

Unidade Comunista of Portugal

The origins of today's problems in the international communist movement

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The origins of today's problems in the ICM

The following text was produced by the group *Unidade Comunista* of Portugal which is formed of ex-members of the Communist Party of Portugal

(reconstructed) (CPP (r)). *Unidade Comunista* is struggling for the reunification of communists in Portugal and on the international level. The text

which follows is taken from the draft resolution of *Unidade Comunista's* first national conference which took place in January 1980. The text opposes

dominant trends which currently exist in the international communist movement, notably certain positions of the PLA and the parties which it recognizes. *Unidade Comunista* identifies the current ideological and political crisis within the international communist movement as resulting from the insufficient development of the ideological and theoretical struggle against modern revisionism. In the first sections of the text, *Unidade Comunista* advances that the source of the difficulties within the international communist movement at the current time is to be found on the ideological level in the idealism and subjectivism in dealing with the historical analysis of the degeneration of previously socialist countries, principally the Soviet Union and China. Further in the text, *Unidade Comunista* presents its opinion on the evolution of the international communist movement before 1956 and indicates that even before the dissolution of the Comintern and throughout the history of the International, opportunist positions surfaced and were sometimes dominant. These include the following erroneous positions: first, economism which

reached its height after the VII Congress of the International in 1935 when several, and even the majority, of the communist parties merged, in practice, with social-democratic parties and policies. Then there was the thesis of peaceful transition, especially after World War II. Examples given include the Italian "historical compromise", the turning over of arms in Greece, the "front" policy in France, etc. Third, the anti-fascist struggle replaced the struggle for socialism. Finally, nationalism and chauvinism are identified as a source of the international communist movement's problems. The first thing mentioned is that *Unidade Comunista* considers the dissolution of the Communist International in 1943 to be a mistake. According to Jdanov in his report on the international situation (1947), the dissolution of the Comintern was aimed at putting an end to the lies made by the enemies of communism and the labour movement according to which Moscow interfered in the internal life of the other States and tried to create a situation where communists in the different countries would act not in the in-

terests of their own people but according to orders from outside. Other than the sections which we are publishing below which deal with the international communist movement after the XXth Congress of the CPSU, and proletarian internationalism and the relations between different parties, the text deals in detail with the degeneration of the parties of the socialist countries, in particular the Soviet Union and China, and tries to evaluate the work of Stalin and the role of Mao Tsetung in this degeneration. We will have the opportunity to come back to this theme, but, for the moment, we can limit ourselves to saying that among the major reasons emphasized by *Unidade Comunista* as being the explanation for the degeneration of the socialist countries, the following are the most important: the formation of a new bourgeoisie under socialism, the bureaucratization of the State apparatus and the transformation of the proletarian party into a bourgeois-like party. The excerpts which we are publishing are taken from *Unidad Comunista, Bulletin for the reunification of communists*, No. 7, October 22, 1979. (Translation by IN STRUGGLE!)

Concerning some burning questions in the international communist movement

1. *What is immediately obvious is the fact that, after the XXth Congress, the splits which took place in the communist parties did not have a mass character, and that the sectors affected by this crisis were limited to the intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie.* This is only an indication of what was to take place later: the incapacity of the groups and parties which did form to influence class struggle in their own country in a revolutionary way. But there is more than the class nature of the splits which were later to lead to the isolation and crisis of Marxist-Leninists. The fact that their dominant political and ideological positions cor-

responded to both an attempt to flirt with the reformist politics and ideology of the revisionist CPs and the appearance of radical petty-bourgeois theses must also be taken into account...

2. *It can thus be concluded that the struggle waged by the Marxist-Leninists in the sixties remained unfinished.* This meant that the revolutionary opposition within the CPs had enormous difficulty in making itself heard. This was due to the fact that the opposition did not seem to be linked to the class struggle in its respective countries, but seemed rather to basical-

ly refer to the international situation, and did not wage a very protracted struggle against revisionism within the CPs themselves. And where a certain opposition did surface, it stayed in the upper structures since, to a large extent, bureaucratic centralism had already replaced real democratic centralism. The results of the splits were thus very fragile.

Why did the Marxist-Leninist groups and parties which were formed develop extreme sectarianism and base themselves almost exclusively on sectors of the radical petty bourgeoisie? In the first place, this problem should be

linked to the social and economic situation under capitalism. Already, capitalism was no longer experiencing growth, even temporary growth. Capitalism was engulfed in a profound crisis which even today it has not succeeded in escaping. And this crisis also hit the petty-bourgeois sectors which were easily radicalized. In some countries, the unequal development of the crisis led to a situation where the crisis in the superstructure was more advanced than the economic crisis. Certain sectors of the petty bourgeoisie were pushed towards rapid and direct solutions. The analysis of Marxist-Leninist groups on the "permanent crisis", their confusion between strategy and tactics, between ideology and politics, and infantile "left-wing communism" on the questions of the parliament and mass organizations influenced by revisionism are known. But, the radical petty bourgeoisie is vacillating and when it does not achieve its desires it rapidly becomes pessimistic. We are also familiar with the openly right-wing positions of Marxist-Leninist groups and parties, like the "theory of cadres", the underestimation of the labour movement in the capitalist countries, etc.

The general portrait of what exists in the Marxist-Leninist movement today is, in reality, a very sad demonstration of the crisis which is very deep, but which many people continue to ignore. We could give dozens of examples, but let us only recall certain facts: during the recent revolutionary events in Iran and Nicaragua, Marxist-Leninists played no major role, neither internally in these struggles nor on the level of international aid; the electoral results in countries where Marxist-Leninist parties already participate in elections are considered as a pretty reliable indication of their influence, and these results are almost ridiculous; in the trade unions their influence is almost non-existent with the Marxist-Leninists generally intervening from outside in "pure oppositions" which are formed of none other than the communist militants themselves; parties continue to be recognized internationally on the basis of their servility before the father parties, and not on the basis of their programme or real activities in their own country. This practice has even led to the recognition of completely opportunist parties, as was the case with Jurguet in a not so distant past, and which only discredits Marxist-Leninists....

Proletarian internationalism and the relation between parties

1.... Given the era in which we are living, the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, at a time when capitalism has made its means of economic, military and ideological repression over the working class a hundred times more efficient and centralized, no progress is possible in the labour movement, neither on the practical nor the theoretical level, without looking at the labour movement on the international level, without taking into account all of the interests of the world proletarian revolution, and without subordinating the particular aspects of this or that country to the vital interests of the labour movement on the international level. Although the revolution takes on a national form because of the unequal development of capitalism and revolution, it is imminently international in its content.

These are principles which communists have recognized for a long time but they have nevertheless not been applied with all their consequences. One of the conditions for the victory of the proletariat, its unity, has not been achieved, at least on the level of the most developed countries. Not only has it not been achieved, but it has been made more difficult by a series of conceptions and practices which have deformed internationalism and emptied it of its content.

Undoubtedly, it is here that we find a open door for the development of the crisis in the communist and labour movements on an international level....

In conditions where modern revisionism appeared, the Marxist-Leninists had the duty of making an analysis of the historical situation which had given rise to it, and enriching Marxism-Leninism through the criticism of revisionism. It would have been necessary to have all the forces which remained separate from revisionism participate in the work of uniting the international working-class movement. Finally, it would have been important to elaborate a new orientation for the international communist movement and to give it an organizational form. It was thus an era of redefinition, of intense ideological and theoretical struggle, and of the opening of new paths. It was necessary and urgent to completely break with the revisionist basis of communist concep-

tions which had existed for several years.

2. This, however, was not what happened. Instead of intense ideological and theoretical struggle and a analysis of the historical situation which had led to the new revisionism and the degeneration of the U.S.S.R., a tailist attitude was taken in relation to the positions of the Chinese CP. Idealism and the refusal to analyze the process of the degeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat was adopted. There is no question that the long period of lethargy which the international communist movement experienced, as we saw above, bore fruit — the Marxist-Leninists themselves deformed the method of Marxist analysis and took the easier path of idealist condemnation and tailism with regard to the position of the party with the most authority. This was the result of a process of several years during which the inexistence of the Communist International led to the institutionalization of the inequality between parties, and tailism with regard to a "father-party".

As we have seen, this situation destroyed the theoretical and practical capacities of the different communist parties, prevented their merger with the labour movement as a whole and imposed an orientation on the international communist movement which was determined not on the basis of its correctness, but on the basis of the authority invested in the party which proposed it.

What happened after the split with the revisionists in 1962 is well known. Parties and groups claiming to be Marxist-Leninist and Maoist sprang up everywhere. In the majority of countries, more than one group appeared. At the time when really revolutionary parties appeared which united a significant revolutionary Marxist-Leninist trend around them, petty-bourgeois groups which had nothing to do with class struggle in their countries also appeared.

The Marxist-Leninist groups, isolated from class struggle, with no influence in the labour movement, parodying Marxism by mouthing Marxist vocabulary and repeating "official" positions without ever criticizing them, basically struggled for their international recognition — this is unfortunately the general portrait of the international communist movement.

How can Marxism move forward in these conditions? On this slippery ground where all internationalism is absent, only opportunism and bourgeois conceptions can develop....

The Communist Party of China has particular responsibility for this situation. It underestimated and abandoned bilateral and multilateral contacts between parties. Then it developed a policy where the principle of "I recognize anyone who is completely in agreement with me" was put into practice. This led the CPC to recognize different groups and parties in each country which, in the majority of cases, had no influence in the struggle of the working class. Gradually, China, adopting the policy of "great power", began to decide who belonged to the international communist movement and who did not, without any Marxist-Leninist criteria whatsoever.

It is therefore not difficult to understand how the relations of servility which are typical of bourgeois diplomacy appeared in the relations between communist parties. We cannot be too astonished that openly petty-bourgeois parties and groups were recognized by the international communist movement solely because they sensed which were the official theses and they developed intensive diplomatic activity within the international communist movement.

The very existence of several groups was limited to the publication of stereotyped analyses in various languages or the outright translation of Chinese and Albanian articles....

3. At this point, we should talk about an extremely negative phenomenon which developed in the dictatorship of the proletariat countries with regard to their internationalist tasks. Evidently we are referring to the concessions they made to nationalism and the so-called "reasons of State", to the detriment of active internationalism. This was particularly the case in two fields: the abandoning of the public polemic with other parties in power on deviations of principle, for economic reasons. As is now known, the Chinese CP only began its public polemic against the CPSU, and the PLA only waged open struggle against the Chinese CP, after the adoption of chauvinist policies which led to



the rupture of relations and an end to economic support. On the other hand, there was a nationalist tendency which was the expression of the petty-bourgeois class interests of the bureaucrats and upper strata of the economic and military sectors of society in transition, which did not see the countries of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the base for world proletarian revolution....

4. What has happened today in the international communist movement since the open split with the Chinese is not very different from what happened to the relations between parties over the past decade. A trend has been formed in the movement which considers that the only internationalism, the so-called "touch stone", is support of the PLA and Albania. We also feel that this support is just. But, as for the material and moral support to struggling peoples, as with the recent examples of Iran and Nicaragua, nothing was done. The continual education of the proletariat in the spirit of militant internationalism has not been achieved. The continual propagation of the revolutionary experiences of other peoples, even when they do not fit the "pure" framework adopted by Marxist-Leninists, is considered suspect.

This is "closed-door" internationalism where the door does not open to those who are developing the

real revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie, but rather to those who develop perfect plans, or who are the "official translators" of the positions of the most authorized parties.

It is a sad situation that internationalism has fallen so low in the practice of Marxist-Leninists. Although the experience from before the split with the revisionists obstinately shows another path, the still weak international communist movement stubbornly stays on the same path....

It is correct to support genuine Marxist-Leninist parties, and to struggle and work for the creation of an international, and little has been done on this. However, recognizing groups which have no audience, and creating others in a hasty fashion in order to give birth to an international which would have no "credibility" is a completely unacceptable practice. And when alongside this, parties which are not entirely in agreement with the PLA's methods and analysis are left out, we can already clearly see what kind of an international this will be: a paralyzed, lifeless, and tailist international, incapable of drawing Marxism-Leninism and the international communist movement out of the crisis they are currently in....

The principles which we consider essential if the Marxist-Leninists of the entire world are going to be able to unite and take a firm path for raising themselves to the level of the vanguard of the proletarian revolution of the whole world are: giving an important place to the ideological and theoretical struggle within the international communist movement and the entire revolutionary movement; struggling for an international organization of Marxist-Leninists on the basis of a general programme for the movement which has been widely discussed, even if it must necessarily be limited; criticizing the authority of a "father-party" and the "race" for international recognition; looking for the past errors of the movement by particularly analyzing the life of the III International; practising active internationalism with regard to all revolutionary movements....