



Shah: taking no chances

Beatrix, Juliana and Bernhard: change imminent?



Brezhnev: who is sleeping in my bed?



Kennedy: acted irrationally



Pintasilgo: chirping or roaring?

■ It was the answer to a cartoonist's prayer. Out of the dark clouds on Portugal's political horizon, a Pintasilgo (goldfinch) has come home to roost on the prime minister's chair.

Lisbon's political polecats were out to get her the moment **Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo** (49) glided in from her cozy Parisian perch of ambassador to Unesco to make history as Portugal's first woman prime minister.

Portuguese "machismo" is in for some more hard knocks. No sooner had she arrived on the scene than three other women were sitting with her as top advisers.

● The question being asked by anxious Portuguese is whether Pintasilgo's sweet chirping may not turn into a lion's roar as a skirts cabinet leads the country to general elections.

And a roar may soon be heard as Portugal's political forces close ranks for what may turn out to be the most vicious electoral contest the country has ever seen.

■ Is Queen Juliana of the Netherlands about to hand over power to her daughter **Princess Beatrix**? Diplomatic circles in The Hague believe this to be a possibility despite official denials from the palace.

Beatrix (41) is being seen more and more in public. It has long been an open secret that pressure from within the royal family has been exerted on Juliana to persuade her to abdicate. She and Prince Bernhard have found it difficult to live down the 1976 scandal when Bernhard was accused of accepting R850000 in hand-outs from the American aircraft company Lockheed.

Juliana's popularity with her people remains immense but insiders believe that after 31 years on the throne she is now willing to yield the royal burden to her daughter.

■ A bed in which Soviet leader **Leonid**

Brezhnev slept during his official visit to Bonn, a handkerchief owned by the Shah of Iran and a crystal glass from which Queen Elizabeth drank Rhine wine will be sold by auction in Bonn in September.

The bed, which has a catalogue price of R1000, and the other items were part of the fittings of the Petersburg Hotel, near Bonn, which was bought by the West German government for R8,2 million at the beginning of the year.

The catalogue price of the Shah's handkerchief is R2,10 while the crystal glass is listed at less than 30 cents.

It is expected that more than 1500 people will be present at the auction which starts on September 25.

■ There have been no attempts so far on the life of the **Shah of Iran** now in exile in Mexico but he's taking no chances.

Two hundred armed guards are responsible for his safety in the 18th century French-style mansion in Cuernavaca where he is staying. Of these 10 belong to the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 15 to the Mexican federal police, 15 are detectives, 10 are local policemen and 50 are from Mexico City.

The other bodyguards are private security personnel who receive just over R36 a day — no mean wage in Mexico. The Shah's mansion is surrounded by high walls and there is a special look-out for strange aircraft flying in the vicinity.

Despite his low profile most people in Cuernavaca have started to turn against him. Last week anti-Shah slogans including "Go away murderer of the Iranian people" were painted on the outside walls of the mansion.

The Shah has a six months visa from the Mexican authorities and there is doubt as to whether it will be renewed on its expiry.

■ Try as he might **US Senator Edward Kennedy** can't exorcise the spectre of Chappaquiddick.

For five years he maintained a stony silence about the controversial accident in which his passenger **Mary Jo Kopechne** died after the car they were in fell into a lagoon. It failed to silence the critics.

Now, in a reversal of tactics, he is speaking openly about events that night and conceded that he had acted "irrationally".

He said he was strongly opposed to the opening of a new inquiry into the incident and added that he did not think that the matter was one that would be an obstacle to his candidature in any presidential elections.

Not that he was planning to run for the presidency in 1980, he quickly added.

His family, with memories of two Kennedys who were assassinated, are reported as being bitterly opposed to his possible candidature.

■ At the international cherry-pit-spitting championships held in Eau Claire, Michigan, **George Nadmik** claimed a world record after propelling a fruit pip 17,69 m.

The 47-year-old American said modestly that all he had needed to accomplish his feat had been a lot of training and a strong tongue.

All the cherries he swallowed to get at the pips had not put him off the fruit, he added. The previous record of 14,79 m was held by **William Mobley** of Ohio.

Another world record — one that many would love to break — has been chalked up in Fort Lauderdale, US. **Vincent Torro** (34) and **Louise Heath** (26) exchanged the longest kiss in the world. It lasted four hours and 32 minutes.

Their prize for winning the competition, organised by a local radio station and in which 40 couples took part, was a holiday trip to Canada.