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Woman Prime Minister appointed in Portugal

BY JIMMY BURNS IN LISBON

PORTUGAL'S PRESENT ambassador to UNESCO and a former Social Affairs, Dr. Maria de Lurdes Pintassilgo, has been appointed to form a new government, which will prepare interim elections in the autumn and conduct essential state affairs. She becomes Portugal's first and Europe's second, woman Prime Minister.

Dr. Pintassilgo has built a formidable reputation as a woman of considerable intellectual and technical experience.

Before becoming a diplomat, she was a leading lay exponent of contemporary Roman Catholic thought, and was involved in grass-roots community action. She also led a study group which reported on social policies for women.

Dr. Pintassilgo, a graduate industrial chemist like Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the UK leader, was also formerly head of a textile plant and editor of "Industry," a specialised magazine.

Her task will be, essentially, a caretaker one, but her qualities will be tested to the full in the difficult weeks ahead.

The political parties have initially accepted her appointment, although their final posi-

tion will depend on the government she forms and the type of programme she presents to Parliament in about two weeks' time.

The programme will need to define the precise powers of her Ministers and avoid the ambiguity which has led to the downfall of previous non-party governments.

This will not be easy. The Socialist Party, Portugal's major parliamentary grouping, has already insisted that the future government freeze all controversial activity, particularly in collectivised agrarian reform.

It is, nevertheless, insisting that it raise administrative prices, including fuel and transport, to make present budget allocations compatible with the target for the public-sector deficit.

Dr. Pintassilgo's government, Portugal's 11th since the 1974 revolution, will also be expected to clarify its position on the presently interrupted negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, as well as on a number of wage demands which will emerge before the autumn election.

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