

The accession of Portugal

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In Portugal, the military uprising and the ‘Carnation Revolution’ of 25 April 1974 swept aside the authoritarian regime put in place in 1933 by António de Oliveira Salazar. However, the armed uprising soon faced the threat of extremism and of revolutionary chaos dividing the officers and civilians, heirs of the April revolution, returning from exile abroad. Nevertheless, the fledgling Portuguese democracy enjoyed considerable international support. The leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party during his enforced exile in France and Germany, Mario Soares, who was the new Minister of Foreign Affairs and would later become Prime Minister, travelled the length and breadth of Europe championing the cause of his country as a future member of the Community. Portugal joined the Council of Europe on 22 September 1976. Acting swiftly, Portugal, which had been linked to the EEC since 1973 through a free-trade agreement covering industrial and agricultural products, officially submitted its application for accession to the European Communities on 28 March 1977. Following the Council’s request for an opinion, the Commission submitted a positive opinion on 19 May 1978 on the action to be taken on Portugal’s application. The long and difficult accession negotiations which began on 17 October 1978 culminated in the signing of the Accession Treaty between Portugal and the EEC in Lisbon on 12 June 1985. The Treaty came into force on 1 January 1986. A day earlier, Portugal had withdrawn from the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), of which it had been a founder member in 1960.