

# An Engineer to Get Portugal Moving

Maria de Lurdes Ruivo da Silva Matos Pintassilgo

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LISBON, July 20 — In the heady, stormy days of 1974, Col. Vasco Gonçalves, the left-wing Prime Minister of the Portuguese revolutionary Government, would greet the arrival of his sole woman minister at Cabinet meetings with a mildly

**Woman in the News** sarcastic: "Here comes our flower."

The taming of the revolution has swept away many personalities from those times. But yesterday one of them, Maria de Lurdes Ruivo da Silva Matos Pintassilgo, the "flower" of the Gonçalves Cabinet, made a striking re-entry on the political scene. From a list of seven names, President António Ramalho Eanes picked the 49-year-old engineer and diplomat to become Prime Minister of the 11th government since the collapse of the Salazar dictatorship in 1974. She will be the first woman to be head of government in Portugal.

The appointment of the forceful Miss Pintassilgo — her name means goldfinch — was greeted with anger and consternation by the Portuguese right, which has come to believe that political affairs are drifting in its direction. *O País*, a far-right daily, labeled her "a rather controversial person, who under the previous regime did not hide her adhesion to advanced ideological currents." It also called her a progressive and a "third-worldist."

Another daily recalled that she had spoken out in favor of legalized abortion, an issue that has stirred deep debate in a country where the Roman Catholic Church has an important voice.

## Defies Easy Categorization

But Miss Pintassilgo, who has never married, defies easy categorization. She is a longtime Roman Catholic feminist who lives in a Lisbon commune with a group of women from Graal, a Catholic lay organization.

While she plunged eagerly into the revolutionary ferment of 1974, serving as Minister of Social Affairs, she had earlier served as an appointed member of a quasi-legislative chamber of the Salazar regime.

"She is very open to the historical currents of the times," said a woman friend who has worked closely with Miss Pintassilgo on study groups on the condition of women in Portugal. "She is very open to people, it's easy to get in touch with her," the friend added. "The commune where she lives has a very international atmosphere: Someone always answers the phone in Spanish, French or some other language. She is very generous and very understanding. But she is also very strong-willed."

In the first, anxious months of the revolution when the Communists appeared to be in the ascendant, two influential officers in the left-leaning Armed Forces Movement, Vitor Alves and Ernesto Melo Antunes, introduced Miss Pintassilgo to a little-known major named Eanes. She and the major became fast friends, and later, in political crises, President Eanes has floated her name as a possible non-party prime minister.

## Faces Highly Delicate Task

Colonel Alves and Colonel Antunes, now both members of the watchdog Council of the Revolution, are known to have discreetly advanced her candidacy, which is another reason for the explosion of outrage on the right.

Miss Pintassilgo, who since mid-1975 has been Portugal's UNESCO delegate in Paris, now faces the delicate task of putting together a government that according to the President will be a neutral referee in the elections for Parliament expected to be held in late Octo-



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*A longtime feminist who defies easy categorization.*

ber. The President has insisted that the caretaker government's program be approved before Parliament is for-

mally dissolved, a possibly tricky hurdle for the new Prime Minister.

Once the elections are over, Miss Pintassilgo will in theory step aside for a prime minister of the winning party or coalition. But, as many politicians believe that the balloting will produce another stalemate, there is speculation that she could be around beyond October. If, as in the past, the parties cannot put together a stable government, President Eanes might renew her mandate.

In the coming days, Miss Pintassilgo will have to assemble a cabinet willing to take on jobs that could end in three months.

A chemical engineer by training, an unusual accomplishment for a woman in Portugal, the new Prime Minister likes to be called "Engineer."

In a country where men have for the last five years badly muddied the political waters, this woman, born to a middle-class family in Abrantes on Jan. 18, 1930, now has a chance to succeed.

"Perhaps," one newspaper observed wistfully, "a woman can bring off the miracle so greatly desired."

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