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## Portugal

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# New elections set as instability increases

by Laurent Murawiec

Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes has issued a decree dissolving the National Assembly and calling early elections for Oct. 6. The June 4 breakdown of the uneasy coalition of the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP), led by Premier Mario Soares, and the center-right Social-Democratic Party (PSD), had deprived the country of a viable parliamentary majority.

With a powerful Communist movement capitalizing on the nation's economic difficulties, Portugal is now threatened by reversion to extreme instability followed by dictatorship—the pattern which has characterized its political life for nearly two centuries. Given the country's geographic and strategic position, the crisis constitutes a danger to the Western alliance as a whole.

Portugal has never recovered from the effects of the oil crisis and the years of Communist-led revolutionary unrest that followed the ouster of the 50-year dictatorship of Dr. Salazar and his successors. President Eanes and the pro-Western officers who had planned the 1974 coup, had at first been overtaken by the radical explosion led by the Communist Alvaro Cunhal and the Communist-linked wing of the military movement, led by Lt.-Col. Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho.

Followed by the failure of Cunhal's "Leninist revolution," and his own failure to remain in power, de Carvalho established in 1980 a terrorist organization, the People's Forces of April 25 (FP-25), named for the date of the 1974 military coup. Since 1980, the FP-25 has claimed a dozen murders and several dozen bombings, including mortar attacks against U.S. ships in the port of Lisbon. If Cunhal's Communist Party (PCP) is not officially involved, intelligence sources in Portugal report that "no single act of terrorism could occur without the knowledge and the approval of Cunhal."

De Carvalho was arrested last year, producing an outcry among the Communists and the Socialist International, where "Otelo" had become something of a cult figure, a European Che Guevara. French President François Mitterrand, leaders of West Germany's Social Democratic Party, and others, interceded with their fellow-Socialist Soares, and asked for "explanations" of the arrest. De Carvalho plays a significant role in the international operations of the Soviet KGB. Given

Portugal's ancient links with the Portuguese-speaking nations of especially Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Cape Verde), de Carvalho had been entrusted with important KGB operations, in cooperation with Mozambique's President Samora Machel.

The trial of "Otelo" opened at the end of July—and was adjourned forthwith until Oct. 7, the day after the elections, as the star-witness for the prosecution, a former member of FP-25 who recanted, was shot and severely wounded on the eve of the trial, while dozens of witnesses failed to show up, after an intimidation campaign was directed at them. The potential for the trial to turn into a destabilization of Portugal is based on de Carvalho's intimate knowledge of the "dirty laundry" of the 1974-76 period, backed up by his access to one of the Communist Party's best assets: The PCP has been in possession, since April 25, 1974, of the totality of the archives of the old dictatorship's political police (PIDE). For more than 10 years, these archives have been a powerful means of blackmail against many of the country's politicians. The Cunhal-de Carvalho alliance may partly sit in the dock, but it still has teeth to defend itself.

The other means at Cunhal's disposal is the spectacular power of the PCP, a party which cannot rule, but can keep power from being exercised. Thanks to the disastrous economic situation, the PCP is able to bring hundreds of thousands of workers, unemployed, and farmers to the streets, call strikes and mass actions, and thus wield a permanent sword of Damocles over any of the fragile governments that have succeeded one another at high speed for the last 10 years. The dependency upon and subservience to the International Monetary Fund of the Soares government, have further shattered the country's livelihood. The demagogy of the PCP finds a fertile ground.

President Eanes, whose second and last mandate expires at the end of the year, will step down and a successor will have to be elected. No leading personality has emerged yet, and much of the backroom negotiating has centered on persons and party-political affairs rather than on issues. The trial of terrorist de Carvalho, which threatens to open the floodgates of scandal, also raises the delicate issue of the relationship between military and civilian power. Even though the military has long returned to the barracks, its prestige and power are still immense—and there is some uneasiness at having one of their peers—even though he is a terrorist—judged by a civilian jurisdiction.

The military—whose leadership has strongly favored Portugal's cooperation with the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, and which represents certainly the most solid institution of the nation—does not desire to revert to open intervention in political affairs. But if the Portuguese democracy fails to secure stability, the Communist threat might well precipitate exactly what the military has tried to prevent at all cost for one decade—a civil war, in which a large part of an impoverished population would side with the Communists, against the State.