

Pintassilgo seeks to heal social divisions

From Jill Jolliffe
in Lisbon

Portugal's Prime Minister-designate, Miss Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, said yesterday she "would never be an instrument of a military regime." Speaking at a press conference, where she announced her new Cabinet, she said that Portugal had finished with military rule, and that "all democratic institutions are functioning normally."

Miss Pintassilgo said that her main task was to prepare elections in a climate of stability, and that the Cabinet had been

chosen on the basis of government experience, competence, and political neutrality. She said that her dream was for "an alternative society" in Portugal, in which the divisions which followed the 1974 revolution will be forgotten. The new Cabinet will be sworn in today.

Miss Pintassilgo is facing a boycott from leaders of the conservative Social Democratic and Centre Democratic parties, who recently formed an electoral alliance. They have refused to meet her to discuss the new Cabinet.

The interim Government will face its first political test in 10 days, when it presents its programme to Parliament. Despite their strong opposition to Miss Pintassilgo, the conservative parties do not appear to have the numbers to block the programme.

The Cabinet includes three backers of the independent Social Democratic Association, which split from the Social Democrats in April.

The new Prime Minister is stressing national unity, and described her Cabinet as "homogeneous." She has

created a new Science and Culture Ministry, and emphasises open government. Yesterday's press conference, during which she answered a stream of questions in three languages, is planned as the first of a series of regular meetings between Miss Pintassilgo and the press.

The new Cabinet includes one woman, Maria Teresa Santa Clara Gomes, as Assistant State Secretary to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister-designate said that three Cabinet posts were offered to women, who refused "for various reasons."

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

