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Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, Prime Minister of Portugal, votes in Lisbon

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Right-Wing Coalition Is Winning Over Socialists in Portugal's Voting

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LISBON, Dec. 3 (Monday) — The right-wing Democratic Alliance early this morning was heading for victory in the parliamentary elections and appeared to be within reach of an absolute majority in Portugal's National Assembly.

With votes equal to a little over half of the total electorate of 6.9 million tallied, the Democratic Alliance, a coalition of three conservative parties, was polling 46.4 percent of the popular vote, and already had been awarded 51 seats in the 250-member single-chamber legislature.

The rightist coalition cut sharply into traditional constituencies of Mário Soares' Socialists, which lost their position as the single largest party in Portu-

gal. Mr. Soares today conceded defeat.

The other big winner in yesterday's special election, called as a solution to chronic parliamentary instability, was the hard-line Communist Party, whose popular vote was running at 16.9 percent of the total. In Lisbon alone, the Communists, who took 14.3 percent of the vote in the last elections in 1976, were running very close to the Socialists.

Socialist losses were particularly sharp here in the capital and in the sprawling southern Alentejo region, which was the scene of large-scale land seizures after

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Right-Wing Coalition Leading in Portugal Election

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the 1974 military upheaval that ended five decades of dictatorship.

At 2:30 A.M., the Socialists' percentage of the popular vote stood at 27.3, assuring them of remaining the second largest party and an important role in Portuguese politics. But Mr. Soares and his party members paid a heavy price for having led the first two of five Governments that succeeded one another after the 1976 legislative elections. In that vote, the Socialists netted 34.8 percent of the popular vote.

The triumph of the Democratic Al-

liance, led by the ambitious Francisco Sa Carneiro, marked a dramatic break with the spirit of the 1974 "revolution," which was never consolidated by the leftist military officers and Communists who were its chief protagonists."

Even under Mr. Soares' two Governments, and the three nonparty Cabinets that followed, there was a slow erosion of what the Communists like to call "the conquests of the revolution" and a gradual encouragement of private and foreign investment in a battered economy.

But if the Democratic Alliance does achieve a parliamentary majority, Mr. Sá Carneiro and his allies will have about

10 months to put their imprint on national politics before another round of legislative elections that, according to the Constitution, must be held in the fall of 1980. After those elections, the right clearly hopes to amend the Constitution, which declares that Portugal should move toward socialism.

As suggested by vote patterns in many places, Portuguese politics are now sharply polarized and many politicians expect that the Socialists will suffer further from this process when important municipal elections are held Dec. 16.

The momentum from yesterday's parliamentary elections is expected to carry

both the well-organized Communists and the Democratic Alliance to fresh victories in city halls around the nation. "The municipals will be springboards for next year's parliamentary vote," said one Democratic Alliance strategist.

No Trouble Reported

Constitutional democracy here is little more than four years old, but the Portuguese vote like veterans. There were no reports of significant trouble or disruptions at the 13,403 polling booths around the country. It appeared that huge numbers of citizens had voted and projections suggested that the level of participation might reach 87 percent of the registered electorate.

A new coalition of rightist parties, the

Democratic Alliance was the acknowledged favorite in the balloting, but its own definition of victory was an outright majority, which no party has enjoyed since the 1974 upheaval. Democratic Alliance strategists believed they needed between 43 and 45 percent of the popular vote to win a parliamentary majority. If the Democratic Alliance falls short of a parliamentary majority, some politicians believe, President António Ramalho Eanes might ask Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, who has been a caretaker Prime Minister since July, to continue in office.

Lately, both the Prime Minister and the President had given subtle signals that they would prefer to see the Socialist Party retain its position as the arbiter in

Parliament, and avert a triumph by the Democratic Alliance.

Last week, the President presided over a Cabinet meeting that raised pensions and welfare benefits for the old and poor, and on television Miss Pintassilgo said pointedly that these measures were possible because of the economic policies of Mr. Soares, when he was Prime Minister three years ago.

A Democratic Alliance victory would complicate General Eanes's apparent plans to run for re-election in 1981, since the rightists' leader, Mr. Sá Carneiro, has vowed to run a candidate against him. Despite past differences with Mr. Soares, the President appears still to believe that the Socialists can provide social and political stability.