

July 18, 1975 - Release of Comrade Arnaldo Matos and MRPP militants arrested by COPCON / PCP

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July 18, 1975 was an indelible mark in the history of the struggle of the working class and the Portuguese Communists of the MRPP, under the direction of comrade Arnaldo Matos, against the social-fascist dictatorship, for freedom and democracy and the continuation of the struggle for revolutionary communism.

At 10:30 pm on May 28, 1975, COPCON, using the commandos of fascist Jaime Neves and military units controlled by the PCP, began Operation Turbilhão, assaulting and looting all MRPP headquarters in the Lisbon region, and arrested comrade Arnaldo Matos and more than four hundred Party activists and supporters.

The purpose of this terrorist operation had been previously pointed out by the PCP at the MFA assembly which approved it, in particular by its chief social-fascist colonel Varela Gomes - to physically eliminate comrade Arnaldo Matos, founder and secretary general of the MRPP and to destroy and annihilate the Party.

The MRPP, which had been at the head of the labour movement for the 40-hour working week, had become a hindrance to the progression of the March-11 social-fascist counter-coup, and it was therefore necessary to push it away and outlaw it, and preventing him from participating in the elections, destroying their headquarters and arresting their militants.

But the response to that desperate attack was soon delayed - the headquarters were immediately reoccupied and popular demonstrations for the release of comrade Arnaldo Matos and all the arrested anti-fascists, particularly at the Caxias jail, came to pass day and night, bravely facing COPCON's bullets.

From jail, comrade Arnaldo Matos directs the Central Committee and the fight inside and outside the jails, deciding to hold a hunger strike - which lasted eighteen days - and mobilizing a strong labor movement that associated the claim of the 40 hour week with the release of the political prisoners of the MRPP and that became victorious.

On July 7, 1975, Comrade Arnaldo Matos was released from the Military Hospital by a group of soldiers, followed by the release of all other prisoners until **a large rally was held in Campo Pequeno on 18 July celebrating** the defeat of the forces of the PCP and the fascists.

If the struggle for the release of comrade Arnaldo Matos and against the liquidation of the MRPP were not successful, even the little freedom we breathe would not exist.

May this date and the steadfastness, combativeness and spirit of sacrifice displayed by the communists in the struggle for proletarian revolution and communism continue to inspire us and guide our action in the coming battles?

Long live the 18th of July!

Honour to comrade Arnaldo Matos!