

Over the first hurdle on the way to recovery

More than the resounding victory of the centre-right Democratic Alliance in the December 2 general election, the most encouraging sign that Portugal is on the road to recovery was the massive turnout at the polls of a previously apathetic electorate. Indeed most observers saw the election campaign and the results as evidence of the country's political maturity.

The stranglehold the so-called "majority of the Left" has kept on the country since the ill-fated April 25 1974 revolution has been broken. It is even being argued that the claim made by the Marxist-orientated revolutionaries that they

had restored democracy in Portugal is a fallacy.

At the height of the election campaign the fiery leader of the Democratic Alliance Dr Francisco Sá Carneiro contended that what the country has had for more than five years was not democracy but revolution. "What we have had is an abrupt change imposed by force or under threat of force to uphold a regime."

With four seats elected by Portuguese living abroad still to be declared on December 12 the Alliance had exactly half of the 250 members of parliament. In the last elections the parties merged in the Alliance captured two of these seats and the Socialists won the other two. The swing in the latest election

suggests that the Alliance will take at least two of the four this time. If so, it will have 127 of parliament's 250 seats against 123 for parties of the Left.

The winning Democratic Alliance consists of three widely different parties and one political group which have come together as an electoral front to put a stop to Leftist rule. They are the Social Democratic Party (PSD) led by Dr Francisco Sá Carneiro, the Social Democratic Centre (CDS) of Professor Diogo Freitas do Amaral, the small Popular Monarchist Party (PPM) under the leadership of Goncalo Ribeiro Telles and Dr Medeiros Ferreira's Reformists.

The big losers were the Socialists led by Dr Mário Soares. He conceded defeat by saying that his party would now be one of opposition "defending the gains of the revolution". The Socialist Party saw support for its policies slip by 7.7% since the 1976 election with the greatest falls in the large towns.

Although the Communists linked with the small Portuguese Democratic Movement in the United Popular Alliance gained 4% it was not enough to compensate for the Socialist decline.

A defeat for Soares was also seen as a setback for President Ramalho Eanes whose differences with Sá Carneiro had increased recently. Indeed the leader of the Democratic Alliance has made it abundantly clear that the coalition will not support a re-election bid by Eanes when his term of office expires late next year. He told the Portuguese weekly *Tempo*: "We have already agreed on the type of person we will put up as candidate. We have not yet made a choice but in principle would like him to be a civilian."

For the Democratic Alliance the first hurdle has been successfully negotiated. Next is the mammoth exercise of elections for thousands of local councils throughout the country to be held on December 16.

Election fever; an exiled Timorese 'warrior' joins in to demand freedom from the left-wing 'dictatorship'



Fundação C...

Sá Carneiro: a victory for change

With the victory of the Democratic Alliance it became virtually certain that the new prime minister of Portugal would be the leader of the biggest party in the coalition — the Social Democratic Party — Dr Francisco Sá Carneiro.

Since he was first elected to parliament in 1969, the 45-year-old diminutive lawyer from the northern city of Oporto has made a name for himself as the maverick of the Portuguese political scene. Indeed as a member of the "liberal" wing of the only party allowed at that time Carneiro resigned four years later in protest at the lack of civil liberties under the Marcello Caetano regime.

After the so-called "Carnation Revolution" of April 25 1974 Sá Carneiro formed the centre-left Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and was appointed deputy to the prime minister of the first provisional government Palma Carlos.

He was behind the move to widen the powers of president António Spínola who resigned after it failed. In December 1975 his party split and he went to London only

returning to undertake a successful leadership struggle.

Observers and close friends credit Sá

Sá Carneiro: promises progress



Carneiro with "an immoderate personal thirst for power". But it is too soon to make predictions how he will use it in the few months before the next general election.

While still on the campaign trail it was suggested to him that if conditions were right he might become a dictator. He reminded his interviewer Amaral Pais of the influential weekly *Tempo* of his track record: "I have never clung to the State or to power. It is true that I work for personal satisfaction but above all to serve my party and the country."

Sá Carneiro vowed that if he became prime minister he would step out of party politics. "I believe that running a government is a task much too absorbing and too serious to allow for divided loyalties. I think that a government must place itself on a national level and not on a purely party level." Promising a policy of "moderation, freedom, progress and social justice", Sá Carneiro is nevertheless aware of the risks run by the Democratic Alliance of clashes not only with the Left but also with President Ramalho Eanes who does not agree with his views on the need for constitutional changes.