

Notes on the PCP (ML)

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The Communist Party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist), PCP (ml) emerged in 1970 growing out of the demise of the Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Committee, previously founded in 1964. It became associated with its leading personality, Heduino Gomes who was in the leadership of this small party.

As a student at Instituto Superior Técnico , in the early 60's, Heduino Gomes became involved in the political struggles that dominated the Portuguese University that saw him leaving for exile in 1966 from Portela airport. While in exiled in Brussels , he became a part of the exiled CMLP grouping , and in 1970 participated in the Fifth Congress in Paris that saw the formation of the Communist Party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist) .

The party gradually divided between those in exile, led by Heduíno Gomes, who used the party name of *Eduíno Vilar* the pseudonym he is often still referred to, and those based in the interior of Portugal, led by Carlos Alberto Janeiro, known by his party name of *Mendes*. Acute internal crisis led to the hasty holding in Paris of a Conference in March 1974, convened by “Vilar” and without the participation of interior central .By May 1974, the split between the two factions was completed, with both calling themselves "PCP (ml)". Both PCP(M-L)s, had a publication titled *Unidade Popular*.

The *Vilar* faction ended up with the acronym; the opposite faction gave rise to the Popular Unity Party. On November 17, 1974, Vilar's party launched the Worker-Peasant Alliance (AOC)/ *Aliança Operário-Camponesa* as a front for the Communist Party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist). It published the newspaper *A Voz do Trabalho*: newspaper of the workers, peasants, all

exploited of Portugal, which defended the political orientation of the Communist Party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist). AOC launched the slogan "Neither Kissinger, Nor Brezhnev. National Independence!" (*Nem Kissinger, nem Brejnev, independência nacional!*). Having created the Aliança Operário-Camponesa as an "electoral front" to stand for the 1975 elections, the AOC was forbidden to stand for these elections.

April 25th allowed the great majority of the organization from abroad to come to Portugal, including the leaders of both factions, the PCP (ml) led by "Vilar" remained in the Portuguese political landscape, whilst Mendes eventually denying the validity of the 1970 Congress, retook the name of the CMLP, and at the same time became part of a movement for the reconstruction of the party with other similar organizations.

The party subsequently took part in elections through the AOC, and ran lists in the 1976 elections. At its First Congress, held in Porto on 15 February 1976, new programmatic bases were approved, as well as a change in the name of the party: it was renamed AOC - National Democratic Front and, subsequently, National Democratic Front - AOC [FND (AOC)], in order to underline its main political objective, which was to forge national unity by uniting "the different popular strata and patriotic personalities... against their external and internal enemies, particularly Russian social-imperialism and its lackeys." At the time of the 1976 elections PCP(M-L) launched the slogan "For Independence, For Democracy, For Social Progress! - Vote for the lists presented by PCP(m-l)!" (*Pela independência pela democracia, pelo progresso social! - vota nas listas apresentadas pelo PCP (m-l)!*)

AOC mustered 15,578 votes (0.03%).

Against Soviet Social-Imperialism

The main approach of Heduíno Gomes had to do with the status of the *main enemy*: "Vilar's party targeted the PCP, "Cunhal's Social-fascism" and "Russian Social-imperialism" as prime targets.

PCP(M-L) claimed that after the Carnation Revolution, the main threat to Portugal came from social fascism (represented through *Partido Comunista Português* leader Álvaro Cunhal) and Soviet social imperialism. The party supported the Socialist Party of Soares against PCP. It was Vilar (Heduino Gomes) who proclaimed "every deputy elected by the AOC will be a pimple stuck in Barreirinhas Cunhal's throat" and went on to describe April 25 as a "social-fascist coup".

The domestic stance, and priority of the PCP(ML) was reflected in its international activity. From January 18 to January 27 1976, at the invitation of

the KPD¹ and the LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, Jose de Silva, of the PCP / ML Central Committee, visited the FRG and West Berlin with Manuel Matos, member of the Central Committee of the AOC (Workers 'Peasants' Alliance). They spoke at various events on Portugal organised by the German Maoists, with over 2500 people attending events of the KPD and the League in Munich, Mannheim, West Berlin, Hamburg, Hanover and Gelsenkirchen.



Among the smaller British Maoist movement there was less attention paid than their German counterparts; the largest ML group, the Birch-led CPB (ML) only carried a few articles in the tumultuous years of 1974-76 on the topic of Portugal, and only identified with the PCP(R) during their own brief pro-Albanian period. With the outbreak of the Portuguese revolution in 1974, other tendencies expressed solidarity with the struggles in Portugal: the British trotskysts *Red Weekly* carried extensive coverage of developments and the IMG threw itself into solidarity work with meeting with speakers from Portugal and a film on the movement for workers control. At least two pamphlets on Portugal were produced; *Portugal: Our Struggle* by Jacky Gray and Pat Jordan concludes with a list of useful articles and resources and an appeal for a solidarity movement. Other groups sent activists like Peter Robinson who worked in Portugal in 1975-6 as an organiser for the British trotskysts, IS International Socialists, and authored *Portugal 1974-1975: The Forgotten Dream*.

The success of the PCP(ML) 's German speaking tour was cited as "a sign of the growing willingness to fight and clarity in the fight against the two superpowers, but especially against the more aggressive and dangerous superpower in Europe, the main enemy of the Portuguese and German people, Russian social-imperialism."

¹ The "Communist Party of Germany Organization" (KPD-AO) was founded in West Berlin in February 1970; from July 1970 it only called itself the "Communist Party of Germany" often called after her central publication "Gruppe Rote Fahne".

“ The visit of the Portuguese comrades is an important step in bringing together European working classes and peoples. The fighting tasks of the Portuguese working class and the Portuguese people and the impressions that the comrades gained from the class struggles in the FRG made one thing clear again and again: Independence and socialism will only exist in Portugal and Germany if the popular masses are uncompromising Fight against the agencies of social-imperialism and against everyone who helps them to protect them. ”²

In March, speeches by the PCP / ML, the Workers and Peasants Alliance (AOC) and the KPD was published entitled "*Portugal. Forward in the struggle for national independence, democracy and socialism!*" Its preface stated that the PCP / ML and the AOC (Workers 'and Peasants' Alliance) agitated against "the two superpowers, but especially against the more aggressive and dangerous superpower in Europe, the main enemy of the Portuguese and German people, Russian social-imperialism."

The leaflet under the headline "No New Prague in Portugal", advertising the joint meeting in Gelsenkirchen, announced,

"PORTUGAL: FORWARD to independence, freedom and socialism! The Portuguese people have been fighting for a future since the fall of fascism without exploitation and oppression, without foreign interference, for freedom and socialism, but as soon as the influence of the US imperialists melted away, a new enemy appeared, willing to establish his fascist dictatorship: Brezhnev's agency, the Cunhal's 'PCP', tried to seize power with all means of conspiracy, infiltration, agitation and deception.

Russian social-imperialism speaks of 'main tendency to relax', [détente] but in reality it wants to make all of Europe dependent. Because Europe is the key to world domination, which the Kremlin tsars wrestle with the US imperialists. The Portuguese people are at the forefront in the struggle of the peoples of Europe for independence and freedom.

- What are the interests of the two superpowers in Portugal? What is behind the 'peaceful intentions' of the Soviet Union?
- How can Portugal's independence and freedom be defended?
- What are the goals of the Portuguese working class and the PCP / ML? “

The slogans for the meeting were: "Support with us the struggle of the Portuguese people for independence, freedom and socialism! Against the plans for domination of Soviet social-imperialism in Europe! For independence and unity of European peoples and states! Down with Cunhal, the lackey of Soviet

² Portugal. Forward in the struggle for national independence, democracy and socialism [March 1976]

social-imperialism!"³

International recognition was relatively high for PCP (ML): Vilar's party had close relations to the Communist Party of China. In the immediate aftermath of April 25, some of the major Marxist-Leninist organizations then established friendship associations with the People's Republic of China. ADAP-C, promoted by MRPP, was founded on 16 May 1974. It led the Democratic Portugal-China Friendship Association (ADAP-C) (Associação Democrática de Amizade Portugal-China). The general secretary of ADAP-C was Carlos Ricardo. ADAP-C published *Conhecer a China*.

The May 1975 visit to China had the obligatory tour and meeting with Keng Piao head of the international Liaison Department⁴ There were other meetings that followed with Vilar's "cordial and friendly conversation" with Chairman Hua Guofeng in May 1977, came after criticising 'Albanian revisionism'. He had attended, but was not listed in the PLA's 7th Congress protocols. The PCP(ML)'s position in the struggle against soviet social imperialism was much appreciate. The *PCP(ML) Information Bulletin* reported on the number of delegations going to China :

PORTUGUESE DELEGATIONS IN CHINA

A delegation of the Communist Youths (Marxist-Leninists) is traveling to China in August, made up of 7 young people from various parts of the country. On the same date, leaving for China at the invitation of Guozi Shudian (China Publishing Centre), a delegation of proLibris. In September, a friendship delegation to Portugal was made up of several Portuguese personalities and organized by the Portugal-China Democratic Friendship Association.⁵

Peking Review had previously quoted from Vilar's report to the seventh congress of the Communist Party of Portugal (M-L), *Two years against the tide* held in January, 1977 which had strongly praised "the correctness of Mao Tsetung's brilliant theory of dividing the present-day world into three parts or three worlds which are co-related and at the same time contradictory"⁶

A separate English language edition of the Congress report, and the distribution of an English language international bulletin, help raise the profile of the

³ Dietmar Kesten *German Solidarity with Portugal. Opposition Analysis Materials Gelsenkirchen, February 23, 2017*

⁴ *Peking Review* No.22 1975 [English edition]

⁵ CP-ml, ML Information No. 10 – July 23rd 1977

⁶ *Peking Review* No.8 February 18th 1977

organisation in the wider international movement at a time when, promoted by Albanian criticism, it was dividing.

The PCP (ML), firmly anchored in the anti-Soviet camp, were instrumental in hosting and organising the Lisbon Conference on the Russian Threat sponsoring the *Appeal to The European Patriots and Democrats* issued in July 1977. The Conference itself received coverage in *Peking Review* but failed as a united front enterprise, neither attracting major support from within the pro-China movement nor influential bourgeois individuals.

Few European Maoists would agree with the PCP (ML) analysis that: “In the present stage of revolution, the aim of the Party’s strategy is to defeat social imperialism. To affirm this aim, the formation of national democratic front with the national bourgeoisie is necessary.”⁷

The neighbouring Spanish organisation ORT ‘Organisation Revolucionaria de Trabajadores’, while accepting that the two superpowers were the main enemies of the people of the world and the Soviet Union the more dangerous source of war, said their strategy “is to direct struggle at principal enemies, US Imperialism and its Spanish supporters. They have bombs, bases and economic control. Simply not materialist to [argue the] Soviet Union is [the] main enemy.”⁸

The organisation limped out of existence: The AOC (the Worker-Peasant Alliance) separated from a fading PCP(ML) and disappeared in 1983. The formation of the Labour Party (PT) in 1979 was dissolved in March of the following year.

A small group of PCP (ML) militants who rejected the “Labour Project” then formed the Pro-Party Workers' Organization of Portugal, which had an ephemeral existence, as did the Labour Party, whose activity practically ceased at birth.

Still referred to today by “Vilar” the last pseudonym he used, Heduino dos Santos Gomes in the 1980s abandoned his far-left political activism and became the musical entrepreneur manager of singer Ana Faria and traditional Portuguese music . Politically, Heduino Gomes joined the Social Democratic

⁷ PCP (ML) International Information Bulletin No63, 30th December 1978

⁸ ‘Report on [RCLB] Meeting with Cde. Sergio of the ORT’ dated 7.5.[19]78. Typescript. Private Archive Holding.

Party (PSD), where he is often associated with the most conservative faction speaking of wanting to defend western civilisation.

The "renegade Vilar", in the view of other Maoist groups, reminiscences at



<http://media.rtp.pt/extremaesquerda/eu-estive-la/da-cmlp-ao-pcp-ml/>