

Los orígenes anarquistas del Partido Comunista Portuguê (PCP)

The anarchist origins of the Partido Comunista Portuguê (PCP)

ADELINO CUNHA

Universidade Europeia, IADE. Avenida D. Carlos I, nº 4, 1200-649, Lisboa (Portugal)

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa. Colégio Almada Negreiros, Campolide, 1099-023, Lisboa

adelino.cunha@universidadeeuropeia.pt

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9502-7913>

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Resumen: Este artículo describe el surgimiento original del Partido Comunista Portuguê (en adelante, el PCP – Partido Comunista Portuguê) en el marco del anarquismo obrero a través del análisis de las dinámicas que condujeron a su fundación. Teniendo en cuenta cómo los orígenes del partido, resultantes de una escisión en el movimiento anarcosindicalista, representan una característica única dentro de las historias de los partidos comunistas europeos, es importante identificar no solo por qué el comunismo bolchevique se volvió predominante en Portugal, entre los diversos otras corrientes libertarias, sino también qué ideas resultaron decisivas en esta demarcación con las tendencias anarquistas. El marco teórico establecido para responder a estas interrogantes proviene de los estudios fundamentales en este campo y se aplicó para interpretar los contenidos publicados en el diario *O Comunista* en el período comprendido entre la fundación del PCP en 1921 y la realización del V Congreso de la Tercera Internacional Comunista en 1924.

Palabras clave: PCP; *O Comunista*; Anarquismo; Sindicalismo revolucionario

Abstract: This article describes the original emergence of the Partido Comunista Portuguê (hereafter, the PCP –Portuguese Communist Party) within the framework of worker anarchism through analysing the dynamics leading to its foundation. Taking into account how the party’s origins, resulting from a split in the anarcho-sindicalist movement, represent a unique feature within the histories of European communist parties, it is important to identify not only why Bolshevik communism became predominant in Portugal, out of the various other libertarian currents, but also just which ideas proved decisive in this demarcation from anarchist trends. The theoretical framework established to answer these questions stems from the keynote studies on this field and was applied to interpret the contents published in the *O Comunista* newspaper over the period between the foundation of the PCP in 1921 and the holding of the 5th congress of the Third Communist International in 1924.

Keywords: PCP; *O Comunista*; Anarchism; Revolutionary syndicalism.

Sumario: Introduction. 1. Literature review. 2. Methodology and *corpus* of analysis. 3. The marks of foundation. 4. The anarchist divergence. 5. The proletarian dictatorship. 6. The terms of the trade union struggle. 7. The founding congress. Final considerations. References.

INTRODUCTION

The November 1918 general strike represents a landmark in the history of the Portuguese labour movement. This does not derive from the direct consequences in terms of any circumstantial reinforcement of the trade unions but rather from how the strike's failure later came to be interpreted within the political and chronological dynamics of the processes leading to the founding the Federação Maximalista Portuguesa (the FMP - Portuguese Maximalist Federation) and the Partido Comunista Português (PCP):

The Russian Revolution bestowed new impetus on the search for a new alternative that would clearly pose the question of power, which the anarcho-syndicalists, unable to resolve, then abandoned¹.

The discussion around the need for a revolutionary organisation capable of projecting economic struggles onto a wide reaching political front arose at a time when both Portugal's participation in the First World War and the repressive measures of the Republican governments, which had under the monarchy promised 'funds and funds' to win over the working class², had combined to create a strongly penalising framework³. However, the decisive factor came with the Russian revolution to the extent that, from 1917 onwards, the prevailing libertarian currents were challenged by the real experiences of the revolutionary construction of the first socialist state.

What to do with these concrete expectations and just what strength do new ideas hold? The answers got returned by the founders of the PCP even while this meant that, for the anarchists, their "sympathies and hopes" towards Bolshevik communism here began to be erased⁴, thus, when "they began to

¹ COSTA, Ramiro, *Elementos para a história do movimento operário em Portugal 1820-1975*, Lisboa, Assírio e Alvim, 1978, p.125.

² OLIVEIRA, César, *O Congresso sindicalista de 1911*, Porto, Afrontamento, 1971, p.15.

³ VIEIRA, Alexandre, *Para a história do sindicalismo em Portugal*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1974.

⁴ CARVALHO, David, *Os sindicatos operários e a República burguesa (1910-1926)*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1977, p.187.

understand, one step at a time, that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were not anarchists by another name"⁵.

Despite the natural difficulties in the reception of Marxist ideas⁶, the Bolshevik spirit enthused trade union leaders and revolutionary militants before triumphing within the hitherto anarchist labour movement through the Marxist-Leninist formulation. This characteristic distinguishes the PCP within European communism⁷.

“The Russian Revolution arrived in Spain not as a result of an imposition by the Russian revolutionaries. Spanish society reacted, motu proprio, to the events in Russia. Obviously, the sectors potentially identified with it, such as labor, were sensitive. But also liberal republicanism and Catalan nationalist republicanism”⁸.

The formation of a communist party in Spain through the rupture within the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) is duly based on the studies of Luis Arranz, Rafael Cruz and Francisco Erice. In one of his

⁵ PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Questões sobre o movimento operário português e a revolução russa de 1917*, Porto, Orgal, 1971, p.40.

⁶ CUNHA, Adelino, “The roots of the Portuguese Communist Party. The introduction of Marxist ideas in Portugal and the creation of the Portuguese Maximalist Federation”, in *Historia Contemporânea*, 64 (2020), pp.883-918.

⁷ This specificity must be based on a transnational perspective with other European communist parties, that is, an approach that allows comparing experiences that are comparable (Haupt & Kocka, 2009). Taking into account the geographical proximity and the social and political context of the political struggle, it seems to us that the Partido Comunista de España makes this comparative vision possible. Although the topic deserves an in-depth bibliographic review, we have considered the studies identified by Josep Puigsech Farràs: Andreu Nin, for their politically committed assessment of the ideological impact caused by the Russian Revolution and the difficulties manifested by Spanish socialists and anarchists in taking advantage of this new reality (*La revolución rusa 1905-1917*, Barcelona, Fontamara, 1979); Juan Díaz del Moral who, starting from concrete studies for an interpretation of the general picture, extols the revolutionary spirit that reached the south of Europe (*Historia de las agitaciones campesinas Andalusas, Córdoba: antecedents for an agrarian reform*, Madrid, Revista de Derecho Privado, 1929); and, in a third thematic and chronological perspective, Gerald H. Meaker and Carlos Forcadell (*La izquierda revolucionaria en España 1914-1923*, Barcelona-Caracas-México, Ariel, 1978) for their analysis of the dynamics in the Spanish labor movement. These three lines are merely examples of a vast bibliography focused on studies on the impact of the Russian Revolution in Spain and the emergence of partisan organized communism.

⁸ FARRÁS, Josep Puigsech Farràs, *La Revolución Rusa y España: Una doble vertiente historiográfica*, Índice Histórico Español, 130/2017, p.60.

bibliographic studies, Josep Puigsech Farràs summarizes the guidelines of the three researchers and specifically mentions Erice's approach, insofar as he refers to the impossibility of Spanish communism to penetrate anarcho-syndicalism due to its revolutionary prestige: "A solid tradition established among the Spanish working class, and a PSOE that continued to maintain a notable social ascendancy through the UGT"⁹.

In Portugal, "there was nothing to be split, it (socialism) had had nothing to give to the Portuguese labour movement ever since 1919"¹⁰. This initiative must be recognized out of the initiative of revolutionary unionists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists¹¹: "Its origin in anarchist and syndicalist circles, and not in the usual split in the socialist left wing, endows it with this hybrid characteristic"¹². This explains the interpretation attributed to the failure of the 1918 strike movement insofar as this then highlighted not only the defeat handed down to the anarchist leadership but also the need for *something new* as conveyed by the success of the first proletarian revolution.

At the beginning of the Russian revolution, the anarchist press ignored its "real" content¹³ and starting out expressing its support for the Bolsheviks, postponing the process of disengagement to the stages of founding a political party, i.e., firstly the launch of the FMP in 1919 before the PCP itself, in 1921¹⁴. This confirmed the inevitable rupture in the Portuguese labour movement:

It was from the working class, 'the only truly revolutionary class', that the Party received the spirit of organisation and endless self-denial that enabled it not only to survive but also to develop under the conditions of fascist repression¹⁵.

⁹ FARRÀS, *op. cit.*, p.66.

¹⁰ OLIVEIRA, César, *op. cit.*, p.37.

¹¹ In its preliminary forms, Socialism is said to have emerged in Portugal after 1871. Founded in 1875 and self-dissolved in 1933, the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP) obtained very little influence in the labour movement as it concentrated its activities on electoral purposes.

¹² PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Álvaro Cunhal – 'Daniel', o jovem revolucionário*, Lisboa, Círculo de Leitores, 1999, p.63.

¹³ PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Questões...*, *op. cit.*, p.41.

¹⁴ The organising committee of the PCP took office in January 1921 with the draft Organic Bases published by the *A Batalha* newspaper. The announcement of the foundation occurred on 6 March 1921, at the headquarters of the Associação dos Empregados de Escritório (Association of Office Clerks) in Lisboa. At this time, there were already several active communist cells.

¹⁵ CUNHAL, Álvaro, *Algumas experiências de 50 anos de luta do PCP*, Lisboa, Edições Avante!, 1975, p.10.

This struggle must necessarily be understood within the ideological framework of the libertarian currents and the social influences that the anarchists had exercised since the declaration of the Republic:

The hopes placed in the new regime led many workers to intensify old struggles and wake up to others, believing that under the Republic they would attain a faster and fairer solution¹⁶.

This gets reflected both by the victory they achieved over the Socialists in the labour movement, despite the waves of repression and prohibitionist republican legislation, with some two hundred organisations falling under their control, and by the range and depth of the editorial and propaganda publications (press, pamphlets, manifestos, booklets, brochures, etcetera):

The attachment of Kropotkin's disciples to the working class was a slow and sometimes tortuous process¹⁷.

This rise of the anarchists in the labour movement had advanced somewhat naturally to the extent that, in as early as 1904, Campos Lima was already anticipating success, largely due to the capacity to diffuse the ideas:

They are men who are ready to do anything, from the calm scientific propaganda work for their doctrine to loud protests in the streets. These men constitute a great force. A few more years of persistent propaganda, in the midst of the disorganisation of the political parties, and this force will become even greater¹⁸.

What happened from 1909 onwards, with the dynamics generated by the publication of the Amiens Charter¹⁹ and the consequent trade union congresses of 1909 and 1911, which postponed the foundation of the Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores (CGT - General Confederation of Workers) because "the time was not yet ripe"²⁰, merely confirmed the

¹⁶ VENTURA, António, *Anarquistas, republicanos e socialistas em Portugal. As convergências possíveis (1892-1910)*, Lisboa, Edições Cosmos, 2000, p.214.

¹⁷ GONÇAVES VIANA, J. M., *A evolução anarquista em Portugal*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1975 [1894], p.35.

¹⁸ LIMA, Campos, *Movimento Operário em Portugal*, Porto, Afrontamento, 1972 [1904], p.128.

¹⁹ From the 1906 congress onwards, anarcho-syndicalism represented a program and ideological platform for the French labour movement before then spreading to other European countries.

²⁰ *Formação Sindical – Temas para Estudo*. Intersindical, 1976.

anarchist dissidence. The Tomar Trade Union Congress, held in 1914, ratified this turn away from socialism towards revolutionary trade unionism:

Our program is very simple in form but magnificent in essence. It can be summarised in just two words: communism and anarchism. And we also say communism because we consider that this idea is an inevitable consequence of the latter. It cannot exist without anarchy just as anarchy cannot exist without communism. Our aim is the liberty of equals just as anarchy is the symbol of liberty, so communism is the symbol of equality²¹.

The idea that there could be no communism without anarchy, nor anarchy without communism, would clash with reality as from the appearance of the first Bolsheviks in Portugal, that is, when the "old syndicalists" assumed a stance as soviet pioneers and began breaking with their anarchist roots²².

This process developed around various divergences but two ended up displaying insurmountable contours: the recognition of the need for a proletariat dictatorship and advocacy for establishing a political structure to take over the leadership of the labour movement *above* the trade union structures and taking the practical dimension, rather than the theoretical field, as a factor of differentiation²³.

While this defence of dictatorship might be partly mitigated by recognising its provisional character, the founding of a working class political party clearly corresponded to a move away from anarchism and necessarily positing the seizure of power through revolutionary syndicalism:

²¹ In their Declaration of Principles (April 1887), the first anarchist group of Lisboa had already staked out its theoretical principles as involving the combat against private property as the "origin of the misery of the workers", and against the state, as the cause of "privilege and class division", that is to say, achieving a better future for the working class "must eliminate the state and private property". In order to accelerate the political and economic breakdown, they proposed organising strikes for wages and hours, refused to participate in elections and rejected parliamentarianism as corrupting and dividing the workers.

²² The insurmountable divergences between communists and anarchists may be subject to analysis in other political latitudes, for example in Italy, notably through Antonio Gramsci's texts on the concept of the proletarian party.

²³ CUNHA, Carlos, *The Portuguese Communist Party's strategy for power: 1921-1986*, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1987, p.150.

When the Communist Party emerges, [the break with the anarchists] will already be complete at the organisational level and over fundamental points in the anarcho-syndicalist ideology²⁴.

In the anarchist conception, the class struggle should advance "free of party commitments" in keeping with the proposition that the worker himself had "to be the maker of his own emancipation" (Vasco, 1923[1984], pp.83-83). The contours marking the beginning of this conflict were diluted by the general lack of theoretical education and training of the leading protagonists even if the 1919 founding of the FMP was pre-empted by the need for a working-class party to lead the break with anarcho-syndicalism. In the positioning dynamics of libertarian socialists, the anarchist intellectual Emílio Costa already anticipated that "libertarians who rightly say that their doctrine accepts all social issues, intervene in all of them, except for the issue"²⁵.

On the one hand, studies point to the limited scope of Bolshevik activities designed to spread the ideals of the Russian revolution, primarily taking place through the newspaper *Bandeira Vermelha*:

The militants who constitute the FMP, including some celebrated syndicalist leaders and theoreticians, claim to be 'sovietists' and 'Bolsheviks' but perceive no radical differences between their positions and those of the anarcho-syndicalists (...) From their very inception, they are little more than propagandists for the Russian February and October revolutions²⁶.

The objective was to engage in this work of propaganda by virtue of the power of the ideas themselves, that is to say, the communism triumphing out of the collapse of Russia represented modernity among the libertarians who were then naturally attracted first to the FMP and then to the PCP:

The FMP was a step towards the establishing the future PCP, which was born and developed from it, and its actions do not cease to be fruitful even at the organisational level however restricted its actual scope of intervention might have been²⁷.

²⁴ COSTA, Ramiro, *op. cit.*, p.132.

²⁵ PEDROSO, Alberto; VENTURA, António, *Emílio Costa e o sindicalismo – Da formação libertária à Casal Sindical*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1977, p.84.

²⁶ PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Questões...*, *op. cit.*, p.41.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.42.

On the other hand, other authors express reservations over recognising some fluid transition from the FMP to the PCP in accordance with the number of leaders and militants:

“While it is true that ex-FMP members composed about 45% of the new party, that does not amount to a majority (and only 19% of FMP members chose to join the new PCP). The remaining 55% were drawn primarily from union activists which endowed the PCP with a radically different flavour than previously believed”²⁸.

Avoiding interpreting the absolutist meaning of numbers, it does seem consensual that the maximalists represented an important founding cluster of both the PCP and its ideological commitment. This firstly stems from the organic point of view given there is a transfer of leaders²⁹ and continuity in the maximalist structures³⁰ and, secondly, as the party’s founding was brought about by the initiative of revolutionary trade unionists:

The meeting to launch a new organisation [the PCP] was well attended, with the majority involvement of former maximalists, but also alongside newly arrived anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists³¹.

The example of Carlos Rates can be cited in the context of this transfer of cadres, insofar as the one who would become the first secretary general of the PCP, began to stand out as a union leader in the União dos Sindicatos de Setúbal and, later, on the Comissão Executiva do Congresso Sindicalista, having developed “an intense activity in organizing the trade union movement in Alentejo, Beiras and Trás-os-Montes”³². This “extremely intense activity”

²⁸ CUNHA, Carlos, *The Portuguese Communist Party’s strategy for power: 1921-1986*, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1987, p.159.

²⁹ For example, António Peixe, Manuel Ribeiro, Paulo Luís, Clemente Vieira Salveda, Luís Laranjeiro, José da Silva Oliveira, Gonçalves Correia and Luiz do Nascimento, among others.

³⁰ The organic bases explicitly state that the basic cells of the organisation should be composed of committees in the three-member parishes, moving on to cells or urban centres whenever there were enough militants (then successively aggregated into municipal federations and into regional sections represented at the national level). The structuring into communist centres (replicating the administrative model of bourgeois parties) resulted in the concentration of activities more on theorising and less on organising worker campaigns and disputes.

³¹ MADEIRA, João, *História do PCP*, Lisboa, Tinta da China, 2013, pp.17-10.

³² VENTURA, António, *Subsídios para a história do movimento sindical rural no Alto Alentejo 1910-1914*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1976, pp.43-44.

in the promotion of the Portuguese trade union movement would lead Carlos Rates to the FMP and then to the founding nucleus of the PCP.

Even if they did not themselves constitute *per se* "the vanguard of a real and global alternative" in the Portuguese labour movement or exercised any ascendancy over the trade unionists with vast experience in organising worker struggles (Oliveira, 1971, p.26), the founders of the PCP emerged from the anarcho-sindicalist ranks:

(...) And they strongly reflected their anarchist formation to the point of even seeking a split in the workers' movement as if it were really a party and not a mass organisation³³.

The communist historiography limits its recognition of the FMP to a "new stage in the Portuguese labour movement"³⁴ due to the "great ideological weaknesses" of the maximalists and their concentration of their only limited activities on publishing the *Bandeira Vermelha*. After praising their "very valuable" role in supporting the struggles of the workers' movements, Bento Gonçalves wrote that the anarchist workers ended up distancing themselves from the FMP that ended up terminating its activities following the imprisonment of Manuel Ribeiro before it then "disappeared forever"³⁵.

Bento Gonçalves recognised that the FMP drove a "certain maturing" of ideas about the need to launch a new party and described the founding process as resulting from "café conversations" between proletarians and opportunist bourgeoisie. The early days reflected these contradictions with limited practical activities, an absence of qualified staff and a lack of theoretical knowledge:

The Party members, with rare exceptions, were not honest revolutionary types. Their conception of the Party was very low and incipient. In fact, there were a few dozen members who had great passion for the Party but they were anarchists³⁶.

The former general secretary of the PCP (1929-1942) classified this whole phase as "a real mess" and termed the leaders "exotic and bizarre". He identified a mixture between "proletarians and individuals from the liberal

³³ CARVALHO, David, *op. cit.*, pp.188-189.

³⁴ *100 Anos de Luta 1921-2021*, Lisboa, Edições Avante!, 2021, p.15.

³⁵ GONÇALVES, Bento, *Os comunistas*, Porto, A Opinião, 1976 [1969], p.83.

³⁶ *Ídem*.

professions" only to later specifically acknowledge the role of the anarchist Nascimento da Cunha in the founding of the PCP:

The case became much discussed and the CGT immediately came out against the idea. However, despite stark disagreement, several meetings were held at the Sindicato dos Caixeiros (Merchants' Union) and they decided to set up the Communist Party³⁷.

This led the PCP to recognise the founding role of the "old anarchists" but rather in support of the argument that such origins ended up "as the basis for all the incoherence demonstrated in the early years":

The Communist Party was born out of a split in anarcho-syndicalism to achieve revolutionary political goals (...) after a long struggle, it completely defeated revolutionary syndicalism (...) It is thus clearly established (subsequent events will prove this) that the Communist Party was born out of a split in anarcho-syndicalism to correspond to the revolutionary political needs of our proletariat and our people³⁸.

Within this context of considerable fluidity, the Anarchist Conference of the Southern Region (Lisboa, 1914) stated that "the aim of revolutionary syndicalism coincides with the aim of communist anarchy". Such an affirmation arose following the 1st Portuguese Anarchist Congress (Lisboa, 1911) had expressed the need for action by its supporters in the trade unions "so that revolutionary syndicalism would be as anarchist as possible"³⁹. This anarchist spirit naturally predominates and explains the difficulties encountered by Bolshevism.

Álvaro Cunhal, PCP General Secretary between 1961 and 1992, justifies the original circumstances surrounding the foundation in stating that "anarcho-syndicalist tendencies predominated in the Portuguese workers' movement", adding that its development within the context emerging after the declaration of the Republic in Portugal and the Russian revolution "made the launching of a proletariat revolutionary party an objective need":

³⁷ GONÇALVES, Bento, *Uma vida. Um combate*. Montalegre, Câmara Municipal de Montalegre, 2000 [1973], p.149.

³⁸ *O Partido Comunista Português e a luta sindical*, Lisboa: Edições Avante!, 2010, pp.35-36.

³⁹ SOUSA, Manuel, *O sindicalismo em Portugal*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento, 1974 [1931], pp.101-102.

It was the international repercussions of the Socialist October Revolution that made it possible for the Portuguese proletariat, whose combativeness and class consciousness clearly came to the fore in the years 1911-1920 in broad and insistent mass struggles, to become aware of the need to form its party, its own revolutionary vanguard⁴⁰.

In fact, this question still remains open today even though mostly due to the will of contemporary anarchists:

The anarchist sociological hypothesis on the nature of social inequality is a hypothesis that today, one hundred years after, achieves scientific confirmation through its ability to understand and interpret social realities⁴¹.

When referring to the period between its foundation and its prohibition (1921-1926), Álvaro Cunhal regrets how the PCP was unable to "form a real revolutionary vanguard" due to the "anarchist and petty-bourgeois origins of many of its leaders at that time, the lack of theoretical preparation, the absence of a truly revolutionary core". This is not exactly a specifically Portuguese characteristic as the line of demarcation was simultaneously under construction as the Bolsheviks themselves proceeded with their own process of consolidating power:

In 1927, 33 per cent of Bolshevik Party members had joined the party between 1918 and 1920, with only 1 per cent having joined before 1917. Thus, in the 1920s, most militants held knowledge about what the revolutionary pre-party life had been like in the underground period - the formative experience of the 'old guard' of Bolshevik leaders - based solely on hearsay⁴².

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The construction of the theoretical framework arises from a literature review focused on the ideas defended by anarcho-syndicalists and on the shock triggered by the arrival of Bolshevism during the process of founding the PCP. The terms are sourced from the contents of the *O Comunista*

⁴⁰ CUNHAL, Álvaro, *Algumas experiências de 50 anos de luta do PCP*, Lisboa, Edições Avante!, 1975, pp.6-7.

⁴¹ BERTOLO, Amadeo, *Anarquistas e orgulhosos de o ser*, Lisboa, Barricada dos Livros, 2018, p.31.

⁴² FITZPATRICK, Sheila, *A Revolução Russa*, Lisboa, Tinta da China, 2017, p.130.

newspaper and constitute the *corpus* of analysis with a view to answering the following research questions:

- Why did Bolshevik communism succeed in Portugal among the various existing libertarian currents?
- Which ideas proved decisive in its demarcation from the anarchists?
- What is the importance of the foundational origins of the PCP within the trade union movement?

The emergence of the PCP in the effervescence of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism requires understanding within the framework of the libertarian currents dominant in the Portuguese labour movement from the turn of the 20th century:

The trade unionists understood that from the perspective of social revolution, trade unionism served as a revolutionary instrument and as a future manager of society was sufficient unto itself [while] the anarcho-syndicalists intended to bring the workers, intellectuals, students and consumers into the revolutionary struggle⁴³.

The anarchists took root in the trade union movement in keeping with the idea that the struggles of workers would lead to a revolution capable of overthrowing all the established powers, which would then be replaced, not by governments or mass parties, but by trade unionised workers. They claimed that anarchism was syndicalist from the cradle and saw anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism as one and the same thing: "Under the guise of 'revolutionary trade unionism', which is for many a simple euphemism", one finds an anarchist"⁴⁴, i.e., "the anarchists, therefore, take on the mission of showing that trade unionism, to be truly *revolutionary*, must be *socialist* and *anarchist* at the same time"⁴⁵.

In this sense, Manuel Villaverde Cabral positioned revolutionary trade unionism as "an evolution of individualist anarchism" and recognised the success of libertarians "until Bolshevism presented itself as a valid

⁴³ OLIVEIRA, César, *O Primeiro Congresso do Partido Comunista Português*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1975, p. 24.

⁴⁴ VASCO, Neno, *Concepção anarquista do sindicalismo*, Lisboa, Edições Afrontamento, 1923 [1984], p.80.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p.102.

alternative"⁴⁶. In the same vein, João Freire started out by warning that the revolution had brought about a change in context with the appearance of Bolshevism and the "ever deeper" rift with libertarians:

It may be stated that the positions have been reversed in relation to a decade ago. Where once there were socialists, now there are libertarians, that is, those defending positions of influence⁴⁷.

Beginning with a non-negotiable position, anarcho-syndicalists refused to participate in bourgeois parliamentary institutions (reflecting their apolitical structuring)⁴⁸ and advocated for the suppression of government institutions in the name of the socialisation of political power:

We want to replace the current authoritarian political organisation with an anarchist political organisation, which starts out from the individual and moves towards society, with individuals freely associating and groups freely federating⁴⁹.

According to Marxist-Leninists, this position meant rejecting the need to conquer power in order to link the trade union movement to the popular masses and then build up revolutionary state power through establishing a proletarian dictatorship.

In the specific context of trade union struggles, the anarchists argued workers should confront employer organisations directly without any intermediation:

The workplace strike and the revolutionary strike, which would at one stroke lead to the paralysis of bourgeois society and the conquest of economic power

⁴⁶ DIAS PEREIRA, Joana, *Sindicalismo revolucionário – A história de uma 'Idéa'*, Casal de Cambra, Caleidoscópio, 2011, p.14.

⁴⁷ FREIRE, João, *Anarquistas e operários – Ideologia, ofício e práticas sociais: O anarquismo e o operariado em Portugal, 1900-1940*, Porto, Edições Afrontamento, 1992, p.196. Thus, without revolutionary trade unionism and anarcho-syndicalism having exhausted themselves "neither as an ideology nor as an organisation in the process of the workers' struggle" to the extent that the CGT maintained its dominance until the mid-1930s, in OLIVEIRA, César, *O Congresso sindicalista...*, *op. cit.*, p.26.

⁴⁸ VASCO, Neno, *Os anarquistas no movimento operário*, Conferência Anarquista da Região Sul, Lisboa, 1914, p.6.

⁴⁹ VASCO, Neno, *Concepção anarquista...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

by workers and their trade unions, constituted the main instruments for direct action campaigns⁵⁰.

Although this model of trade union activism achieved success in the concrete social conditions in which it emerged and where it evolved dynamically, direct action limited the demands to the economic field, i.e., this represented only a partial perspective on the historical process (although accepting interlinkage with the class struggle). Should a strike constitute a rupture in social relations due to the conflict between classes caused by clashing, divergent interests, then it was important to consider this within the framework of social revolution, i.e., *beyond* the economic claims. The PCP would thus emerge as an organisation for a revolutionary class interacting with the trade union organisation and oriented towards exploring the totality of the contradictions in bourgeois society⁵¹.

Hence, there comes the importance of considering the concept of unity. The anarchists deployed this as an instrumental objective (a process of mobilisation), downplaying its intrinsic centrality and instead attributing a superior value to the concept of solidarity. In contrast, the Marxist conception maintained unity represents a "founding notion from which the theory of the party is built"⁵². Therefore, we now arrive at another conflictual dimension: the refusal of leadership. The anarchist union organisation, based on trade unions as an extended community (an "*imperfect* community"), criticised all forms of leadership "seeking to safeguard the rights - that is, the liberty - of individuals and minorities" to prevent their subjugation by the prevailing majorities:

Within the union, the action of resistance; outside it, each completes this action in their own ways, according to their political conceptions or electoral preferences (...) If you are a cooperativist, join the cooperative (...) if you are a republican or socialist, join the respective party (...) but if you are, in addition, a wage-earner (...) join the trade union⁵³.

Logically, accepting a political party as the organiser of the trade union movement corresponded to an impossibility within the anarchist perspective

⁵⁰ OLIVEIRA, César, *O Primeiro Congresso...*, *op. cit.*, p.24.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p.25.

⁵² FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, p.197.

⁵³ VASCO, Neno, *Concepção anarquista...*, *op. cit.*, pp.93-94.

and recognised as such by the CGT itself at its 1919⁵⁴ congress when it defined the aim of developing its forms of struggle "outside of any political school" and in defence of the "full expression of thought"⁵⁵. Anarchism could only live outside the yoke of the parties with the workers free to emancipate themselves⁵⁶.

The application of these principles necessarily reflected in the organisation of the workers' movements, where tensions would amass until triggering a rupture with the PCP, "whose founding elements and first leaders were mostly *celetistas* union activists, and some federal councilors"⁵⁷.

The anarchists proposed bottom-up constitutions (the sovereignty of the bases), based on unions and federations which would later be aggregated into the general confederation while always taking into account the pedagogical character of the movement (labour/knowledge): "The dominant theory prevailing amongst them was that the social 'milieu' inexorably determined individual conduct"⁵⁸. In fact, both revolutionary syndicalists and anarcho-syndicalists advocated the division into trade unions (that denominated trade unionism by profession) while the communists, from their First Congress onwards, advocated "for each company, one trade union"⁵⁹.

The very concept of revolution became an important factor for divergence. Starting out from a common understanding among all theoreticians of libertarianism (the relatively rapid modification of social structures, people's mentalities and behaviour, involving major political, economic, legal changes, etcetera), João Freire draws attention to the abstract concept of revolution popular among anarchists: "A category of the markedly moral type: political power *must* be destroyed; property must be socialised; workers must show solidarity, etcetera"⁶⁰.

This abstraction received strong opposition from the communists with their repeated appeals for an immediate revolution and the consequent dismantling of the state and bourgeois institutions:

⁵⁴ The process of creating the CGT is detailed in the doctoral thesis of José Miguel de Jesus Teodoro, namely the dynamics from the general strike of 1918 to the congress of 1919 (II Congresso Operário Nacional, Coimbra, 1919, TEODORO, José Miguel de Jesus, *A Confederação Geral do Trabalho 1919-1927*, 2013, Universidade de Lisboa, pp.60-91.

⁵⁵ FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, pp.197-200.

⁵⁶ VASCO, Neno, *Concepção anarquista...*, *op. cit.*, pp.101-102.

⁵⁷ TEODORO, *op.cit.*, 2013, p.187.

⁵⁸ FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, p.198.

⁵⁹ *O Comunista*, "A defesa do sindicato único", Ano 1[2], no.6, 15 October 1923.

⁶⁰ FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, p.334.

The anarcho-trade unionists regarded the 'cross-armed' general strike as the highest and most radical form of the proletarian struggle; their ultimate aim was to overthrow capitalism without making any revolution and to take power through a general strike⁶¹.

All of these divergences led to the digging of trenches but it was the proletariat dictatorship notion that defined the final terms of the rupture.

When it arrived in Portugal, Bolshevism took as its objective (through the FMP) "to spread the doctrinal principles tending to the establishment of communist trade unionism, temporarily admitting the action of revolutionary power exercised in a dictatorship of workers' councils or soviets". This thus came out in direct conflict with the anarchists. Bakunin rejected all forms of power (even transitory and class power) and understood social revolution as the rediscovery of individuality: itself an impossibility to the Marxists:

The class struggle will be the detonator for the revolution that will synthesise the contradictions of the bourgeois world but through a new institution, a political party which, by directing the class struggle and affirming itself as 'the conscience of the proletariat', will then create, when the uprising takes place, a 'new expression of power', the dictatorship of the proletariat, a form of limitations on individual freedom⁶².

This literature review traces the boundaries that define the anarchist origins of the PCP and the process of rupture. In refusing any political organisation for the workers, both anarcho-trade unionism and revolutionary syndicalism rejected the scope for exploring the totality of the contradictions of bourgeois society, i.e., the practical and theoretical instruments fundamental to the total transformation of society. The PCP set itself out as the revolutionary political organisation for the proletariat capable of endowing meaning on all the piecemeal struggles in a mass movement while constituting itself as an instrument allowing for "the permanent dialectical unity between theory and practice"⁶³.

⁶¹ KOTA, Filip, *Duas linhas antagónicas no movimento sindical mundial*, Lisboa, Editora Vento de Leste, 1975, p.23.

⁶² OLIVEIRA, César, *O Socialismo em Portugal 1850-1900*, Porto, Afrontamento, 1973, p. 217.

⁶³ OLIVEIRA, *O Primeiro Congresso...*, *op. cit.*, p.12.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OF ANALYSIS

This article's theoretical framework rests both on the studies produced by the main scholars of communism in Portugal and the content analysis carried out on the *O Comunista* newspaper. This technique results in objective, systematic and quantitative descriptions (Berelson, 1952; Daymon & Holloway, 2002) able to "reduce the distance between indicator and indicated, between theory and data, between context and action"⁶⁴.

Within the dynamic of founding the PCP as the Portuguese section of the Communist International (CI), seven issues were published between October 16 and November 27, 1921. There followed a period of suspension justified by the editors as the time to renew the newspaper that they classified as "heavy" and "excessively doctrinaire"⁶⁵ with the publication returning on the eve of the 1st Congress (November 1923) and continuing through to the banning of the PCP (1926).

We chose to restrict the chronological period to that between the founding period (1919/1921) and the 1st Congress (1923) because, on the one hand, these years anticipate the prohibition on the PCP (1926) and the natural fading of the split with the anarchists⁶⁶ and, on the other hand, because the Fifth CI Congress (June/July 1924) closed a cycle through the rise of Stalin and the consequent decreeing of Bolshevism applied to the national sections⁶⁷:

64 MAANEN, John Van, "Reclaiming qualitative methods for organizational research: A preface," in *Administrative Science Quarterly* (24)4 (1979), pp.520-526. We applied MAXQDA software to operationally implement this analysis: RÄDIKER, Stefan, KUCKARTZ, Udo, *Análisis de Datos Cualitativos con MAXQDA – Texto, Audio, Video*. Berlin, MAXQDA Press, 2020.

65 *O Comunista*, "Compasso de Espera", Year 1, no.7, 27 November 1921.

66 Although this question has also traversed the entire history of the Party, invoked at times of confrontation with leftist tendencies during the dictatorship, e.g., CUNHAL, Álvaro, CUNHAL, Álvaro, *Radicalismo pequeno burguês de fachada socialista*, Lisboa, Edições Avante!, 1974 [1970]; or in the revolutionary process itself, e.g. SOARES, Pedro, *Herdeiros e continuadores do anarquismo*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1975.

67 Pierre Brué draws attention to two facts. First: Bolshevisation meant the constitution of an "international Bolshevik party" and was criticised by Lenin for being an artificially imposed Russification of parties with no revolutionary experience or tradition. Secondly: Bolshevism meant that the Russian leaders were instrumentalising the German Communist Party in order to definitively prevent it from playing the role of revolutionary leadership to which it had always aspired, and which it had definitively compromised with the revolutionary ebb of 1923, cfr. BROUÉ, Pierre, *O Partido Bolchevique*, São Paulo, Sundermann, 2014, pp.197-328. We may here add a third fact: Stalin's crushing of the opposition left shaped by Trotsky from 1923

The essential aim of this period of the Communist International is the Bolshevisation of its sections (...) the Party must be a real mass organisation (...) it must be capable of manoeuvre, that is to say, it must not have dogmatic tactics (...) it must be an essentially revolutionary and Marxist party (...)) it must be capable of manoeuvre, that is to say, it must not have a dogmatic tactic (...) it must be an essentially revolutionary and Marxist party (...) it must be a centralised party, which does not admit fractions, tendencies or groups, a monolithic party fused into a single bloc (...) it must apply within the bourgeois army a systematic work of propaganda and organisation⁶⁸.

José Pacheco Pereira warned of the prolonged period required by this process of separation from anarchism, pointing to the first phase in 1923; then to the evolution registered in the years 1925-26 and, finally and "decisively", he referred to the consolidation through to 1929⁶⁹.

When Bento Gonçalves began the 1929 reorganisation and rehearsed the first Bolshevik measures, the PCP contained only a substantially small number of militants, incapable of imposing itself on the political system due to its ideological weakness and with an internal organisational model unprepared for operating clandestinely.

Ideological inconsistency, first, and the vicissitudes of a political order, which quickly became associated with it following the advent of the dictatorship, delayed a coherent and deep process of Bolshevisation for many years⁷⁰.

The results of the first Bolshevik efforts were compromised by the sharp retreat experienced in the 1930s with this process only ending with the reorganisation initiated by Júlio de Melo Fogaça in 1940 and closed by Álvaro Cunhal in 1941⁷¹.

Content analysis of the *O Comunista* newspaper provide for an exploration of the text through the codification of their categories and the units of register applicable to the contents (through ranking the characteristics according to their relevance); furthermore, inference underpinned the

onwards (NOVACK, George; FRANKEL, Dave & FELDMAN, Fred, *As Quatro Internacionais*, Lisboa, Edições Delfos, 1974, pp. 135-158.

⁶⁸ “V Congreso de la Internacional Comunista”, 17 June – 8 July 1924, Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente/56, Cordoba, pp.59-60.

⁶⁹ PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Questões...*, *op. cit.*, p.44.

⁷⁰ MADEIRA, João, “Bolchevização, funcionários clandestinos e identidade do PCP”, in NEVES, José (org.), *Partido Comunista Português 1921-2021 – Uma Antologia*, Lisboa, Tinta da China, 2021, p.158.

⁷¹ MADEIRA, *História...*, *op. cit.*, pp.59-84.

attribution of meanings to submit to interpreting the theoretical framework. The process thus produced indicators representing the units of record and made it possible to proceed to interpret the results and answer the research questions.

This option derives from how this research strategy ensures an objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content⁷², taking into account the objective of identifying, describing and classifying the variables considered for this research project. The objective character established by the research rules and procedures ensured that the analysis provided identical quantitative results for different contexts (who?, what?, when?) in keeping with the intention to begin by describing the frequency of their presence.

The results enable analysis of the respective inferences in the sense that the variables correspond to intentions, attitudes and values which qualitatively regulate the relationships we here seek to analyse, i.e., the contents correspond to the spirit of the time⁷³. It is not about finding semantic homogeneity in the sequences (an approach in linguistics) but rather the diversity arising from participatory journalism⁷⁴, i.e., the persistence of themes and their evolution across the course of the respective chronological clippings. We hereby apply content analysis as a valid set of techniques that strive to obtain indicators underpinning the inference of knowledge⁷⁵.

3. THE MARKS OF FOUNDATION

The PCP emerged with the “supreme objective” of organising “revolutionary action” and advance with the “full socialisation of the means of production”, thus, “the radical transformation of a capitalist society into a communist society”⁷⁶. This set out to be a party of the working class with the ambition of rendering this class a political vanguard at a time when anarcho-syndicalism was proposing an ideology of a dispersed proletariat, not

⁷² BERELSON, Bernard, *Content analysis in communication research*, New York, The Free Press, 1952.

⁷³ Harold D. Lasswell.

⁷⁴ MAINGUENEAU, Dominique, *Discours et analyse du discours – Introduction*, Paris, Editions Armand Collin, 2014.

⁷⁵ BARDIN, Laurence, *Análise de conteúdo*, Lisboa, Edições 70, 2000, p.42.

⁷⁶ *O Comunista*, “Partido Comunista Português – Bases Orgânicas Provisórias”, Year 1, no.1, 16 October 1921.

concentrated, distributed across small units of production, with many remaining at an artisanal level of technology:

The PCP was established, as is common, by workers in the arsenals (navy and army) and weapons factories, some railway and dock employees, rural workers, bakers and confectioners, sectors of the civil construction, metal working industries, etcetera; and a fringe made up of commercial and office staff, clerks and some intellectuals, classes facing fairly advanced states of proletarianization in the 1910s and 1920s and that also contained revolutionary syndicalist classes⁷⁷.

The founders of the PCP sent out a circular to trade unions and union confederations announcing the foundations of the party program based on the expropriation of capitalism and the abolition of private property, having immediately embarked on the process of applying to the CI and the transformation of trade unions into cells.

In contrast to that observed with the maximalist groups, this manifesto caused particular irritation in anarcho-syndicalist circles that did not hesitate to engage in a counteroffensive⁷⁸.

Between the founding of the FMP and that of the PCP, the CGT counted on around 85,000 unionised members and would have reached its peak in 1922 with in the vicinity of 90,000 workers⁷⁹.

The awareness that [the worker] is a strength that is not found in the globality of society in which there is *space* for full *self-realisation* (...) the exercising of a collective and active *consciousness* shall then have to be constantly *clarified*⁸⁰.

The drop in member numbers between 1922 and 1925 derives precisely from the dissidence triggered by the young syndicalists who put their experience in revolutionary syndicalism into the founding origins of the PCP

⁷⁷ PACHECO PEREIRA, José, *Questões...*, *op. cit.*, p.43.

⁷⁸ CARVALHO, *op. cit.*, p.190.

⁷⁹ The number of trade unions rose from 161 in 1905 to 334 in 1920, before reaching 507 on the eve of the coup of 28 May 1926, *cf.* FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, p.122.

⁸⁰ OLIVEIRA, César, *O Operariado e a República Democrática*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1974, pp.76-77.

when they broke off with the CGT Syndicalist Youth to launch the Communist Youth⁸¹.

The qualitative leap from a syndicalism that was appropriate to economic-financial demands, of a more empirical and immediate character to a political organisation that globally challenged the capitalist system [was] extraordinarily difficult to bring about⁸².

The industrial clusters in and around Lisbon became the main bastions through means of control of trade unions representing the railway, followed by the maritime, civil construction (stone masons, labourers, plasterers, painters, bricklayers, carpenters, etcetera) and metal working (locksmiths, smelters, forgers, turners, coppersmiths, boilermakers, jewellers, etcetera) sectors⁸³.

This captures the strength of this Bolshevik force under construction in the industrial society in the “century of great demands”⁸⁴ and at a time when mutualist associativism had run its course as the dominant ideology⁸⁵. The same was to occur with anarcho-syndicalism but for different motives:

A fact of the greatest importance, and that arises entirely at the expense of revolutionary syndicalism, is this entrance into the organised struggle by the side of the worker [but] revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism very often led to impasses that they did not know how to get out of due to a lack of any theoretical instrument⁸⁶.

The early years of the PCP were necessarily “timid” due especially to the lack of any prevailing revolutionary culture and shortcomings in the ideological preparation:

[The] syndicalist militants decided all of a sudden to express a total adherence to Marxism, even while only understanding its formal aspects as it was otherwise very poorly known nor was there any great inclination for its deep

⁸¹ The Syndicalist Youth had been set up by a group of anarchists in 1914 and experienced severe setbacks with the successive drafting of young persons for the war effort.

⁸² OLIVEIRA, *O Congresso sindicalista...*, *op. cit.*, p.37.

⁸³ FREIRE, João, *op. cit.*, pp.127-131.

⁸⁴ FONSECA, Carlos, *Integração e ruptura operária – Capitalismo, associacionismo, socialismo (1836-1975)*, Lisboa, Editorial Estampa, 1975, p.118.

⁸⁵ RUIVO, Beatriz; LEITÃO, Eugénio. *O sindicalismo do funcionalismo público na I República*, Lisboa, Seara Nova, 1977, p.17.

⁸⁶ OLIVEIRA, César, *O Operariado...*, *op. cit.*, p.86.

study. Only Manuel Ribeiro and Carlos Rates attempted to disseminate the theories of Marx⁸⁷.

During the year of its foundation, the PCP published only a very limited number of copies of *O Comunista* with the primary concern of justifying the historical need for its existence due to the impotence of the trade union movement. The theoretical basis appeared as clearly weak in keeping with how the references stemmed essentially from the news arriving about the Russian revolution and less from the national preparation of activists. The first article conveyed an attempt at justification based on the original revolutionary spirit and the idea of mobilising a (new) collective will that had hitherto been silenced:

The Communist Party, that a dozen of revolutionaries and syndicalist militants founded a short while ago, interpreters of a state of collective consciousness, remains far from causing any dissidence to the established combative members of the working class⁸⁸.

The question was framed in precisely these terms as this did constitute dissidence, furthermore, implicitly recognised when affirming that there are no immutable ideas or principles to the extent that the social movement had to adapt to the dynamics of change “should they wish to do useful and progressive work”. This led the author to attempt to explain how syndicalism “was not anything more than a new means of struggle” resulting from industrialisation with its capacity for mobilisation, strike action, getting “easily liquidated” and hence proving unable to project itself as a broad social movement and therefore correspondingly always remaining within a “strict egoism of class”. This was what got classified as the “interesting side” to strikes and encapsulating material wellbeing.

This immediately conveys how the movement preserved its entire relevance as a bearer of hope for the “souls of workers” but the facts arising forced the recognition of its “revolutionary impotence” and “lack of idealism”: “And without idealism, there is no faith, there is no enthusiasm, there is no revolution”⁸⁹.

⁸⁷ CARVALHO, David, *op. cit.*, p.188.

⁸⁸ *O Comunista*, “Novos Horizontes”, Year 1, no.1, 16 October 1921.

⁸⁹ *Ídem*.

This reflects a lesson learned from the Russian revolution in the sense that workers should strive to engage in their trade union activities “exclusively” as professionals and in the party as “citizens” and “revolutionaries” to the extent that syndicalism “is highly exclusive” and fosters a “timid class spirit”. That was a strident appeal against the “hat in hand” approach that depended on transforming the worker from being a “poor soul” into a “citizen with the right to demand”:

Having demonstrated and clearly demonstrated by practice, the revolutionary shortcomings of trade union actions, it is necessary to make recourse to political action, the actions of a party⁹⁰.

The justification for founding the PCP did not dispense with barbed comments for the anarchists in their rejecting of the “pride of formed opinion” and “the fanatical intolerance of dogma” before closing the rhetorical cycle with a direct allusion to the change then taking place in Europe: “The best French militants of revolutionary syndicalism are today communists”⁹¹.

The Portuguese communists now began bewailing the apathy and the disappearance of the revolutionary spirit to then present the PCP as the new path of hope:

Respecting and recognising the trade union organisations of which so many its members were part of, but also recognising that their actions are insufficient and incomplete for full emancipation, [the PCP] invites the working class and the proletarian masses in general to make their political initiation enlisting as free men in the legion of those willing to ceaselessly combat, through direct action and every possible form of struggle so that the social Revolution shall soon be a reality⁹².

Indeed, José Peixe would later explain his transition from anarchism to communism through affirming that it was “the same temperament” that led him to support “with his heart and soul” the anarchist theses as that which led him “to stand with the communists today”⁹³.

⁹⁰ Ídem.

⁹¹ Ídem.

⁹² Ídem.

⁹³ *O Comunista*, “Revolução Imediata? SIM!”, Year 1, no.5, 13 November 1921.

4. THE ANARCHIST DIVERGENCE

In reality, the lines of demarcation with the anarchists represented a fundamental instrument for affirming the role of the PCP and, to this end, José da Silva Oliveira addressed his new army by starting out warning how the foundation of the party had raised “great discussion as regards its needs and very existence inside and beyond the trade union organisation” taking into consideration the objectives of unifying the revolutionary front based on the dictatorship of the proletariat: “Who would dare deny the need for a dictatorship of iron and fire, necessarily imposed against the enemies of the next revolution?”⁹⁴.

This then led the author to express his regret at the “incoherencies in such cultivated and free-thinking minds” and points a finger of accusation directly at the anarchists for their “morbid symptoms” of “decadence” or “mental cowardness”:

Hermetically sealed in the dogmatism of their and these principles, they already do not recall the right to think and freely criticise the new methods of struggle that the present has demonstrated to us⁹⁵.

A bellicose declaration against the anti-statism of the anarchists (opposition to the state and to governments as well as criticism of electoral parties) but immediately rebutted by a certain hesitation when José da Silva Oliveira adds that communists and anarchists are “more or less libertarian communists” and for such reason there should be understandings in effect between communist and anarchist militants:

There should be more rigorous unity in their views as, within the trade union organisation, there can be no further consent given to the confusion that has spread among workers⁹⁶.

The demarcation with anarchism continued somewhat hesitantly, especially in the phases when the focus was on attacking the republicans and their violent radicalism. In the wake of the Noite Sangrenta (Night of Blood, October 1921), the communists began by accusing the republicans of leaving

⁹⁴ *O Comunista*, “Militantes Comunistas”, Year 1, no.1, 16 October 1921.

⁹⁵ *Ídem*.

⁹⁶ *Ídem*.

the “country demoralised, undisciplined, maddened by party dissent” before then playing down the very revolutionary character of the PCP:

Certainly, we do also preach, which we also appeal for with our every energy, social revolution but this expression is less a cry of war and more an appeal to the consciousnesses⁹⁷.

The sweetened discursive tone reflected both the marginality of the PCP and its lack of power for social mobilisation in this period when the party also represented an ideological deviation expressed in the definition of the taking of power as a “reflexive turnaround in the spirits” and in the fallout from the demarcation with the anarchists. The communists also regretted the “habit” of attributing social agitators and advanced propaganda to demagoguery and the indiscipline of organic forces of society and recruited anarchism into the peripheries of the PCP:

Did the crowd hiss, assault, lynch? That’s the doings of the anarchists. Anarcho-syndicalism, that is the great, the only disruptor. It is not the anarchist bomb that tears apart [Portuguese society], it is the political gangrene that is rotting it away⁹⁸.

The difficulties in circulating and disseminating ideas in the years immediately after the Russian Revolution began to be gradually perceived by activist members who recognised the difficulties in “themselves”, we who “are connected with the revolutionary movement”. This stemmed both from the ideological fragility of the Portuguese communists in their earliest phase as well as the respective complexity of the Russian Revolution to the extent that its interpretation required so many new analytical instruments and reflections, as if an entirely new mentality:

Only rare, unfortunately, are those who have an exact notion of what is happening in Russia and providing a synthesis of the true significance of the revolutionary successes of that country, some due to a lack of mental preparation while others, the largest part, because sentiment clouds reason⁹⁹.

⁹⁷ *O Comunista*, “Palavras Francas”, Year 1, no.3, 30 October 1921.

⁹⁸ *Ídem*.

⁹⁹ *O Comunista*, “A Filosofia da Revolução Russa”, Year 1, no.4, 6 November 1921.

This same spirit led the author to recognise the “cruelty” of ignorance to reposition the idea of revolution as “only one step on the enormous path to be travelled” and never as an “apothecic finality”.

This problem would only be openly confronted in 1923 in the writing of Carlos Rates, the first Secretary-General of the PCP. He accepted that the Party arose out of the initiatives of former anarcho-syndicalists “out of sympathy for the Russian Revolution” but without any significant theoretical outputs in a clear deviation from the indications provided by the CI. This all justified the continuity of the equivocation:

Many do not have the slightest hesitation in proclaiming their anarchism without even grasping the profound abyss existing between the two philosophies – the Marxist and the Anarchist (...) The fact is there exists deep antagonism between Marxist communism and anarchist communism, if not over the objectives then at least in the means to obtain them¹⁰⁰.

Undertaking this clarification of the boundaries would seem to strengthen this fluidity: the Anarchists defend how “the ideas produce the events” while to the Marxists “events pull on other events”; the Anarchists deem the French revolution an “entry in encyclopaedias” while the Marxists perceive it as “a great revolution”. In brief, the waters separate when, in agreeing with the Leninist suppression of the state, the Anarchists judge the success of the revolution on the development of individual consciousness so that the future society may dispense with the proletarian dictatorship: “We [the communists] are not concerned about individual liberty because what we want to guarantee is the collective freedom of the proletariat”¹⁰¹.

The dynamics preceding the first congress were shaped by the effective rupture with anarcho-syndicalism but simultaneously to the communists appealing for unity in the working class movement based on insults and thereby coming out against the “critters with bad faith” who act out of “stupidity” and “vanity” in desegregating the workers’ movement. The appeal, merely rhetoric, arose from a generic orientation that the International had handed down that the PCP was attempting to comply with as a section that at the time was still seeking to mark out its role as a new party and in the context of the run-up to the First Congress.

Only after profiling ideas about the origins of the proletariat within the framework of the concentration of economic forces, the expansionist nature

¹⁰⁰ *O Comunista*, “Sejamos Marxistas!”, Year 1 [2], no.4, 15 June 1923.

¹⁰¹ *O Comunista*, “Frente Única do Proletariado”, Year 1[2], no.6, 15 October 1923.

of capitalism and the inevitability of class struggle did Carlos Rates also seek to define the contours of Marxism as the provider of an interpretation of history before then immediately returning to attacking the anarchists: “They are communists without knowing it”.

The gravitational centre remained focused on the dispute with the anarcho-sindicalists and, as the CI representative assumed in person during their speech at the first PCP Congress, the “great task” of “convincing their anarcho-sindicalists comrades (...) of the need to apply communist methods”¹⁰²:

- i. there can be no economic revolution without also making a political revolution;
- ii. hence, when the bourgeois power is overthrown, it is necessary to establish revolutionary power;
- iii. it is essential to ensure the authority of the strike, the centralisation of the struggle, the need to create a strike policy (the so-called vigilance commission) and the penalties to be applied.

5. THE PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP

The fracture lines that broke through from the outset started with the defence of the proletarian dictatorship with the PCP soon running into difficulties as regards both its theoretical foundations and its justification as a political objective. In its first edition, *O Comunista* began by recognising the existence of “innocent victims” of any dictatorship of the proletariat just as there were also innocent victims of the “many anarchist attacks” but without having observed how “puritanism mourns and sentimentalises over these victims”¹⁰³. The argument hereby conveyed fundamentally rests on the conviction that any profound transformation in society requires combating the bourgeois through to their extinction and with this transformation to the new communist regime requiring transition to the extent “the communist organisation cannot emerge from a capitalist organisation”:

To build a society without owners or workers, the proletariat should first overcome the bourgeois state, the armour of the capitalist society, and seize

¹⁰² *O Comunista*, “O que se deve dizer aos anarco-sindicalistas”, Year 1[2], no.7, December 1923.

¹⁰³ *O Comunista*, “Ditadura do Proletariado”, Year 1, no.1, 16 October 1921.

power and, having turned architect, and only then, can they build the new society¹⁰⁴.

The urgency of this PCP desire for affirmation reflects both in the puerile arguments put forward (“you cannot get from a bad society to a good society as if changing your shirt”) and in the bellicose tones (“only imbeciles would believe that in the day immediately after the Social Revolution and having defeated the bourgeois in an armed struggle, you can straight away advance with libertarian communism or anarchism”), taking into consideration that the backdrop to this was the process of separating Marxism from Anarchism:

Exactly because we are not anarchists and libertarians is why we do not accept either dogmas or masterplans drafted by fools imposing old and decrepit teachings that they made in their time¹⁰⁵.

At this same time, the benchmark ideological texts produced by anarchists were insisting that they are socialists and communists precisely because they attacked private property and anarchists because they defended a society without government and, therefore, anarchy “as the political organisation corresponding to socialism”¹⁰⁶. Indeed, all the anarchist theoretical outputs maintain the idea of communism-anarchy as an inalienable identity¹⁰⁷.

In the build-up to the First Congress, it became clear that the survival of the PCP depended on the concrete struggle against the anarchists holding power in the trade union movement, accepting that winning over the unionised masses “is a question of life or death”, based upon the proposal of a post-revolutionary society led by a dictatorship of the proletariat:

According to the PCP, which legitimately sought to guide and mentor the proletariat, the solution to the struggle in the pre-existing classes could be no other than the destruction of the capitalist system and its replacement by a

¹⁰⁴ *O Comunista*, “Ditadura do Proletariado”, Year 1, no.1, 16 October 1921.

¹⁰⁵ *Ídem*.

¹⁰⁶ VASCO, Neno, *Concepção anarquista...*, *op. cit.*, p.61.

¹⁰⁷ The CGT went as far as organising a solidarity campaign for the Russian Revolution having organised railway and dock works to block the loading of livestock destined for the counter-revolutionary forces, cfr. CARVALHO, *op. cit.*, p.187.

working class dictatorship that is then able to bring about the total and absolute annihilation of capitalist institutions and the disappearance of the classes¹⁰⁸.

6. THE TERMS OF THE TRADE UNION STRUGGLE

The grounds for the dispute with the anarchists necessarily stemmed from union related matters and on which aspect the communists were clear to the extent they from the outset they stated that the proletariat could not continue taking “consecutive false steps” and maintaining the “idiot expectations that have been maintained” to then immediately point to the anarchists as a “poorly prepared input” and with a weak “mass revolutionary spirit”¹⁰⁹.

The importance of taking power in the trade unions arose from the need to organise workers into a political party capable of “educating the masses” but without this process getting accompanied by appropriate theoretical justification that, indeed, almost always focused on verbalising and denouncing the political inconsequence of trade union actions, especially strikes: “An excellent pretext for days off in the vegetable garden or doing some other wish as a ‘hook’ for particular persons”¹¹⁰.

7. THE FOUNDING CONGRESS

The theoretical framework for building an autonomous communist power structure in the workers movement emerged more clearly on the eve of the First Congress, including the orientation to set up cells in all trade unions and their aggregation through a trade union commission. This action program understandably stems from the orientation issued by the Red International of Unions (Profintern): to crush capitalism through revolutionary class struggle and then install a proletarian dictatorship.

This is a period of great internal turbulence to a large extent beginning with the purge undertaken by Caetano de Sousa and Pires Barreira following their participation in the 4th CI Congress (November 1922) with its insistence

¹⁰⁸ *O Comunista*, “A constituição dos núcleos sindicais-comunistas”, Year 1[2], no.6, 15 October 1923.

¹⁰⁹ *O Comunista*, “O Sindicalismo Português”, Year 1, no.2, 23 October 1921.

¹¹⁰ *O Comunista*, “Revolução Imediata? SIM”, Year 1, no.4, 6 November 1921.

on launching the working class as a block in opposition to the block of left-wing groups “condemning the communists to isolation”¹¹¹.

On their return from Moscow, the leaders of the PCP and the Communist Youth removed significant numbers of militants and triggered a rupture through staging a conference in March of the following year¹¹². This would later be classified by the CI as an erroneous interpretation of the measures that should have been undertaken (Cunha, 1987, p.163). Out of this opaqueness, there are two certainties: the rise of Carlos Rates to power with the support of precisely those militants subject to criticism by Caetano de Sousa and Pires Barreira; and the inevitable intervention of the CI:

There are practically two parties: one, belonging to Caetano de Sousa, which continues with its task of purging; the other, that of Rates, with a regular printed publication and seeking to win support and followers in the trade union movement and among the radical republican bourgeois¹¹³.

The CI representative for the Iberian Peninsula intervened in favour of Carlos Rates and thus the issue remained as this did not only amount to personal differences among the respective contenders but rather a deeper reaching problem stemming from the ideological inconsistency and that Jules Humbert Droz had only managed to paper over. The CI representative had to intervene in the political program presented by Carlos Rates to remove the commitment to selling off the Portuguese colonies to then subsequently let the problems fester through to the PCP Constitutive Congress as the Portuguese section of the CI (November 1923).

In a thesis previously presented in May, the communists had openly declared their internationalism through recognition of the PCP as a section in the international movement, or more precisely, a “tactical unit” directly obeying Moscow¹¹⁴. There is little further comment on the ideological positioning despite the intention to “set down the fundamentals of the communist doctrine”, perhaps due to there also being weaknesses among the leading party members as regards their capacities for such theoretical outputs

¹¹¹ KRIEGEL, Annie, *As Internacionais Operárias (1864-1943)*, Amadora, Livraria Bertrand, 1974, p.107.

¹¹² Towards the end of this year, the PCP had around 2,900 registered militants and in the vicinity of 1,700 members paying their respective party fees (COSTA, *op. cit.*, p.137).

¹¹³ COSTA, Ramiro, *op. cit.*, p.138.

¹¹⁴ *O Comunista*, “These para o 1º Congresso Comunista Portugalês”, Ano 1 [Ano 2], no.1, Maio de 1923.

or the need for immediate membership of the International. The very Action Program would seek to approach diverse lines and areas but while adopting almost always superficial rhetoric and also always insisting on the characteristic of power taking:

The capitalist regime cannot be overthrown other than by force and, inspired on the principle of arming the proletariat, [the PCP] defends the need to take the communist propaganda of armed strength to the bourgeois with the goal of acquiring the support of these forces on behalf of the proletarian cause¹¹⁵.

These pedagogic purposes were detailed in the very first issue: “What is a communist society?”. In a schematic approach, the author starts out by writing about that supposed as the “mechanisation and industrialisation of agriculture (...) the specialisation of production (...) superabundance (...) reduction of the working timetable to just a few hours in the day (...)” in order to then guarantee these conditions bring about the disappearance of “parasitism”, enabling the “variability in professions”, while allowing “each worker to consume at will” and “the disintegration of the classes making the state disappear”¹¹⁶.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The emergence of the PCP from within anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism represents a unique facet within the histories of European communist parties and requires grasping within the scope of the libertarian currents that dominated the Portuguese working class movement in keeping with how they explain the complex and drawn-out process of consolidation. On the one hand, the ideological fragilities of the first Portuguese sovietists ensured Marxism underwent only a slow maturing process in amongst the anarchist turbulence; on the other hand, the very Communist International experienced difficulties in organising a small party in the peripheries. The success stemmed to a large extent on the hope arising due to the concrete successes of the Russian revolution and the modernity of the Marxist ideas themselves. This moment spelled out the distancing of the anarchists from Bolshevik communism.

¹¹⁵ *O Comunista*, “O programa de acção do Partido Comunista”, Ano 1 [Ano 2], no.1, Maio de 1923.

¹¹⁶ *O Comunista*, “O que é uma sociedade comunista?”, Year 1 [Year 2], no.1, May 1923.

The relative slow advent of this rupture derives from the proximity between the anarchists and communists within the libertarian groups and the dynamics of their respective reactions to the events unfolding in revolutionary Russia. When the communists began proposing a class struggle to exploit all the contradictions in bourgeois society, the differences among the ideas became clear with a particular focus on the divergence over the founding of a political party, the defence of the proletarian dictatorship and the connection between the trade union movement and the popular masses in the revolutionary process of seizing power.

Firstly, the anarchists perceived the unity of workers as a mobilisation process and would leave the process of self-emancipation free of party commitment and in the hands of each worker. According to the communists, what mattered was precisely the organisation of the trade union movement into a political party that would then serve as the vanguard of the working class. The foundation of the PCP represented *something new* and the fracturing dynamic generated by its foundation is duly portrayed through the contents of the *O Comunista* newspaper.

This acceptance of a dictatorship of the proletariat, even if only transitory, formed an insurmountable obstacle. Bolshevism defended the exercising of revolutionary power through councils of workers or soviets but for the anarchists it would always be impossible to accept any such form of power even if transitory or class based.

Finally, the very idea of revolution, interpreted by the anarchists as a category of a markedly moral type in an abstraction rejected by the communists on the grounds that this immense transformative pressure had to be politically organised. The PCP set out its stall as a revolutionary class based organisation in conjunction with trade union organisations and structured towards exploiting the entirety of the contradictions in bourgeois society.

The uniqueness of the founding of the PCP within the framework of the trade union movement stems from the transformation of the strength of the trade union movement into the strength of its own party and explaining decisively how to attain success in the continuous combating of the Estado Novo within a highly repressive context. The PCP took up its position as the revolutionary political organisation of the proletariat to provide meaning to all of the localised struggles of a mass movement and establish itself as an instrument enabling the dialectic unity between theory and practice.

The contents analysed throughout the issues of the *O Comunista* newspaper start out by conveying the clash of ideas resulting from the discursive centrality of Marxism but rapidly undergo consolidation through a

reiterated approach defending its application, hence, the clear and non-negotiable definition of Marxism-Leninism as the practical and theoretical instrument fundamental to the total transformation of society under the leadership of the PCP as the vanguard of the working class.

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