

Notes on the fusion of small groups

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The beginning of the Seventies saw ML opposition grow as local collectives developed against state authoritarianism and a process of fusion between groups saw the emergence of distinct trends amongst the Maoist-inclined groups. In 1970 there was the appearance of the *Comités Comunistas Revolucionários Marxistas-Leninistas* (Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist Committees) and *Unidade Revolucionária Marxista-Leninista* (Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Unity).

What was to emerge with a prominent presence, the MRPP Reorganizing Movement of the Party of The Proletariat / *Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado* was also founded in September 1970.

A former member of FAP and the CMLP, the publisher Manuel Quiros, founder of Edicoes Maria da Fonte, created the student-populated Communist Committee of Portugal (CCP) in 1971. In 1973 Quiros left it, and with former members of the OCMLP established the group UC[ml] – Communist Union (Marxist-Leninist). After two years, this fused, in 1975, with UCRPML – Communist Union for the Reconstruction of the Marxist-Leninist Party – created by Jose de Sousa after an early split from the periodical *O Comunista* at the end of 1972 when it merged with *The People's Cry* set up.

All of which had their political roots in the original CM-LP. There followed a period of attempting to unite with other ML groups which proved fruitless and

saw the UCRPML transforming itself at a congress held in January 1978; it became a Portuguese Communist (Marxist-Leninist) Party [PC (ml) P]. Its central organ was the newspaper *The Communist*

1970-1974

Note on *Comités Comunistas Revolucionários Marxistas-Leninistas* CCR (ML) Revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Communist Committees

The main protagonist of the split from the CM-LP that created the CCR was João Bernardo, who the end of 1967 had went underground, after the arrest of Alexandre Alinho de Oliveira, and moved to Paris, where he remained in exile from 1968 to 1974. This split was justified by documents that became known as "*Tiago's letters*", one of João Bernardo's clandestine pseudonyms in CM-LP. The CCR considered themselves as the true successors of the CMLP. In the CCR clandestine organ, "*Long live Communism!*", the long article "*À Esquerda de Cunhal todos os Gatos São Pardos*" was published, an analysis of the Portuguese extreme left at that time. This article, reflected the sectarianism that denied the revolutionary character of other organizations based on their supposed social support base, in the petty-bourgeoisie or the lumpen-proletariat. This was not simply applied to the revisionist PCP but others who professed allegiance to Mao Tsetung Thought. For all the unity processes involving small groups in the early 1970s, such attitudes were reciprocated by all the components of the Marxist-Leninist movement.

The CCRs high tide, when they obtained their greatest roots inside Portugal, was between 1970- 1973, mainly, but not exclusively, from the Instituto Superior Técnico .They were also present in several workers' sectors, namely in the workshops of Carris (public transport company in Lisbon), in the Standard Electric factory in Cascais and others in Queluz-Amadora. There was the propensity for a complex theoretical elaboration that were considered to be of Trotskyist inspiration by many opponents, who would argue that the number of militants was proportionally inverse to the hundreds of pages of their theoretical publications and interior documents, letters, directives, reports, etc and the priority given to the "workers' implantation" of the students who constituted the organization. [Wikipedia, Portuguese edition]

State repression from August 1972 began to dismantle the organization, with arrests that reached their peak in December 1973, with the arrest of two of its leaders, António Rocha and Paula Fonseca. All prisoners denounced, under torture, comrades, which resulted in the succession of arrests and imprisonment. The organisation could not survive.

These attacks, and political differences on strategy - criticism related to other organizations of the extreme left, although elegantly constructed had nothing to do with reality - and regarding the evolution of the Communist Party of China's political line - accusation of revisionism were raised by João Bernardo before Lin Piao's death - saw the CCR ended up dissolving itself in the first months of 1974. João Bernardo moved away from Maoism, around 1973, to a tradition of Marxist thought that has its origins in the council communism.

After April 25, 1974, several members of the CCRs that were in hiding in Portugal reconstituted the organization, namely Acácio Barreiros and Vieira Lopes (clandestine leader in the interior), soon promoting the creation of the Popular Democratic Union (UDP) in December, 1974 from the alliance with two other Marxist-Leninist groups, with a less sectarian political orientation, more adept at the "mass line" and later taking a pro-Albanian position.

1974-75

PCP (m-l) (Mendes faction) – PUP - CMLP

In August 1970, at the so-called 5th Congress of the CMLP, it transformed into the PCP(ML) Communist party of Portugal (Marxist-Leninist). However in March 1974, a few months before the revolution, saw the PCP(ML) split into two factions. The bigger faction was led by Vilar. The two resulting groups disputed ownership of the PCP (ML) name and acronym until the group led by Carlos Janerio (Mendes) created the **Popular Unity Party** *Partido de Unidade Popular* as a legal political force to participate in the elections to the Constituent Assembly, in which they obtained 13,138 votes (0.23%). Numerous members of Portugal's political and intellectual life were at the time part of the PUP, including Esther Muczynik, Jose Pacheco Pereira (of [Ephemera](#) fame) Joan carlos Espada, Antonio Costa Pinto and Nuno Crato.

After the 1975 elections the PUP eventually disputed the validity of the CMLP's 5th Congress and accordingly retook the original name of CM-LP, Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Committee (*Comité Marxista-Leninista Português*).

1973-1975

OCMLP /Organização Comunista Marxista-Leninista Portuguesa / The Portuguese Marxist–Leninist Communist Organization

The Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Communist Organization was created at the end of 1972 from the merger between two minor communist groupings:

- the Working Committee which had been publishing the newspaper *O Grito do Povo* (The People's Cry), active since late 1969 in student circles in the cities of Porto and Coimbra, and
- *Comunista* (The Communist) – an external formed by militants from the Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Committee in 1968 - which had a presence in some emigrant groups in Europe, particularly in Paris, where the community of Portuguese political exiles developed intense political activity but also in Holland, Sweden, and Denmark.

From March 1973 *The People's Cry/ O Grito do Povo* became the publication of OCMLP. The theoretical publication was *Foice e Martello*.

In December 1974 OCMLP, and the group of *The People's Cry*, launched FEC (ML) **the Communist Electoral Front (Marxist-Leninist)** with a view to the elections for the Constituent Assembly. It first appeared publicly in December 1974 and its first Congress took place in January 1975. Its political line intended to unite all who were willing to take part in political activity in the service of the struggle for the establishment of the regime of popular democracy. It advocated combating US imperialism and Soviet social imperialism – *which the OCMLP considered to be the most dangerous*. FEC (m-l) participated in the 1975 Constituent Assembly elections, in which it obtained 33,185 votes (0.58%). At

its second Congress, held on October 25th 1976, it adopted the name and acronym of its sponsoring organisation, OCMLP.

In August 1975 OCMLP agreed to join, along with the ORPC (ML) and the CMLP, an Organising Commission for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party. A discussion process began to achieve that objective. However 1975 proved to be a fast moving year as the electoral front UDP Popular Democratic Union in May 1975, saw its component parties merged in the Organização para a Reconstrução do Partido Comunista (Marxista-Leninista)/ Organization for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist). Led by Francisco Martins Rodrigues, ORPC (ML) published *Causa Operária*, and had as its theoretical magazine, Proletarian revolution.

ORPC (ML) disappeared in December 1975 following its merger with CMLP at the congress that gave rise to the formation of the Portuguese Communist Party (Reconstructed) (PCP(R)).

The second OCMLP National Conference decided to resume talks with the PCP(R) which eventually led to the integration of most of its militants into that party by April 1976.

Those who rejected the fusion reorganised the OCMLP in October 1976 and limped on until a consultative conference in April 1987 dissolved the group.

The UDP came to be the electoral front of the PC(R), however from 1983, the differences between the UDP and the PC(R) drove them to organise separately.

Finally, in 1992 the PC(R) turned into the Communists for Democracy and Progress (CDP), integrating as an association in the UDP in 1995.

UCRP (ml)

Just prior to the merger, OCMLP had passed through a split. The majority, with strong base in Porto, went through with the merger plans. A minority, who kept strong emphasis the issue of struggle against "social fascism", refused to join and continued a separate existence. The Communist Union for the Reconstruction of the Party (Marxist–Leninist) led by Afonso Gonçalves da Rocha. UCRP (ml) was founded in 1975 after the split and UCRP (ml) published *O Comunista*. In 1978 UCRP (ml) went on to found the short-lived Portuguese (marxist-leninist) Communist Party (PC(ml)P).