

MINISTÉRIO DA COMUNICAÇÃO SOCIAL

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New leadership in Portugal will bring only brief calm to political storms. The swearing in of Maria de Lurdes Pintasilgo as the country's first female Prime Minister on August 1 ended a long period of right-left stalemate. But her mandate is limited--to organize democratic elections next autumn.

Even before the vote, Pintasilgo, a former diplomat, faces a mountain of problems--a worsening economy, sniping from critics of all ideological stripes.

And afterward? Not much improvement, says our man who covers the region:

"Socialists, whose running of the government is blamed for economic woes, stand to lose substantial strength, but will remain the largest single party.

"Four other parties, ranging from conservative to Communist, may have to divide up the rest of the vote. In short: Ingredients for another impasse.

"Would President Eanes, a former general, intervene? As a last resort. He is committed to democratic rule, but might act to avert a military coup."

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