

## Chronology of events in Portugal drawn up by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (16 September 1975)

**Caption:** This chronology, dated 16 September 1975 and drawn up by the Office of the Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, outlines the major political events that have taken place in Portugal since 25 April.

**Source:** Joint Committee of the Council of Europe. The situation in Portugal: chronology of events since 25 April 1975, drawn up by the Office of the Clerk of the Assembly, Restricted CM/AS (75) 3. Strasbourg: 16.09.1975. 10 p.

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## The situation in Portugal

### Chronology of events since 25 April 1975, drawn up by the Office of the Clerk of the Assembly

#### April

28. Final result of the elections of 25 April to the Constituent Assembly announced as follows (as a percentage of total votes cast):

Socialists: 37.9; Popular Democratic Party (PPD): 26.3; Communists: 12.6; Social Democratic Centre (CDS): 7.55; Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP): 4.13; Popular Socialist Front (FSP): 1.17; Movement of the Socialist Left (MES): 1.02.

The Communists interpret this result as a victory for progressive political forces, the Socialists as a defeat of Communism and victory for pluralist democracy.

#### May

1. Mario Soares, Secretary General of the Socialist Party, forcibly prevented from mounting the speakers' tribune at the May Day Rally organised in Lisbon by Intersindical, the Communist-dominated unitary trade-union organisation.

2. Big Socialist demonstrations in Lisbon and Oporto against the incidents at the May Day Rally in Lisbon.

3. Heavy casualties reported in fighting between rival liberation movements in Angola.

5. EEC Foreign Ministers instruct the EEC Commission to prepare a report as soon as possible on how the Nine could best assist Portugal.

10. MFA bulletin stresses the need for "progressive solutions which achieve a synthesis between the electoral and revolutionary processes".

14. New nationalisations announced (tobacco, cement, paper industries). Foreign firms are not effected. Minimum income fixed at 4000 Escudos, maximum income at 35 000 (after tax).

15. Portuguese troops assume total responsibility for security in Angola.

17. General de Carvalho predicts "natural death" of political parties (in interview with weekly Expresso).

19. Communist printers occupy offices of the Socialist newspaper Republica, in order to put an end to "party journalism".

20. After failure of attempts at mediation by Commander Jesuino, Minister for Social Communication (Information) and General Carvalho, in command of the internal security force COPCON, the government closes Republica pending the judgement of the special tribunal for press questions.

In a communiqué, the MFA Assembly puts the blame for the May Day incidents on the socialists and calls for direct co-operation with structures for popular participation such as workers' and neighbourhood committees.

Major Melo Antunes, the Foreign Minister ends a 36-hour visit to Bonn. The official communiqué announces that Federal German government is ready to support extension of the free-trade agreement between Portugal and the EEC. Major Antunes announces that a code for foreign investors is under preparation. NATO membership is not being called in question.

21. The Socialists Mario Soares (Minister of State without portfolio) and Salgado Zenha (Minister of Justice) inform President Costa Gomes that they will not attend cabinet meetings until *Republica* reappears. Pluralist democracy is at stake and must be guaranteed.

Big Socialist demonstrations take place in Lisbon and Oporto.

23. In a communiqué, the Supreme (Military) Council of the Revolution calls upon the Socialists and Communists to meet and make up their differences. The Socialists are blamed for attaching grossly disproportionate importance to a “labour conflict” at *Republica*.

A Communist communiqué accuses the Socialists of reacting “hysterically” and behaving “like an opposition party”.

Major Melo Antunes, Foreign Minister, and Mr. Lopes, Minister for External Trade, visit Brussels for talks with the European Commission.

25. The Socialists accuse the Communists of wishing to introduce a peoples’ democracy on the Eastern European model, and to dissolve the Constituent Assembly.

26. Foreign Ministers of the EEC, meeting in Dublin, agree that Portugal should receive rapid and effective economic aid as a contribution toward democratic developments.

EFTA Ministerial Council meeting in Geneva, with the participation of Mr. Lopes, Minister for external trade agrees to give favourable consideration to urgent measures of assistance to Portugal.

27. The MFA Assembly criticises all political parties and creates a working party, to set up grass-roots “peoples’ committees” to reinforce the link between the MFA and people.

28. Workers occupy Radio Renascença (owned by the catholic episcopacy) to place the transmitter “at the service of the people”. The Social Ministers Soares and Zenha agree to take part in a cabinet meeting in view of the serious situation in Angola.

The Press Council (consisting of equal numbers of journalists and publishers) declare the action of the printers at *Republica* illegal on three counts (under the terms of the recently promulgated press law).

EEC/Portugal Joint Committee meets in Brussels and decides to “initiate appropriate negotiations as soon as possible to develop co-operation”.

29. Dozens of militants of the Maoist MRPP are arrested by COPCON units.

## June

1. The Prime Minister, General Gonçalves, and Admiral Rosa Coutinho, in Brussels for the NATO Summit, seek greater sympathy for the “Portuguese path towards socialism” and deny that Portugal is a Trojan Horse within the alliance. They repeat that a foreign investment code is under preparation.

2. Mr. FitzGerald, President-in-Office of the EEC Council of Ministers in Lisbon for talks with the Portuguese government. Enlargement of free trade agreement subject to the establishment of “a democratic order founded on those principles which are the foundation of the Community”.

First sitting of the Constituent Assembly elected on 25 April, under the interim presidency (later to be confirmed) of the Socialist Prof. Henrique de Barros. Seats are allocated as follows: Socialists: 116; PPD: 81; Communists: 30; CDS: 16; MDP: 5; UDP (Popular Democratic Union): 1.

3. Armando Bacelar, Socialist, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Justice, ends a 2-day visit to the Council

of Europe to discuss details of legal co-operation. He states at a press conference that Portugal is not at present in a position to seek full membership of the organisation.

7. President Costa Gomes ends the first official visit of a Portuguese Head of State to Paris since 1917. He assures President Giscard d'Estaing that Portugal is on the way to creating a pluralist democracy.

The civil governor of the Azores resigns following separatist demonstrations.

9. Troops rescue leaders of the Portuguese Christian Democratic Party (PDC) besieged by left-wing demonstrators at Evora.

12. Reopening of Republica (announced by the Supreme Revolutionary Council on 8 June) delayed, following a government announcement that it was not in a position to guarantee the safety of the staff.

15. General de Carvalho speculates (in an interview with Radio Renascença) whether the “revolution of flowers” was not a mistake, and whether harsh repression of counter-revolutionaries would not have been preferable.

19. Republica offices reoccupied by the printers, given the key by COPCON after the management had declined to return without a guarantee of their security.

Confrontation between Catholics and left-wingers in front of the Archbishop's residence in Lisbon. Catholics are stoned and driven into the residence.

Following a week of intensive meetings, the Supreme Revolutionary Council publishes a long document reaffirming commitment towards political pluralism, including freedom of expression, but characterising the present phase of political life as a transitional stage on the road towards a classless society in which the means of production should be collectivised. The Constituent Assembly is warned to restrict its activities to drawing up a constitution, without expressing opinions on day-to-day political issues.

21. Dr. Moura, (PPD), Secretary of State for Social Security, in Strasbourg for discussions with the Secretariat.

23. Mario Soares states (in an interview with Le Figaro) that the conflict between Church and State threatens the Revolution. He affirms his belief in religious freedom.

“Exile edition” of Republica, published by Le Quotidien de Paris, including a document purporting to be secret Soviet instructions to Western Communists for seizing power.

24. EEC Foreign Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, reaffirm their agreement on the principle of Community financial aid to Portugal.

28. Supreme Revolutionary Council restructured by the creation of a central executive committee (consisting of President Costa Gomes, the Prime Minister, General Carvalho and the three service chiefs).

## July

3. Supreme Revolutionary Council decides that all radio stations will be nationalised including Radio Renascença, which is to be administered by a military committee (after an earlier announcement that the station would be handed back to the episcopacy had provoked a left-wing demonstration).

10. MFA Assembly adopts a blue print for a “workers’ and soldiers’ state” in which factory, soldiers’ and neighbourhood councils (elected by show of hands) would send delegates to a people’s assembly.

Socialists withdraw from the government protesting that the MFA blueprint means the installation of a

dictatorship.

Republica appears under new management (a military committee).

12. The Prime Minister announces that the Socialist Ministers will be replaced by “independent personalities capable of placing the interests of the nation above their partisan sympathies”.

13. Rioting farmers burn down the headquarters of the Communist Party and the Popular Socialist Front (FSP) at Rio Maior, north of Lisbon.

15. Socialist demonstration in Lisbon with the slogan “the people are not with the MFA”.

Unsuccessful attempt by the Communists to change the rules of procedure of the Constituent Assembly, to abolish the traditional general political discussion preceding the adoption of the agenda.

16. PPD leaves the coalition government having failed to obtain the guarantees concerning democratic principles for which it had asked.

The Supreme Revolutionary Council dissolves the 4th provisional government, and charges the Prime Minister, General Gonçalves, with forming a new government.

A left-wing demonstration in support of the MFA calls for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly.

17. The “European Council” of Heads of State or Government of EEC countries, meeting in Brussels, declares that the Communities are ready to continue discussions on economic and financial co-operation with Portugal, but that this would be linked with progress towards pluralistic democracy. Chancellor Schmidt states that “we do not wish to support a dictatorship”.

18. Communists erect street barriers in Oporto to prevent a demonstration called by the Socialists. The barriers are rapidly dismantled and an estimated 50 000 participate in the demonstration calling for the dismissal of the pro-communist Prime Minister General Gonçalves.

19. The Communists fail to prevent a similar massive anti-Gonçalves demonstration in Lisbon.

21. The EEC/Portugal Joint Committee which was to have met in Brussels at ministerial level is cancelled at the request of the Portuguese government.

22. New attacks on several Communist headquarters in the North.

25. Secretary of State Kissinger warns the Soviet Union against interference in Portuguese affairs which would be incompatible with the spirit of détente.

26. President Costa Gomes pleads for a pause in the revolutionary process which “has left the people behind”.

Supreme authority is vested by the MFA Assembly in a triumvirate consisting of Generals Costa Gomes, Gonçalves and Carvalho, representing the three “tendencies” within the MFA. The Council of the Revolution becomes an advisory body.

General Carvalho returns from a week’s visit to Cuba and speaks of the possible need to use force against counter-revolutionaries, describing the Socialists as dangerous enemies of the revolution.

27. Creation of triumvirate unreservedly approved by Communists but described by Socialists as “undoubtedly unconstitutional by law and the pact” (signed by MFA and the political parties on 11 April).

General Gonçalves describes Portugal as engaged in “a life or death struggle against capitalism”.

31. President Costa Gomes flies to Helsinki for the final day of the CSCE closing ceremony.

## August

2. European Socialist and Social Democratic leaders meet informally at Stockholm to discuss the situation in Portugal and entrust the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Joergensen with a fact-finding mission.

The British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, describes Portugal as the “first test for the spirit of Helsinki”.

4. Colonel Neves is reinstated by General Carvalho in command of the Amadora commando regiment (integrated in COPCON) after being suspended following communist accusations of preparing a rightist coup.

More violent anti-communist rioting in the Northern town of Famalicao.

8. Composition of the 5th provisional government announced by President Costa Gomes, who describes it as “transitional”. Socialist, PPD and Communist Ministers are replaced by military men and “independent technicians”.

9 of the 28 members of the Revolutionary Council, led by Major Melo Antunes, and including the commanders of the central and southern military regions, publish a manifesto, or “political alternative”, protesting at the radicalisation of the revolution and calling for a return to the original ideals and for the replacement of the Prime Minister, General Gonçalves.

9. The “9” are suspended from the Revolutionary Council by the ruling triumvirate who declare the manifesto “divisive”. Nevertheless the “Antunes document” continues to circulate, provoke discussion and gather support in army and airforce (but not navy) units. Socialists, PPD and the Constituent Assembly declare their support.

11. Mob sacks the Communist headquarters in Braga after the Bishop describes communism as the enemy of the people and of religion.

12. Airlift to Portugal of 300 000 whites from Angola starts (to be completed by Independence Day, 11 November).

13. Communist workers prevent the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Joergensen, from visiting Portugal’s biggest shipyard, Lisnave.

14. General Carvalho publishes a political plan, drafted by a group of COPCON officers, attacking the Antunes document. The parties are blamed for the government’s paralysis. Allowing elections to take place is described as a serious mistake by the MFA. Social democratic Western European models, and links with EEC and EFTA, are rejected in favour of national independence turned towards co-operation with the third world.

18. A group of 24 journalists at “Diario de Noticias” are suspended following their protest against the paper’s one-sidedly communist line. Socialists and Maoists combine to outvote the Communists in the Journalists’ union and demand the resignation of the Minister for Information, Commander Jesuino.

19. The half-hour general strike called by Intersindical as a protest against “fascist reaction” and anti-communist violence, is relatively little supported.

The Prime Minister seeks support in the communist strongholds near Lisbon. He admits that a mistake was made in provoking the hostility of the catholic hierarchy over the Radio Renascença affair.

Negotiations continue between the “Antunes group” and the “COPCON group”. The ruling triumvirate suspends the activities and orders the “restructuring” of the 5th division of the general staff, which acts as a communist propaganda unit. The pro-communist General Corvacho, commander of the Northern region, is recalled to Lisbon.

20. A communist meeting in Porto, which was to have been addressed by the Party leader, Dr. Cunhal, is called off at the last moment, the “passivity of the forces of order” being given as a reason.

22. Mario Soares does not exclude a favourable response to the Communists’ appeal for anti-fascist unity, but requires proof of communist respect for the rules of democracy (a) by submitting to genuine elections in trade unions and local authorities, and (b) returning Republica and Radio Renascença to their legal owners.

25. The first number of A Luta (the struggle) appears edited by Raul Rego, the deposed editor of Republica. The paper’s line is described as “socialist, pluralist and independent”.

26. The Prime Minister refuses to resign following failure of the Antunes and COPCON groups to agree on a common alternative and demonstrations of communist and extreme-left support and loyalty by armed forces sergeants and privates (also in the northern military command, where General Corvacho is reinstated).

27. Pravda denounces the EEC “economic boycott” of Portugal as a “gross interference in the country’s internal affairs”.

29. Civil war between rival independence movement in Timor oblige the Portuguese governor and armed forces to leave the island.

General Gonçalves is replaced as Prime Minister by the Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo, but is promoted to Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

## September

1. Air Force Chief of Staff General Morais e Silva publishes communiqué contesting General Goncalves’ nomination as Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo consults with leaders of the Socialist (1), PPD (1) and Communist parties in an attempt to form a government. He lets it be known that Commander Jesuino will not remain Minister for Information.

2. General Spínola makes his second visit to Europe since his exile to Brazil in March. He declares that he belongs to the “Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Portugal”.

3. The Army Assembly rejects the new, but still unconfirmed, appointment of General Gonçalves by an overwhelming majority.

5. The MFA Assembly, at which army and air force are represented only by their chiefs of staff, exclude General Gonçalves and two of his supporters from the Revolutionary Council and reverses his nomination as armed forces chief of staff. The navy excludes its most “moderate” representative, Admiral Vitor Crespo.

8. The Council of the Revolution reinstates the excluded “moderate” leaders, Majors Melo Antunes, Vitor Alves, and Costa Martins and sets up working parties to study proposals for transferring power to civilians.

(1) Who include among their conditions for participation a commitment to organise elections for a legislative assembly within 60 days of finalisation of a constitution.