

## Interview with José Medeiros Ferreira: the first constitutional Government (Lisbon, 25 October 2007)

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[Miriam Mateus] As Minister for Foreign Affairs in the 1970s ...

[José Medeiros Ferreira] ... in 1976 and 1977 ...

[Miriam Mateus] ... in 1976 and 1977, would you say that that was an important time in the history of Portugal's international and European relations?

[José Medeiros Ferreira] It certainly was. I think that it's clear nowadays that the first constitutional Government — led, I repeat, by Mário Soares, with myself as Minister for Foreign Affairs — laid down the guidelines for Portuguese foreign policy. Those guidelines can still be read today in the programme of the first constitutional Government presented to the *Assembleia da República* [Portuguese Parliament]. It was the first government programme presented for parliamentary discussion in Portugal after some 50 years of our political life, so it was special.

And, in the section on foreign policy, that government programme stated that Portugal would submit an application for accession to the EEC. So it wasn't something that was overlooked in that programme, quite the contrary, in fact, it's the most significant part of the foreign policy section: accession to the European Community, the maintenance of preferential relations with the Portuguese-speaking African countries, closer relations with Brazil, the opening of diplomatic relations with all the countries in the world. We were coming out of a certain isolation, although a great deal had already been done in the immediately preceding period. Relations still had to be established with various countries, however — Israel and China — I'm talking about some countries that still didn't have normal diplomatic relations.

Obviously, we already had mutual recognition with those countries, but we didn't have diplomatic relations with them. It was the first constitutional Government that established them, although, in China's case, relations weren't formalised until 1979, if I remember correctly.

So, in answer to your question, I'd say that the first constitutional Government set the guidelines for Portuguese foreign policy, at least until Portugal acceded to the EEC in 1986 and, I dare say, until today.