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## Portugal

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# Elections slam State Dept., Socialists

by Laurent Murawiec

The upset that belied all prognoses and shook up the Portuguese political scene on Oct. 6 when the legislative elections returned results unexpected by any commentators, may start profound transformations along NATO's southern flank and the African continent.

A smashing defeat has been inflicted by the Portuguese electorate on the U.S. State Department's chief asset in Lisbon, Socialist Party head Mario Soares, whose party lost nearly half of its vote, from over 36% to barely above 20%, and had to yield its position as premier political force in the country to the right-of-center Social Democratic Party. The humiliating defeat suffered by Soares, whose campaign was richly funded by the Socialist International and especially the German Social Democrats' Friedrich Ebert Foundation, fell on the party associated with austerity policies imposed on Portugal by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Soares, a symbol of political corruption and indecision, was deserted by much of the Socialists' traditional electorate, as well as by the middle classes badly hit by the economic depression. The warning is unmistakable for neighboring Socialist regimes that have toed the IMF's line—Spain's Felipe González as well as France's François Mitterrand.

After conceding his defeat and announcing his resignation as prime minister, Mario Soares suddenly reneged and insisted that he would stay on as head of a caretaker government—time for him to try and recoup by the January presidential elections, which were his true goal. The “slap in the face,” as the press calls his treatment at the hands of the voters, may however send him into early “elder statesman” retirement.

With 30% of the vote, the Social Democracy has emerged as the largest parliamentary force, after a dynamic and somewhat demagogical campaign led by its new leader, Anibal Cavaco Silva, a monetarist economist who conveniently saddled Soares with the sins associated with IMF austerity, while his party, which governed in coalition with the Socialists for the last two years, has failed to present any positive program for solving the most urgent national problem, the raging economic decay. The Social Democrats advocate measures

of denationalization, some of which are not without merit after the bureaucratic-socialist follies of the 1974-75 revolutionary period. The presence of advocates of a “Singapore-style offshore economy” within the Social Democracy nonetheless burdens its capacity to act. The 3% gained in the vote shows more the mandate for change—“get rid of the Socialists at all costs!”—than backing for a program which is itself vague, and reflects the internal divisions of a movement which is more an electoral coalition than a party.

The great surprise came from the party created only four months ago by Portugal's President, Gen. Ramalho Eanes, the Democratic Renovation Party, which tallied 17.7% for its first electoral appearance, nearing the Socialist vote. President Eanes, whose second mandate expires in December and who cannot run for a third term, had expected to pull together a new force capable of carrying his own political ideas after his departure from the presidency. The tidal wave of voters disaffected by the Socialist Party, and parts of the popular electorate which refused to vote solely in protest for the Communists, was unexpected by the Democratic Renovation Party's leadership itself. Before the vote, they considered that 10% would be a triumph. The Renovation Party is so new that it lacks the cadre force, the program, the organizational abilities—and it is still in shock. President Eanes's “image” of personal integrity, honesty, and competence—in contrast to Soares—was the Democratic Renovation Party's main campaign theme, and now needs to be traded in for more concrete proposals. The impressive campaigning led by the President's wife, Dr. Manuela Eanes, also enhanced the “mandate for change” image of the party, which has yet to change from a loose alliance into a party fit to govern.

On both extremes of the spectrum, the failure is obvious: The CDS, a shelter of nostalgia for Portugal's Ancien Regime (pre-1974), whose leader F. Lucas Pires was a member of the Trilateral Commission, has stepped into political insignificance with its fall under 10%. The Communist Party, led by veteran Stalinist Alvaro Cunhal, also lost 2.5% of its vote, to the general surprise. It was expected to bank on the exacerbated discontent of hundreds of thousands of unemployed or unpaid workers. In fact, the Communist Party lost a large chunk of its vote even in its traditional fiefs, such as the industrial city of Setúbal, or the “red” region of the land reform, the Alentejo.

The mandate for change is clear. What has been defeated is the coalition of the IMF, the Socialist International, the U.S. State Department, and the Comintern. But the level of abstention, an unusually high 25%, indicates that little hesitancy will be permitted to the government after the January elections.

### Presidential perspectives

A great deal of confusion still prevailed in Lisbon, a few days after the legislative upset. Attention is focused on the presidential elections, and the impact of the Oct. 6 vote on the field of potential candidates. The presidential ambitions

of Mario Soares have virtually been ruined, as well as those of former CDS leader Freitas de Amaral, both of whom have nevertheless announced that they are maintaining their candidacies. The Communist Party has no candidate that passes muster, unless it wanted its chief Alvaro Cunhal to make a fruitless last stand before his impending retirement.

Sources in Lisbon say that Gen. Lemos Ferreira, the present chief of the general staff, a very prestigious military figure, may throw his name in for nomination. In the last few months, Lemos Ferreira has been approached by the Social Democracy to be the party's presidential candidate, and has been mentioned by President Eanes as his favored successor. Reputed for his integrity and breadth of knowledge—the reader may refer to the interview he gave *EIR*, April 16, 1985—Gen. Lemos Ferreira could rally around his candidacy the Social Democratic and Democratic Renovation vote, thus forming a center bloc that could prove an unbeatable combination. Whether the Democratic Renovation Party would fully support him is not yet clear; Lemos, who succeeded General Eanes as chief of general staff when Eanes became President, after having crushed the Communists and their attempted putsch in November 1975, is not liked by left-leaning circles in the military, said to have some influence in some Renovation party circles.

One already declared candidate is the former head of a short-lived "technical" government, Maria Lourdes de Pin-

tilgo, a left-wing Catholic pacifist supported by some of the most obscurantist "Catholic" layers in the country, those associated with the insane Cult of Fatima, a fundamentalist, pseudo-religious sect centered in Portugal. Mrs. Pintasilgo, originally elevated by President Eanes, has long since distanced herself, and Eanes himself has spared no effort to marginalize her. A member of a nominally Catholic cult called "The Graal," she could be the ideal candidate for regrouping the Communist vote, the part of the Socialist electorate that would not trust in Soares's chances, and the backward, peasant-based fundamentalist vote. The expected replacement of Cunhal by the more "Euro-Communist" José Casanova as head of the Communist Party, as well as the gradual retirement of Soares, would favor the constitution of such a beastly alliance, whose chance would lie in the aggravation of the economic crisis.

Portugal is very close to Peru and the other Ibero-American debtor nations. A new Portuguese regime that would join with the anti-IMF offensive of the debtor countries, would open the door for the urgent regeneration of the Portuguese economy. A Portugal, backed up by the United States, that would use its expertise and assets in African affairs, could prove an invaluable ally to help solve the African and South African crises. Now that the State Department, and its favorite Soares, have been brushed aside by the Portuguese electorate, such an outcome becomes possible.

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