PORTUGAL

Date of Elections: April 25, 1975

Purpose of Elections

In accordance with the programme of the Movement of the Armed Forces (MFA), which had assumed power in the country on April 25, 1974*, elections were held for all the members of the national Constituent Assembly.

Characteristics of Parliament

The national Constituent Assembly of Portugal is composed of 250 members elected for the purpose of drafting a new Constitution and preparing the way for future elections of a Parliament. Of these deputies, 247 represent metropolitan Portugal, the Azores and Madeira, whereas Portuguese citizens abroad are represented by three deputies: one for Mozambique, one for Macao and one for foreign countries with a not unimportant Portuguese population.

Electoral System

According to the Electoral Law which was drawn up specially for the Constituent Assembly elections**, all Portuguese citizens over 18 years of age were entitled to vote. Also qualified were illiterate persons and certain classes of immigrants, while Portuguese working or living abroad could vote only under certain conditions. Criminals serving their sentences, as well as a number of persons who held certain high public positions or belonged to anti-democratic organizations prior to April 25, 1974, were barred both from voting and standing for election to the Assembly.

Registration as an elector for the April 1975 poll was compulsory and took place from December 9, 1974 to January 8, 1975.

All persons holding Portuguese citizenship for at least 15 years, aged over 21 and resident for at least 6 months in the constituency in which they stood as candidates were eligible for election to the Constituent Assembly. Ineligible, however, were illiterate persons, active members and officials of all political, social, paramilitary or economic organizations of the former regime, and all members and collaborators of the military and police who exercised functions

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* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections VIII* (1973-1974), p. 14.
** See section *Parliamentary Developments,* p. 15.

in metropolitan Portugal or overseas. While civil servants were qualified to run, membership of the Assembly was considered incompatible with membership in the Government or the Council of State.

Candidates were nominated by political groups which, once having 5,000 members, qualified as parties. Under the Electoral Law, a candidate's campaign expenses were limited to 80,000 *escudos.*

Members of the Constituent Assembly were elected in the 22 electoral districts of metropolitan Portugal in accordance with a party-list system of proportional representation, whereby one deputy represented every 25,000 constituents.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The 1975 elections were held in accordance with the programme of the Movement of the Armed Forces (MFA), which had declared, upon taking power, that elections to a national Constituent Assembly were to be held within 12 months.

On April 1974, General de Spinola had become President of the Republic and left-wing Colonel Goncalves was chosen as Prime Minister. President Spinola however resigned following a split between right and left-wing factions of the Government, and was succeeded by Gen. Costa Gomes.

The general elections were the first since 1928 in which the Portuguese electorate was afforded a choice between political groups ranging from extreme left-wing to centre-right parties. During the 3-week campaign, a National Electoral Commission aimed to inform the public about electoral procedure and to ensure equality of treatment for all the contending parties in the press, radio and television.

The 12 parties — 3 centre and right-wing, 5 left-wing and 4 extreme left-wing — which ultimately contested the Assembly seats fielded some 2,600 candidates. Among the major parties were the four (Socialists, Communists, Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and the left-wing Portuguese Democratic Movement-Democratic Electoral Committee) that were members of the coalition Government, as well as the conservative Social Democratic Centre.

In a speech on the eve of the elections, President Costa Gomes called on the people to back those parties favouring a socialist and pluralist democracy. The interest in the poll was manifested by the fact that the participating electorate — enlarged by 18-year olds — more than doubled as compared with the previous (1973) general elections.

After a calm and orderly polling day, official results gave the two moderately left-wing parties (Socialists and PPD) — which had campaigned on a

platform of public freedoms — over 64 % of the vote. Virtually all the parties with Assembly seats had, prior to the elections, signed an agreement with the country's recently-formed Supreme Revolutionary Council stating that they would write a Constitution providing for three to five years of transitional military rule and for the creation of a socialist society.

Prime Minister Goncalves' Cabinet remained unchanged after the elections. The Constituent Assembly first met on June 2, 1975.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Constituent Assembly*

Number of registered voters.	. . .	.6,176,559
Voters.	. .	5,665,707 (91.73 %)
Blank or void ballot papers.	. . .	.393,164
Valid votes.	. .	5,272,543

Political Group	Number of Electoral Districts in which Candidates were presented	Votes obtained	/o	Number of Seats *
Portuguese Socialist Party.	22	2,145,392	37.87	115
Popular Democratic Party.	22	1,494,575	26.38	80
Portuguese Communist Party . . .	22	709,689	12.53	30
Social Democratic Centre.	21	433,153	7.65	Hi
Portuguese Democratic Movement-Democratic Electoral Committee	22	233,362	4.12	5
Popular Socialist Front . . .	lfi	66,161	1.17	—
Movement of the Socialist Left	15	57,682	1.02	—
Popular Democratic Union .	10	44,546	.79	1
Electoral Front of Communists	12	32,508	.57	—
Monarchist Party.	14	31,809	.56	—
Popular United Party	7	12,984	.23	—
International Communist League	4	10,732	.19	—
				247

* Seats for metropolitan Portugal only.