

## 6 OVERSEAS NEWS

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Jill Jolliffe surveys the state of the parties prior to election campaign

## Portugal Left faces uphill fight

THE Portuguese Left has recognised that it must adapt to the changed political climate of 1979. It is concerned primarily to "defend the conquests" of the Revolution of April 1974. There can be no question of attempting to extend existing nationalisation as the country approaches new elections.

Major Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho—or Otelo as he is more often known—is synonymous with the Revolution in most Portuguese minds. One of the original "captains of April," he was recently moved to the Army Reserve, against his will, in an attempt to neutralise him politically. But Otelo has no intention of retiring from politics. He is an active supporter and spokesman of the far Left, and still commands wide respect.

His mood reflects the sobriety of the Portuguese Left today: "These elections have caught the Left at a low ebb," he said. "It is evident that the class struggle hasn't stopped—in the factories, or on the collectives—but it is more isolated. Before, there was complete workers' unity.

"The election looks like being dominated by the Right-wing block, while the Left is divided. The 'Left majority' spoken of by the Communists is a fiction... conditions do not yet exist for a Left-wing electoral front outside the Communist and Socialist parties, although they may exist for the 1980 elections." Despite his



● Major Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho: 'The Left is divided'

pessimism. Otelo feels that the Left will retain its present parliamentary majority.

This defensive approach is also evident within the Communist Party itself, which is placing less emphasis on the "direct action" tactics of the past and more on parliamentary success. Industrial action by the Communist-led Intersindical Federation has been muted, and the party leader, Mr Alvaro Cunhal, recently warned the Socialists against an irresponsible attitude to the newly-formed Government of

agrarian reform, is growing rather than waning.

Gerrit Jan Hoek of the Dutch weekly, *Vrij Nederland*, recently spent a week working on a collective, and viewed the Alentejo as the most thoroughly organised Communist region in southern Europe. "But there is great uncertainty about the future there," he said. "People are angry about the dismantling of the collectives, and afraid for their jobs. There is a general feeling of instability." He thought the Communist Party, which is prominent in defending agrarian reform, would pick up votes from the Socialists, who are a discredited force in the province.

The Left is approaching the elections with little prospect of unity. The Socialists hold 101 seats in the 263 seat Parliament, and are Portugal's largest parliamentary party. They have rejected approaches from the Communists, who have 40 seats, to form an alliance, and attempts by parties of the extreme Left to organise a united revolutionary alternative to the Communist Party have failed so far.

By contrast, the Right formed an electoral alliance in July. The Social Democrats, Centre Democrats, and Popular Monarchists signed an agreement to contest the elections as the Democratic Alliance. The Alliance has already run into trouble because of the refusal of the larger party, the Social Democrats, to agree to joint lists of candidates, but is likely to hold together until the elections.

Miss Maria de Lurdes Pintasilgo.

A forthcoming visit by the Italian Communist leader, Mr Berlinguer, suggests that the party is stressing political flexibility and wants to change its (perhaps unjustified) image as Europe's most "Stalinised" Communist Party.

Nevertheless, the Communists remain a powerful force in Portuguese politics. They are highly organised, with a large and loyal following. The party's support in the Alentejo province, the seat of