

Gon Van Verdegheem
Harvestehuder Weg 81
2000 Hamburg 13

Hamburg, 4th September 1979



Dear Maria de Lourdes,

If I had been able to find out your whereabouts, I would have congratulated you much earlier upon your entering high office. By chance I heard your name mentioned on German television indicating your willingness to take upon you the premiership. However, I did not find out until I was on my way to Finland reading the attached article in TIME and thus learning that you had been at UNESCO; I allow myself to address this letter to that agency.

I rejoiced indeed upon recognizing your picture along that of Mme Veil, a fact that should make all women extremely proud. Moreover, I am grateful to TIME which made it possible to extend to you all my sincerest wishes for the next few months and for the future. May you indeed be successful in your endeavors in taking the right decisions and guiding the Portuguese people into the desired direction. Above all, I wish to express my admiration for promoting the women's cause and for your continual adhering to your ideals and principles of old. May you achieve the lofty goals you have set for your self in both fields.

Long gone are the Coimbra days. The contact has broken off but memory stays on.

With my kindest regards,

Gon van Verdegheem
Gon van Verdegheem

Europe



The new "Euro-President," Simone Veil



Premier Maria de Lourdes Pintassilgo

EUROPE

Year of Victorious Women

Two more political pioneers in Maggie's footsteps

No one was willing to attribute it entirely to Margaret Thatcher's groundbreaking election in Britain. And, certainly, no male politician was yet prepared to step aside chivalrously. But, suddenly, 1979 in Europe seemed to be turning into a year of victorious political women.

In Strasbourg, the spanking new European Parliament chose as its first President the elegant and brainy Simone Veil, 52, a former French Health Minister, a Jewish survivor of the Auschwitz death camp and one of the Continent's hottest political properties. In Lisbon, President António Ramalho Eanes abruptly chose as interim Premier Maria de Lourdes Pintassilgo, 49, a chemical engineer and women's rights advocate now serving as Portugal's delegate to UNESCO in Paris.

Riding on the support of her own centrist Liberals, plus a loose coalition of Christian Democrats, British Conservatives and French Gaullists, France's Veil won her post on the second ballot, with 192 out of the 377 valid votes cast.

For a political body that considers itself historic, the election of a victim of Nazism symbolized the enduring European reconciliation to which it is committed. Veil regularly tops the polls as the most popular political figure in France. In Strasbourg, it was hoped that her grass roots appeal could help the new Parliament make up with prestige and influence what it lacks in constitutional power.

Veil has made a strong public impact ever since President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing picked her from a senior judicial post to serve in his Cabinet in 1974. A mother of three, she strenuously campaigned against tobacco and notorious French alcoholism, liberalized rules gov-

erning contraception, and successfully led a long and bitter legislative campaign for legal abortion. The new "Euro-President" quickly gave the Parliament an early sample of the no-nonsense grit behind her gentle smile. When Protestant-Ulster Unionist the Rev. Ian Paisley heckled Irish Prime Minister Jack Lynch for delivering part of his speech in Irish Gaelic, Veil rapped her gavel and, in softly spoken French, effectively told him to shut up.

In traditionalist Portugal, voters and politicians alike could not help being tantalized by the choice of Pintassilgo as the stopgap Premier charged with forming an interim government to prepare for early elections this fall. The country has been without a government since early June when a reformist Cabinet of political independents headed by Carlos Alberto Mota Pinto resigned under Socialist and Communist censure motions. An independent herself, Pintassilgo has been described as both a "Catholic militant" and a "pure social democrat." As Minister of Social Affairs in the first provisional government following the army-inspired Flower Revolution of 1974, she was best known for promoting the introduction of equal rights for women into the country's new constitution.

If her program is approved by the lame-duck Parliament, she will become the first woman to govern Portugal since Queen Maria II in 1853. The chipper diplomat, who is single, is undaunted by that prospect. She acknowledges Maggie Thatcher's political pioneering. "We have always imitated the English," she quipped last week. "After all, we only started liking our own port wine after they did." ■

SPAIN

Under the Gun

All the Basques in one exit?

As leader of the ruling Center Democratic Union Party, Premier Adolfo Suárez last week reached an agreement with Basque political groups that held out the promise, at least, of ending nearly 150 years of intermittent bloodshed and violence in the name of autonomy for the Euskal-Herria, or Basque people. Suárez and Carlos Garaicoechea, president of the moderate Basque Nationalist Party and of the Basque General Council, negotiated almost literally under the gun until the last minute. Failure would have triggered a new campaign of terrorism by ETA, the Basque separatist organization whose political-military wing had lately focused on tourist resorts. "We have signed a veritable peace treaty!" cried Juan Maria Bandrés, a deputy of the left-wing Basque Euskadiko Eskerra party.

That judgment may prove premature, but there was no doubt about the profound sense of relief that swept the Basque country. The stock exchange in Bilbao, commercial capital of the rich, heavily industrialized Basque region, rose 1.23 points at the news of the deal. "We are being greeted like a victorious football team returning from a cup final," declared one tired but happy Basque parliamentarian as the negotiators arrived at Bilbao's Sondica Airport.

The Basque groups had laid down their terms for autonomy in the so-called Statute of Guernica, named for the Basque town that was almost obliterated by Nazi



Spain's Suárez, the Basques' Garaicoechea
"A deep and profound understanding."

