

Notes the

Comité Marxista-Leninista Português

Published: 2020

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1964-1966 CMLP | Portuguese Marxist–Leninist Committee | *Comité Marxista-Leninista Português*

CM-LP was formed in March 1964 by a group, including Francisco Martins Rodrigues (party name, Campos) (1927- 2008), that could be said to be a taproot for many organisations and groups that emerged out of the splits and fusions of its former members.

The **Frente de Acção Popular** (FAP; Front for Popular Action) and **Comité Marxista-Leninista Português** (CMLP; Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Committee) appeared in 1964 as the result of ideological elucidations within the PCP. The former saw itself as a mass front dedicated to overthrowing the regime, whereas the latter aimed to establish itself as an embryonic reconstructed Communist Party. The leading figure involved in this task of demarcation was Francisco Martins Rodrigues, who had taken part in the from Peniche prison on 3rd January 1960. Then a group of ten PCP members had escaped from the high-security prison in Peniche. The escape returned to freedom many of the leading figures of the Party, among them, Álvaro Cunhal, who would be elected in the following year the first secretary-general in nineteen years. ¹

¹ Among the escapees was Jaime Serra, who would help to organize a secret commando group, the Armed Revolutionary Action (*Acção Revolucionária*

Francisco Martins Rodrigues after the escape became a member of the Central Committee and Executive Committee, which led the party in Portugal. He emerged as a leading dissident within the Party leadership and was expelled in the autumn of 1963. The group initially organized in exile in France—with branches in Algeria, Switzerland, and Belgium—and shortly afterward decided to clandestinely transfer its leading cadres to the interior of Portugal. Heavily persecuted by the *Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE; International State Defense Police) between 1965 and 1966, this first “Marxist-Leninist” wave practically disappeared, and its political camp was restricted to some members with a brief experience of militancy within its structures and infighting in exile.

The crux of the dissenting position adopted by this emerging Anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist tendency echoed the Sino-Soviet conflict, with the FAP/CMLP positioning itself in favour of the Chinese line. In domestic terms, the dissent centred on the question of alliances (building fronts with the democratic-liberal bourgeoisie versus a “working class–peasant” alliance) and the strategy for overthrowing the regime (“national uprising” versus armed struggle).²

In 1965 most of the leadership of CM-LP was imprisoned. Rodrigues was imprisoned numerous times by the internal and external State security PIDE, including a long prison term between 1965 and the Carnation Revolution in April 1974.

Armada or ARA). The ARA was the armed branch of the PCP that would be responsible in the 1970s for some military action against the dictatorial regime.

² Their critique of the PCP line is explained in the pamphlet *Luta Pacífica e Luta Armada no nosso Movimento*, dating from 1963/64, among other documents. Writings produced when Rodrigues broke with the Portuguese Communist Party were collected from the archives by the historian João Madeira and published as *Francisco Martins Rodrigues. Documentos e papéis da clandestinidade e da prisão* (Lisbon: Ela por Ela and Abrente Editora, 2015). For a view of this first “pro-Chinese” wave, see José Pacheco Pereira, “O Um Dividiu-se em Dois.” *Origens e Enquadramento internacional dos movimentos pró-chineses e albaneses nos países ocidentais e em Portugal (1960–65)* (Lisbon: Alêtheia Editores, 2008).

Miguel Gonçalo Cardina Codinda judgement is that regardless of the short experience of the CM-LP, smashed by the repression and attacks of PIDE (International and State Defense Police) in 1965 and 1966, with most of the leadership of CM-LP imprisoned, it produced a theoretical legacy reflected in the next Maoist groups. Characterized by a growing schism, these groups developed some differentiated features from 1970 onwards, mainly after the appearance of groups such as MRPP and *O Grito do Povo* [The Cry of the People], later OCMLP. These organizations assumed a mass line and missionary zeal in their activism, clearly rooted in the juvenile and student environment, with some intervention and influence in individual workers fields.

In 1968 one section, representing most of the leadership in exile that were not jailed, starts the publication *O Comunista*. This group later merges in 1972 into the Portuguese Marxist-Leninist Communist Organization (OCMLP).

In 1969 a second conference of another tendency is held inside Portugal, through the initiative of Eduíno Vilar. They start publishing *Unidade Popular* in March 1969. It was this branch that would later maintain diplomatic relations with China.

Various individual CM-LP members participate in other small Marxist-Leninist groups that populated the Portuguese experience, often meeting up with old comrades as groups underwent a process of splits and fusion that characterised sections of the movement in the 1970s.