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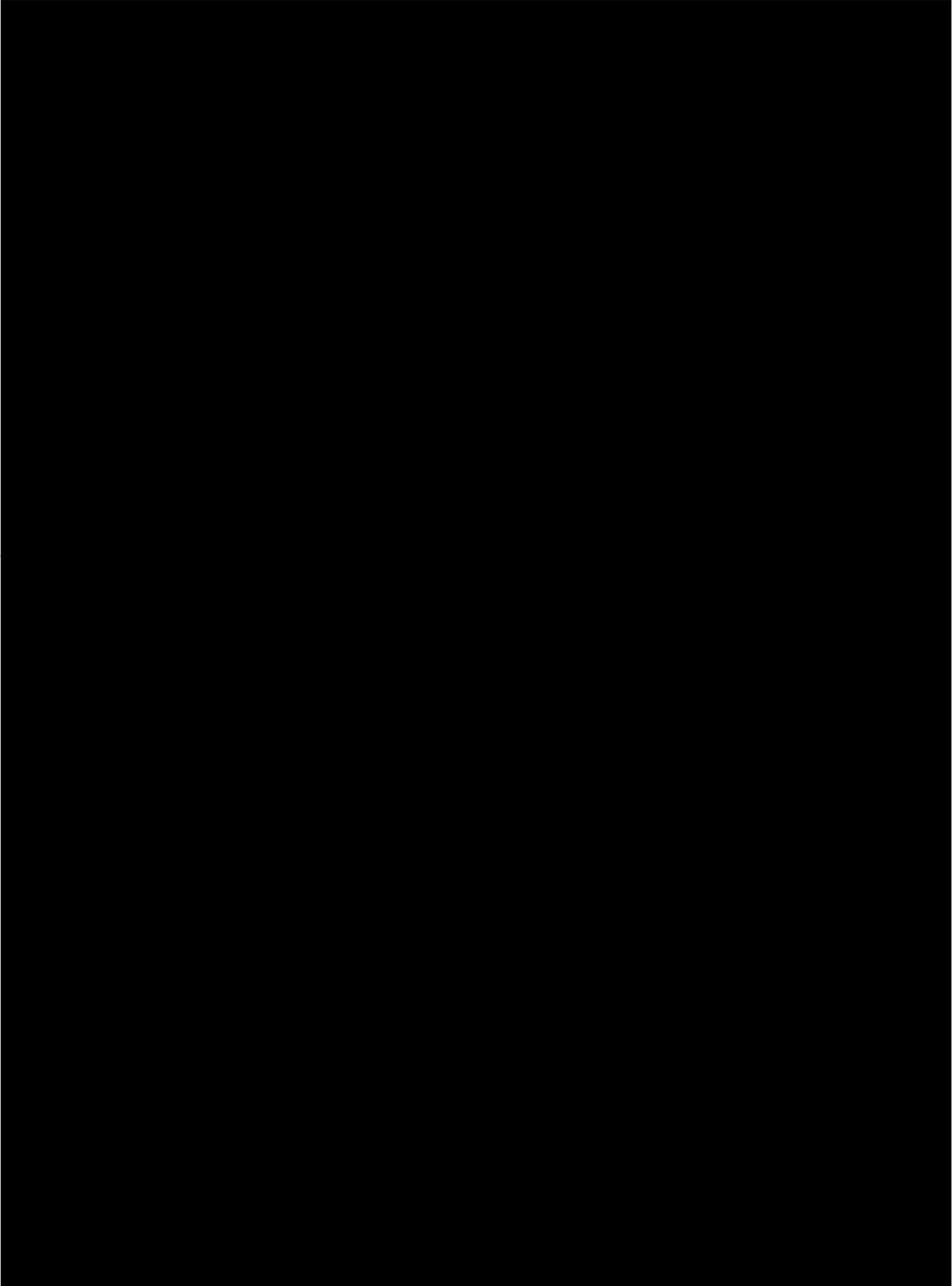
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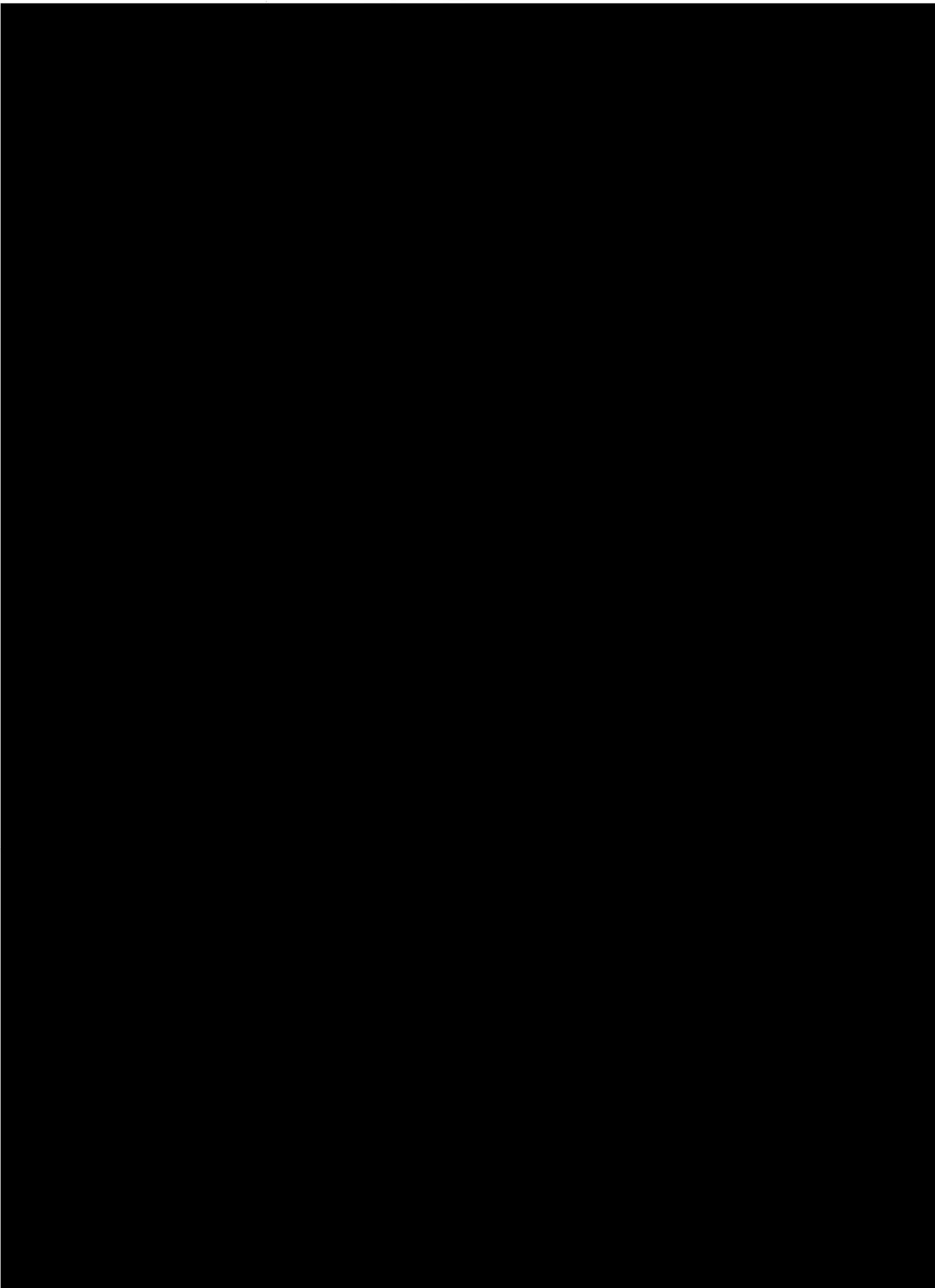
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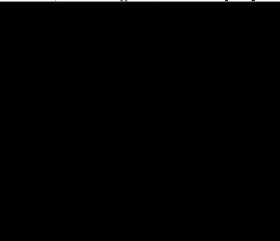


EUROPE

Stage Is Now Set for Election of Legislative Assembly in Portugal

The signing of the new pact between Portugal's Armed Forces Movement and the political parties late last month clears the way for the legislative assembly election on April 25, the second anniversary of the fall of the Caetano government. The election will go far to determine the composition of Portugal's next government, the seventh since the successful 1974 coup and the first one in 50 years to be genuinely elected.

The contest is widely expected to demonstrate a significant increase in the strength of the center parties and a decrease in popular support of the Communists. The Socialists are unlikely to do as well as they did in last year's constituent assembly election, although they still are expected to garner about one-third of the vote.



At the time of the 1975 election, the Socialist Party was viewed by many as the only effective bulwark against the Communists. This enabled it to obtain con-

siderable support from the center and right. This perception has changed over the past year, particularly since the abortive November 25 leftist military rebellion and the resulting isolation of the Communists. Many conservatives and centrists are believed to have returned to the parties of their first choice, the Social Democratic Center and Popular Democrats. The Socialists have compensated for some of these defections by drawing support away from the beleaguered Communists.

Coalition Alternatives

The government will not be chosen until after the presidential election in June. The Popular Democrats, fearful that incumbent President Costa Gomes would choose an unacceptable prime minister, pushed through a last-minute amendment to the pact that leaves the selection of the prime minister to the elected president. Maneuvering in anticipation of the presidential contest is just beginning. Prime Minister Azevedo and army chief Eanes appear to be the current front-runners, but Costa Gomes' candidacy cannot be ruled out.

It is too early to predict what the political complexion of the next government will be. The election returns themselves are likely to provide numerous coalition possibilities, but probably will not be the sole determinant of the government's composition. Other factors include:

- The perceptions and prejudices of the military and the parties concerning the breadth of party representation

During a four-year transition period, beginning with the election of the president, power in Portugal will be shared by five institutions:

- A popularly elected President, who names and dismisses the prime minister and members of the government and can veto legislation; a two-thirds vote by the legislature is needed to override a veto. He can declare states of siege and emergency with the approval of...
- The all-military Revolutionary Council, which reviews legislation and can order a presidential veto of laws considered unconstitutional. The Council can declare the president physically unable to exercise his functions, and it has full legislative powers in the military field.
- A Government, appointed by the president, is responsible to...
- The Legislative Assembly, which has full parliamentary power. The president is required to dissolve the assembly and call for a new election if no-confidence or censure motions require a third change in government during the same assembly session.
- A nine-member Constitutional Commission is the highest court of appeal on constitutional matters.

necessary to ensure political stability (whether the military left continues to manifest a strong bias against the Social Democratic Center, for example, and whether it is seen to be necessary to include the Communists even if they show poorly).

- The compatibility of the various party programs.

Coalition possibilities appear to run the gamut from a continuation of the existing broad, multi-party type of government to a two-party coalition, which, as the polls indicate, could include various partners. Whatever the specific composition of the next government, it will almost certainly be dominated by civilian politicians, representing the Socialists, the centrist parties, or both.

The Socialists—who have repeatedly stated their unwillingness to enter into a coalition—say they will go into opposition if they fail to obtain a majority. This may, nevertheless, be only election rhetoric. Given the need for political stability and for a serious attack on Portugal's pressing economic and social problems, the participation of the Socialists—because of their burgeoning labor support and the quality of their leadership—probably will be critical to the government's effectiveness.

Socialist participation in the government also would work to prolong the estrangement between the Socialists and Communists and to further strengthen the

Socialists' ability to act as the country's dominant force on the left.

Exclusion of the Communists from the government is the objective of many moderates in Portugal, although some Socialists and others believe that a hemmed-in Communist Party, sharing some responsibility for unpopular programs, is preferable to outright Communist opposition.

Implications for US

Any government likely to emerge would be pro-West and probably would continue Portuguese foreign policy very much along current lines. The more Socialist and Communist participation in the government, the more emphasis there will be on consolidating the revolution, but such domestic policies will not appreciably modify the government's pro-West orientation.

Negotiations for extension of US base rights in the Azores may well resume once the new government is in office. Although it is premature to forecast what their negotiating position would be, the Portuguese probably will:

- Agree to the principle of a base rights extension.
- Make explicit their refusal to have the base used in the event of another Middle East war.
- Request a substantial, perhaps unreasonably large, quid.
- Request specific compensation for the Azoreans themselves.

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