

Military discord grows in Portugal

From Jill Jolliffe
in Lisbon

As Portugal prepares to test its eleventh Government in five years, led by Mrs Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, there is growing discord between politicians and the military, and increasing criticism of President Eanes.

The dispute was triggered by the controversial amnesty law, passed by a Left-wing majority in Parliament on Thursday. The law gives amnesty to Army officers involved in coup attempts since the 1974 Revolution. It was approved by Parliament in April, but vetoed by President Eanes under pressure from his military associates.

Under the Constitution, the law returned to Parliament for review where it was approved a second time. The President is now bound to promulgate it, despite military opposition.

The Army Chief of Staff, General Pedro Cardoso, said this week that Armed Forces commanders would not accept the law. "It represents a usurping of the national responsibilities of the military community," he said.

Since President Eanes announced his intention to dissolve parliament in favour of early elections, he has been the target of growing criticism. His decision was opposed by the Left-wing parties and applauded by conservatives of the newly-formed Democratic Alliance.

But his nomination of Ms Pintassilgo as Prime Minister-designate drew protests from the conservative parties. They regard her as a Socialist sympathiser close to the controversial Revolutionary Council, a military advisory body which

oversees the power of the President and Parliament.

The leadership of the conservative Social Democratic Party has long accused President Eanes of "militarising" the Presidency, although a liberal stream of the party, centred on the Lisbon weekly, *Expresso*, was more sympathetic.

But *Expresso* joined presidential critics, when it described Ms Pintassilgo's appointment as a deal between the Revolutionary Council, which initially opposed early elections, and the President. It also revealed that Ms Pintassilgo has been a close adviser of President Eanes since 1976. "For some people," the weekly claimed, "the appointment is proof of the dangerous isolation of the President, who is now resorting to appointing his friends."

The claim that the President was concentrating more power in his own hands was echoed by the Socialist Party. The party's accusations "have become too marked to ignore, but do not necessarily reflect popular opinion. Earlier this year, when the President faced similar criticism, a poll conducted by *Expresso* showed General Eanes's popularity running at 63 per cent.

If General Eanes decides to run for President in 1981, he may pass to Army Reserve to stand as a civilian candidate.

The restlessness of Portugal's military men is a reminder that they are still playing politics. This was underlined in June when the Air Force commander, General Jose Lemos Ferreira, threatened to withdraw the force from national and NATO exercises, in protest at Parliament's rejection of the Budget.



Ms Pintassilgo

