

EANES PLEA TO ARMY

By JACQUELINE REDITT
in Lisbon

GEN. EANES, the Portuguese President, warned the armed forces yesterday to resist any political manipulation and urged them to stay loyal to the democratic system.

Speaking on the fourth anniversary of an attempted Left-wing uprising and one week before general elections, the speech will certainly be interpreted as an oblique message to Portugal's electorate who for nearly 50 years before 1974 were forbidden to act, or even think, politically.

In reaction to this, the past five years have brought one successful military coup, two unsuccessful coups, and no less than 11 governments.

Small surprise, therefore, that there is confusion and consequent apathy. In the 1975 Constituent Assembly elections there were 8.7 per cent abstentions, in the 1976 general elections, the figure rose to 16.7 per cent.; and in the municipal elections that year it was 35.4 per cent.

Opinion poll ban

Opinion polls in Portugal are banned as soon as an election date is fixed but Spanish polls carried out for the Madrid daily *DIARIO 16* in five Portuguese cities show that a high percentage of voters—56 per cent. in Lisbon, for example—have not yet decided who to vote for.

The three main contenders are the Socialists, who emerged in 1976 as the leading party with 35 per cent. of the votes, the Democratic Alliance of the Social Democrats, a group of dissident Socialists, and the Monarchists, and the Communist front, the United People's Alliance.

The Constitution demands that general elections be carried out in October next year again, so whichever party wins will only have eight months to prove itself. Communist and Socialist leaders say the Alliance will poll most votes, but will not gain a majority in the new 250-seat Parliament.

They believe that if the Alliance forms a minority Government, it will be defeated on its programme by the combined votes of the Left. If they are right, Portugal will be back to square one and without effective government.

Fundação para o Futuro

