.

An action ever so important as we see measures, as those announced by Passos Coelho last Friday, and what is happening in the country. The devaluing (of the wages in Portugal has no parallel in Europe, while the big economic groups cash in colossal profits.

A program of exploitation of our people that is an authentic pillage of the country's resources and the annihilation of national sovereignty manifest in several dominions.

In the furious privatization of the state's business sector, with Paulo Portas assuming and engaging in competition with the Economy Minister for the role of salesman in the auction of the country to foreigners.

In the public service of radio and television, with the announced intention of conceding RTP and the public service of radio and television to private interests. Privatization that translates in a new attack upon the rights of the Portuguese people to a public service of quality, the right to a free and plural information, the right to the defense of their language and culture in which public television is an irreplaceable instrument. They argue that the people had approved their aims. Interesting argument! Did they also approve the raise in taxes? And the cuts in wages? And in the Christmas subsidy, the vacation subsidy and family support? Then why didn't they make these actions clear during the electoral campaign?

Regarding issues of National Defense, the government now announces conferences about the new Strategic Concept. They elaborate a Strategic Concept and the government announced the criminal privatization of TAP, RTP, ANA, the shipyards in Viana do Castelo and other strategic companies for the country. One need ask: what is this strategy that makes Portugal poorer and more vulnerable? What strategy is this that submits Portugal to foreign interests? This is not a strategy of national defense, but national capitulation.

Simultaneously, they aim, through the Strategic Concept, to find justification for the use of Armed Forces in missions that are forbidden by the Constitution. They want to involve the military in missions of policing.

The security problems, or rather the insecurity that has installed, with an increase in criminal violence, are resolved with more prevention, more local policing, with more support to the security professionals, who are unmotivated given the attacks on their rights, and not with the decrease in precincts and increasing concentrations of police stations.

The backdrop of the international situation is the violent deepening of capitalism's structural crisis, which has, as main element and expression, one of the sharpest cyclical crises in its history.

A crisis that is not simply financial and local, but instead an economic crisis of the system that makes extraordinarily timely the Marxism-Leninism theses on the functioning of capitalism, exposes its unsolvable contradictions, highlights its historic limits and testifies socialism's superiority over capitalism.

As we anticipated and reaffirmed in this same venue last year, the measures enforced – so they say – in the name of combating the crisis, are merely further deepening that crisis and showing how difficult it is for the ruling classes to handle it in the framework of the system's functioning. Look at the North-American economic situation, look at the Japanese economic swamp, look at Europe, and look at the spreading of the crisis to the emerging economies and the ricochet effect that it causes on the main capitalist economies.

As was also forecast, imperialism's reaction to the deepening of the crisis results in the brutal intensification of its offensive. An offensive based on the only way capitalism knows to solve overproduction cyclical crises – to destroy productive forces, increase exploitation, further concentrate and centralise wealth and power, further intensify its domination of resources and markets and accentuate its warmongering and criminal nature.

By massively destroying social and labour rights, by the brazen robbery of public resources; by promoting deeply reactionary and fascisizing values and also speculation, coupled with the growing instrumentalisation of States to serve its own interests, big capital is engaged in a vast project of social and civilizacional regression.

But imperialism's offensive is not limited to the economic and social spheres. War, terrorism, interference and destabilisation are the key trace and are putting on the agenda the possible generalisation of conflicts. A year ago we exposed, in this same rostrum, the criminal war of aggression on Libya. Look now at that war's result. A destroyed country plunged in chaos, with no democracy whatsoever, impoverished, with its oil being looted.

Today, one year later, we must once again alert to the dangers of war, this time in the Middle East.

By instrumentalising real and rightful claims of the Syrian people, imperialism has manoeuvred, conspired, injected weapons and agents in the country and instigated sectarian divisions. The result is well visible: the country is plunged into violence and armed groups of mercenaries paid by the NATO powers and by the Persian Gulf dictatorships are sowing terror. All of this with the aim of causing chaos in order to justify a direct war of aggression that, men like Obama and Hollande – presented to the world as men of change – are preparing to command. So this is the time to step up the struggle for peace and against war!

But if imperialism's offensive is powerful, so is the workers and peoples' struggle. The class struggle is there, more alive than ever, simultaneously opening perspectives and showing that it is in the peoples' hands to put imperialism on the retreat, to attain progressive and even revolutionary gains and, in that way, to build the global alternative to capitalism – socialism.

From this rostrum, we wish to salute all the struggling peoples: in Europe, in Asia or in the Middle East, highlighting, in particular, the martyr people of Palestine. In Africa, continuing the struggle for progressive changes and resisting against neo-colonialism. In Latin America, where several peoples are the protagonists of hope in a better world, engaging themselves in processes of building alternatives free from imperialism's hegemonic domination, like the Bolivarian revolution or the socialist revolution in Cuba to which, from this rostrum, we convey our special greetings.

We salute the struggles of these peoples and the progressive and revolutionary forces involved. Many of them are here with us on this stage. This is a very demanding time in which it is necessary to dialectically combine resistance and forward move. A time in which the role of Communist Parties and other revolutionary forces and their cooperation with other progressive forces the world over is extraordinarily important, not only to resist but to push forward in the path of social transformation.

Here in Portugal you can count on the solidarity from the Portuguese communists, with our profound friendship and with our determination in deepening our cooperation and common or converging action.

The PCP is in the front line of the major workers and people struggles and has had, and will continue having, a determined, confident and mobilising action. This is how we will continue acting.

The time we live in is the time to intensify the struggle of the masses, the time of converging action of democrats and patriots to break away from the right wing policies, the time to strengthen the unity and broad united workers and popular mass organisations, the time for increased action in the institutions and, at all levels, of struggle for a rupture and for an alternative policy.

In the context of the elections for the Parliament of the Azores Autonomous Region, on October 14th, we greet the communists, the ecologists and other democrats who, being part of the CDU coalition, are acting to expand the influence and parliamentary representation, to serve the Azores workers and people and to boost the autonomous region's development.

In a situation strongly requiring our intervention, the Party will be holding its 19th Congress on November 30th and December 1st and 2nd. We are determined to work so that its analyses, conclusions and decisions may reaffirm the unmistakable identity of the Portuguese Communist Party, with its unshakeable commitment of serving the working class, workers in general, the anti-monopolist classes and strata, the Portuguese motherland and the cause of workers and people's emancipation.

A Congress that will determine the PCP's response to our country's situation and to the implementation of the rupture with the current course of national disaster, showing the alternative path and how to implement it.

A Congress being prepared since the beginning of the year by the Party collective, in which each Party member is called to give his/her view and contribution, in a process of discussion in which the final stage will begin at the end of this month, once again endowing the PCP Congresses with a deeply democratic content, unparalleled in national life.

The Central Committee proposes that in this Congress we propose changes to the Party Programme. In the Programme's current name "Portugal: an advanced democracy in the threshold of the 21st century" we indicate the current historical stage that the PCP proposes to the Portuguese people and which is part and parcel of the struggle for socialism and communism. We now propose that the expression "in the threshold of the 21st century" be replaced by elements that accompany the affirmation of Advanced Democracy, attributing more visibility to its inspiration on the April Values and their projection and consolidation in Portugal's future. Therefore, we propose the following new denomination of the Party's Programme: "An Advanced Democracy – The April Values in the Future of Portugal".

Yes, April, that major deed of the Portuguese people throughout centuries of our country's history, was, is and will be, an element of great inspiration in our Party's struggle and in the struggle of the Portuguese workers and people for an advanced democracy, for socialism, for communism.

This is how we will proceed, valuing the strength and dedication of our large collective, but being aware that a stronger PCP is indispensable. Stronger in its intervention and organisation, militancy, rejuvenation, renovation and growth of its ranks, in the enterprises and work places' organisation, in the dissemination of its press and propaganda, in funds collecting and financial independence.

The PCP is necessary, indispensable and irreplaceable, always, and even more so in the current times. There is no organised, consequent and efficient struggle without the PCP, there is no solution to the national problems without the PCP and its strengthening is decisive. Thus, in these difficult days, joining the PCP is the choice put to all those who want to act consequently. We here launch that appeal; we here salute the more than 900 men, women and youngster who, already in the course of this year, have become members of the Portuguese Communist Party.

They are joining the PCP, the Party with a heroic history, always present in all decisive moments in the life of the workers and people, in this large collective to which, throughout more than nine decades, so many gave the best of themselves.

They are joining the Party of Álvaro Cunhal, when we are preparing the celebration of his 100th birthday, a celebration that in 2013 we assume as an opportunity for knowing and improving the study of his work and to affirm his life, his thinking and his struggle as an example projected today and in the future.

They are joining a Party that affirms itself with the indispensable response in the combat of our time, a Party that carries a project for the future,

To the workers, to the Portuguese people, to the democrats and patriots is posed the need, the urgency and the possibility of rejecting the Pact of aggression, of defeating the right wing policy and of opening the way for a patriotic and left wing policy and for a Portugal with a future.

To all of them we say, join us to change Portugal. Join the Portuguese Communist Party in this combat to save Portugal from disaster and to pave the way for the future.

To the workers and peoples of the world is set the necessity, the urgency and the possibility of resisting against imperialism, its aggression and warmongering strategy, of fighting capitalism and exploiting, predatory and aggressive nature, opening up the path of social progress, a world of peace and cooperation, the implementation of the emancipating project of a society free from exploitation and oppression, towards socialism and communism.

Together, as we have been in the construction, materialisation and participation in this “Avante” Festival, together with more and more Portuguese, shaking off this suffocation and entering a new course, together, with confidence, for a better life! Together in the struggle that continues!

9th September 2012