
Overview of organisational developments

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In 1963 the first anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist organisations arose, and after that, various others developed either through subsequent splits or by indirect or direct routes, not least the student movement and catholic circles influenced by Marxism. Like elsewhere in Europe, inspired by the Sino-Soviet Polemic and later the Cultural Revolution, there was an organisational rupture, a separation from the revisionist party, but how much of a political, ideological and organisational rupture was there? The proliferation of small militants groups¹, and an inability to rally a stable recognised leadership that could command allegiance amongst the various trends saw unresolved ideological concerns engendered criticism and splits that were never resolved in any organisation that could act as, rather than proclaim itself, the successor of the PCE.

Spanish anti-revisionists operated under a repressive authoritarian regime headed by Franco whose military coup had overthrown the Spanish republic. It was a heroic struggle in a regime noted for its anti-communist repression and police killing demonstrating workers in the streets, generating an armed response of differing intensity and effectiveness. These

¹ For example the 1972 formation of the *Movimiento Comunista de España*/ MCE headed by general secretary Eugenio del Río was the result of fusion of five small anti-revisionist groups ~ the *Movimiento Comunista Vasco* - *Komunistak*, previously known as ETA Berri, appeared after the workerist sector left ETA. In 1969 ETA Berri changed its name and adopted a maoist political line; other components were Communist Organisation (Aragon), Communist Unification (Valencia), the Marxist-Leninist Formation Group of the Islands (Balearic Islands) and a grouping of independent communists from Asturias.

communists had not only the clandestine nature of their existence to contend with but the social and national complexities of a society scarred and shaped by the legacies of a civil war well within living memory. The struggle for the Republic was within living memory of some anti-revisionists who had fought in that struggle. There was also the influence of militant regional forces (as in Catalonia, where the revisionist party had its own section, the PUSC) and nationalist sentiments (particularly Basque and Galician) reinforced the anti-revisionist influence and offensive capabilities.

This is a far from comprehensive account of the organisational, and political developments from operating under a clandestine existence to legalization during the post-Franco transitional years when the so-called “pact of forgetting”, a tacit decision among the Spanish political elites not to question or examine the past, was seen by many as vital to make the transition to parliamentary democracy under the monarchy possible in the late 1970s and 1980s. The anti-revisionist movement was not immune to that process. The overseas formations were important in the development and sustaining the Spanish anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists, but their complexities deserve a separate treatment and are only lightly referenced here. Nor is this the place to dissect the multitude of fractious groups who emerged out of the PCE to defend the USSR against pro-Chinese Leftism and revisionism of the PCE.

Clearly there are more extensive source of Spanish language archive material available compared to available English-language sources. This can only act as an introduction to the course of anti-revisionism in Spain that begun under a clandestine existence, and the transformation, in form of the Francoist state, to a constitutional monarchy familiar in other European states, and saw legalization and parliamentary politics during the post-Franco transitional years and its eventual political disintegration in the post Mao era.



Figure 1 The varieties of Spanish left organisations

Regions of Spain



■ 1963 The Break

PCE(ml) 1964-1992

Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista)/ PCE (m-l)

December 1963 Spanish communist anti-revisionist dissidents produced a rival version of the clandestine PCE publication, *Mundo Obrero* (Workers'World). The 'Christmas' edition was not the work of the Party's leadership. It was marked as issue "No.1" and carried the sub-heading, "For the Purity of Marxism-Leninism in the International Communist Movement."

Its editorial, “Why We are breaking the Habitual Silence” questioned the PCE leadership: “We lost the [civil] war, and we have spent 24 years losing the post-war.” It attacked the Central Committee as “the leadership of defeat”. Its anti-revisionist political stance was explicit:

“Yesterday we declared ourselves Stalinists, today Khrushchevists. Tomorrow? ...We are obliged to stand always with Moscow, although Moscow has shattered the faith of millions and millions of militants by presenting Stalin as a monster. We are obliged to stand always with Moscow, although Moscow in its drive for hegemony has broken the unity of the Communist family and divided the parties. We are obliged to stand always with Moscow, although Moscow has abandoned the path of Marxism-Leninism and fallen into revisionism.”

This was not an isolated protest: additional hostility towards the PCE was expressed by self-described “A group of Spanish communists (Marxist-Leninists)” based in Brussels whose letter stated:

“We must speak frankly. The backbone of the party’s policy, the national Reconciliation, that the leadership of the Spanish Communist Party (P.C.E.) seeks to pass off for a Marxist-Leninist Line, is absolutely not that. Neither in its content nor in its result.”²

Published in the Paris-based pro-Chinese magazine, *Revolution* it went on:

“What do we find in the program of the Party? A passage on the parliamentary road to socialism, if time and the competent authorities permit, as though socialism were a bullfight. In short a negation of the class struggle.”

“We accuse the leadership of the P.C.E. of light-headedness of revisionism and lack of responsibility...

We accuse the leadership of liquidating the Party...

We accuse the leadership of the party of cutting itself off from the masses...

We accuse the leadership of the Party of betraying the Spanish proletariat.”

When the leadership of the PCE imposed national reconciliation in the sixth congress, Elena Odena (1930-1985), together with Raúl Marco³, started the struggle against revisionism, first within the PCE they began to write a newspaper called *La Chispa* [The Spark] in opposition. Being a student in the United Kingdom, Elena Odena organized and led the Communist Youth of Spain in that country when she was 15 years old. She joined the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) at the end of the forties. Later she went on to hold positions of responsibility in the organization of the PCE for emigration and exile.

1964 was a decisive year in the polemical struggle; the cry of a need for a revolutionary party was universal from anti-revisionist communists dissidents enmeshed in factional struggle within the revisionist organisations and waged not only clandestinely in Spain but

² Revolution Vol.1 No.8 December 1963

³ Under the conditions of Francoist repression militants used party names : including Benita Ganuza (Elena Odena) and Julio Manuel Fernandez (Raul Marco)

also in the Spanish diaspora, among exiled communists (some veterans of the civil war) and emigrant Spanish workers i.e. Colombian based exiles formed the anti-revisionist group *Espana Democratica* (Democratic Spain). Other exiles were instrumental in the development of the movement such as those in Paris and Belgium⁴

Reinforcing the anti-revisionist opposition, referred to by the revisionist PCE as the “self-style Communist Party of Spain” and “the imaginary ‘revolutionary opposition’ of the Communist Party of Spain”, was the far from imaginary appearance in February of the first issue of *Proletario* (Proletariat) described as the “organ of Spanish Marxist-Leninists” with support in Madrid, Bilbao as well as Paris. Its editorial stated that: “the mistaken and anti-Marxist line” of the Spanish party leadership served the interests of the petit-bourgeoisie and not of the working class and has “led the party to its liquidation, as a Marxist-Leninist party.” It voiced a radical stance that endorsed the prospect of revolutionary violence in the Spanish struggle: “Revolution will be made by the exploited people, led by the proletariat... And they will do it with bombs and arms, with working class-class violence, the only way of breaking and destroying forever the violence of the bourgeoisie.”

The question of revolutionary leadership was raised in leaflets distributed in Madrid and Paris hailing the “first extraordinary national conference of the Communist Party of Spain” which had been convened secretly on February 15-16. Within a few weeks its publication appeared appropriately retitled *Mundo Obrero Revolucionario*.

Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista)/ PCE (m-l) was formed by communists , including Elena Odena and Raul Marco, opposed to the Line of the Communist Party of Spain, under the leadership of Spanish Civil War veteran, Santiago Carrillo (1915-2012) General secretary since 1960, particularly when the PCE had abandoned the armed struggle in 1964.

In the autumn of 1964 the split between the revisionists and the Marxist-Leninists became complete; that November the British Marxist-Leninist paper *Vanguard*, was amongst others like the Belgian *La Voix au Pauple* who, carried a communique from Spain’s Marxist-Leninists:

“At a meeting held on the 4th October, 1964, the Marxist-Leninist organisations: Partido de Espana reconstituido (Reconstituted Communist Party of Spain), *Proletario* (Proletariat) and Oposicion Revolucionaria Comunista de Espana (Revolutionary Communist Opposition of Spain), which edited the periodicals “*Mundo Obrero*

⁴ Other exiles proved to be more marginal to the struggle. An exile group inspired by the Cultural Revolution short lived Maoist group of approximately 100 members, based in Sweden, called *Rebellerna* /"The Rebels" were led by Francisco Sarrión (aka Fredrik Svensson). They were characterised by the intemperate ultra-leftist sectarianism of the age against the broader Leftist and Maoists movement, which they considered corrupted. “They even went to the Chinese embassy in Stockholm where they demanded to become members of the Communist Party of China. When they were denied membership, because they were not Chinese citizens, Francisco Sarrión declared that the embassy was under the control of reactionary bureaucrats who had betrayed Mao Zedong.”

Revolucionario.” (Revolutionary Workers’ World),” *Proletario* (Proletariat)” and “The Spark” (La Chispa), after full and frank discussion, on the subject of the ideological and political problems of the International Communist Movement, and in particular of Spain, have reached a complete agreement and identity of opinion and have proceeded to unite and reconstruct the COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

This new stage constitutes a great advance which gives back to the Spanish working class the party of the vanguard which will organise and directly the struggle of our people for the socialist revolution.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN (Marxist-Leninist) salutes all fraternal parties in the common struggle against imperialism and revisionism.

From now on the organ of expression of our PARTY will be “VANGUARDIA OBRERA” (*Workers’ Vanguard*).

LONG LIVE THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SPAIN (Marxist-Leninist)!

LONG LIVE UNITY ON THE BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM-LENINISM!

WORKERS OF ALL LANDS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES, UNITE!”

Serrano notes “It suffered continuous splits and an intense police pressure, but it survived because its leadership was out of Spain.”⁵

The PCE(ml) faced the complications in the situation brought about by the improvement of relations between the Communist Party of China, with whom it aligned itself, and the PCE , who it opposed.⁶ While its relations with the Party of Labour of Albania remained steady, full reciprocal endorsement came during the Sino-Albanian split and rejection of three worlds theory in the late 1970s.

The renewed domestic struggle against Francoist rule came in January 1971, when the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist–Leninist), together with the Spanish Republican antifascist opposition group based in Belgium and France, the FELN Frente Español de Liberación Nacional led by Julio Álvarez del Vayo, and Vanguardia Socialista, an obscure group led by Alberto Fernández, took part in the foundation of the FRAP / Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota at a meeting in Paris. It had a political programme that included armed struggle against the Francoist dictatorship and Yankee imperialism.

Its constituent conference in 1974, against the background of countering an initiative of the PCE, was designed to coordinate student insurrections against the authorities based on the model of the student demonstrations of May 1968 in France.

Initially FRAP was led by Julio Álvarez del Vayo, and they began armed actions in the summer of 1975 [see: **anti-fascist resistance**] It was a brief engagement as the PCE(ml) renounced the armed struggle in 1976 and launched the CRPE / the Republican Convention

⁵ Serrano, Julio Perez. “Radical left in Portugal and Spain 1960-2010” in Challenging Austerity (2018)

⁶ See: Note on relations between CPC and PCE

of the Peoples of Spain again counting an initiative of the Democratic Coordination (or Platajunta).

In a Spanish turn to Tirana in the late 1970s, the PCE(m-l) took the side of the Party of Labour of Albania [PLA] against the Chinese, when it identified itself as defending the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism without previous customary references to Mao Tse-tung Thought. They had gravitated towards Tirana from the early days of the anti-revisionist struggle, not least because of China's acceptance of the PCE. At least 23 Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista) militants had work as translators in Albania, hosts of radio programs on the Spanish service of Radio Tirana, or engaged in translating political works and the numerous writings of Enver Hoxha produced by the state publishing houses; the last ones were to leave in 1990. The mail of PCE (m-l) came to the Spaniards of Radio Tirana always in the name of Luis Buhalance.⁷

The appeal of the PLA was to those favourable to looking to Tirana in much the same way earlier generations of communists looked towards Moscow. Raul Marco, leading pro-Albanian Spanish Marxist-Leninist stated that "support and solidarity with Socialist Albania... was the fiery line that separates true communists from false communists and opportunists."⁸ The Communique of the 2nd Congress was reproduced in *Albania Today approving the line of the "struggle against opportunism and class collaboration"* domestically and internationally.⁹

The ideological attack reinforced in July 1977 with the 'Zeri i Popullit' editorial, '*The Theory and Practice of Revolution*' authored by Enver Hoxha. It repeated criticism of Chinese policies with allegations of "opportunism" and "flagrant departure from Marxism-Leninism" and the attempt to "divert the attention of the Proletariat from the revolution". All positions endorsed in the October 1977 edition of the PCE(ml)'s '*Vanguardia Obrera*'. Co-signed by five European parties, a joint statement declared support for the Albanian criticism of the Chinese policies. The Joint Declaration "categorically" declared that the Three World Theory could not be the basis for the strategy of the world communism movement.

The Joint Declaration ended with a call to defend Mao's legacy against the 'revisionists' and 'opportunists' who use his name to 'falsify' and to 'treacherously' attack his teachings. It is not until the following year that the pro-Albanian groups are weaned away from their Maoist inspiration and publicly following the PLA in denouncing Mao as "anti-Marxist". The momentum to support the Albanian positions built throughout 1977/78.¹⁰

The PCE(ml) told their co-thinkers :

⁷ Learning the Spanish Language for Ideological, Political, and other Curious Reasons. European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research Vol 2, Issue 1 January-April 2015

⁸ Zeri i Popullit * February 1977

⁹ Albania Today #5 (36) 1977

¹⁰ See: **Rally for Enver** <https://woodsmokeblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/tirana-builds-an-international3.pdf> and 1977 Joint Declaration

“recall that Mr. Santiago was received in Peking in 1971 against the views formally put forward by our Party in Peking a year prior to the visit - they support the Jesuito-Maoists of the ORT and the trotskyo-revisionists of the PTE which, of course, unreservedly support the rotten theory of "three worlds" although they don't quite dare to explain it in clear terms.”¹¹

At its third Congress in November 1979, held legally publically for the first time, the PCE(ml) welcomed a delegation headed by Albanian Central committee member Mihallaq Zicishti, given vista to attend for the first time by the Spanish state. When legalised in 1981, there was a split in the party with a dissident group forming a parallel PCE(m-l) and publishing its own version of Vanguardia Obrera.



El Pais reported on November 12 1985 that Elena Odena, 55, founder of the Marxist-Leninist PCE (PCEml) and leader of it since 1964 as a member of the secretariat of the central committee, died in Madrid on November 10, after a long illness, Revolutionary and defender of communism, she dedicated her life to the struggle against the Franco dictatorship and to the defense and propagation of Marxist-Leninist principles.

Elena Odena was born in Bilbao in a humble family on the eve of the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic. In adolescence, with the recent establishment of the Franco dictatorship, she went to study in the United Kingdom with only 15 years. From there she organized and directed the Communist Youth of Spain, entering shortly after the militancy of the Communist Party of Spain. She was part of

the internal anti-revisionist opposition that split from the PCE and in 1964, the Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) emerged, also known as PCE (m-l), product of the irreconcilable ideological discrepancies within the PCE. The PCE (m-l) grouped the various Marxist-Leninist groups existing in December 1964. Since its creation, Elena Ódena was part of the leadership of the party. In 1966, after the arrest of Secretary General García Moya, she was elected general secretary of the party, a post that she would be re-elected repeatedly until her death on November 10, 1985, victim of a serious illness.

Elena directed the writing committee of the central organ of the PCE (m-l), *Vanguardia Obrera*, and of the theoretical journal *Revolución Española*.¹² She took an active and direct part in the foundation, in early 1971, of the Revolutionary Antifascist and Patriotic Front (FRAP), together with Julio Álvarez del Vayo leader of the socialist left. It had the intention of establishing a Popular and Federal Republic via an insurrectionary movement.

¹¹ *Vanguardia Obrera* no. 216, January 1-7, 1978

¹² Her political writings were published in two volumes available

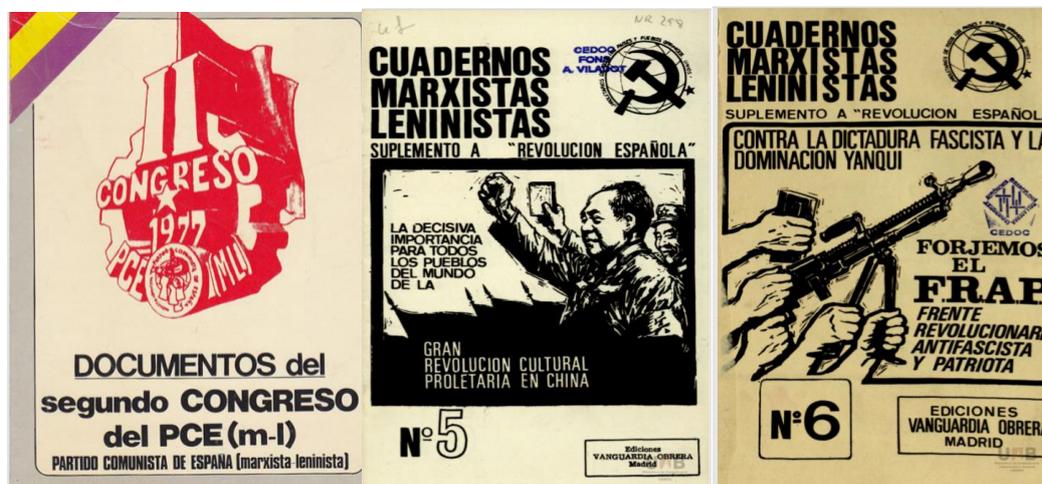
<https://universidadobrerablog.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/escritos-politicos-vol-1-elena-odena.pdf>



As representative of the pro-Albanian trend in Spanish politics it lasted another decade before at its 6th congress in 1992 saw the PCE (m-l) voting to dissolve the party. An agreement was made at the 6th Congress to form a new group, the Partido Comunista Democrático, but that was never carried out. The founder-leader of PCE (m-l), Raúl Marco, had broken away in 1991 to form the Colectivo Octubre, which evolved into Organización Comunista Octubre. The renamed Organización Comunista Octubre aligned itself with the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (publication, Unity & Struggle) grouping that had its roots in alignment to the proto-international promoted by the Party of Labour of Albania.

Post script: There was the resurrection of the name of the PCE (m-l) in 2006 when Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista) was adopted by the Statewide Coordination of Communist Organizations (CEOC) as a unification of 4 communist organizations. Its chairman was Raúl Marco, the last chairman of the old PCE (M-L). The first issue of "Octubre", a monthly publication of the PCE (m-l) appeared in November 2006. But this new PCE (M-L) of reportedly about a hundred of members, has little significance in the Spanish political life. <http://pceml.info/actual/index.php>

Historic archive: <http://www.pceml.info/actual/index.php/26-hemeroteca/biblioteca-marxista/305-archivo-historico>



1969-1979

■ *Partido Comunista de España (Internacional)*

PCE (i) – PTE - PT

A 1967 rupture from the PCE in Barcelona by the group Unificicado headed by 'comrade Miguel' led to the formation of the Partido Comunista de España (Internacional) in 1969. Led by Manuel Valverde, a member of the Central Committee of the PSUC / Partido

Socialista Unificadado de Catalonia, (counterpart of the PCE in Catalonia) it proved to be a very unstable political formation that soon splintered. A later history of the organisation explained:

“The two fundamental factors in this rupture were: In the international field the struggle of the communist party of Spain against the revisionist policies of the Soviet gang and the revolutionary example of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. In the national aspect, the active rebellion against the abandonment of the positions of the proletarian class by the ‘Communist’ party. This abandonment was concretized in the pacts which were attempted with sectors of the grand bourgeoisie and the evolutionists of the regime, as well as the abandonment of the armed path.”¹³

In 1968 a group of intellectuals and students who objected to the leftism of the Unity defining itself in relation to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China formed the UER / Union of Revolutionary Students. They were joined by former PSUC militants creating the Althusseran-influenced OC (BR) / Communist organisation (Red Flag).

Further political disagreement was expressed at the Party’s Third National Congress by a group from central Spain who argued for a strategy of a united front against Yankee imperialism and proposedly joined the rival PCE (ml).

More damage was done to the organisation by a third group of oppositionists who made public major secrets of the Party from which arrests of militants were made. The PCE (i) leadership attributed it as Trotskyist in inspiration when it challenged for leadership of the party.

A fourth and deadly wave of opposition occurred in July 1971 that resulted in the assassination of the party’s principal leader Juan Guerrero in the politically-important mining region of Asturias.

The PCE (I), like most on the Spanish Far Left, emphasised the autonomy and self-determination of the various regional states of Spain, however it also gave support to the Polisario movement for independence of colonial Spanish Sahara, and the archipelago west of Morocco, the Canary Islands.

There was a shift in focus in 1970 when founder Valverde was both arrested and expelled from the PCE (i). The new leadership shifted the focus of the organisations’ work reflecting a mass line orientation that saw it liquidate its Revolutionary Workers’ Commissions (COR) that it had organised in opposition to the PCE-influenced CCOO. It worked once again in the larger trade union federation and in 1975 the organisation adopted the name PTE/ *Party of Labour of Spain*.

It worked closely with the institutions supported by the revisionist PCE, joining the Democratic junta of Spain in 1975, and active in mass organisations such as the Democratic Union of Women (ADM) and the Democratic Union of Soldiers (UDS), and their own trade union CSUT / the Workers Unitary Union Confederation which split from the CCOO in 1977.

¹³ Fernando Ruiz & Joaquin Romero (eds) (1977) *Los Partidos Marxistas: Sus Dirigetes/Sus Programas*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama

Serrano assesses the PTE to be the most influential force through its mass organisation to the left of the PCE, although it engaged unsuccessfully in state electoral campaigns. The PTE, while maintaining a membership over 10,000, suffered a substantial split that resulted in the formation of the Partido del Treball de Catalunya / Party of Labour of Catalonia in 1977.

The PTE graduated into more moderate politics calling for a supportive vote for the Constitution in 1978. In the following year its poor electoral performance – not achieving parliamentary representation – drove the merger with ORT creating the Workers Party (PT).

OMLE 1968-1975

- *Organización de Marxistas-Leninistas de España*

OMLE- PCE(r)

The unity of three organisations that resulted in the founding of *Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista)* did not unite all Spanish communist anti-revisionist dissidents.

Inspired partly by the events in Paris in 1968, Spanish exiles disappointed with the staunchly pro-Soviet and “frozen” stance of the Spanish Communist Party came together in the foundation of the Organización de Marxistas Leninistas Españoles / Organization of Spanish Marxist-Leninists / OMLE in Brussels that September, reinforced when a sector of PCE(ml) militants abandoned the party to join the newly formed OMLE.

OMLE viewed Spain not as an American colony like PCE (ml) but as a developed capitalist country that dictated a revolutionary struggle for socialism rather than a popular democratic state.

While operating from exile as a clandestine group it had a few urban pockets of support in and around Cadiz and Vigo from 1969 onwards OMLE published *Bandera Roja* as its central publication and *Antorcha* as its theoretical journal. *El Gallo Rojo* was published by the Andalusia Regional Committee of OMLE. After 1970, its membership was reinforced with the return of emigrants and in 1971 the leadership was assumed by Manuel Perez Martinez (Arenas) who pushed for an orthodoxy Leninist structure and purpose.

The OMLE held its first conference in June 1973. In 1974 a section of the Organización Obreira, a Galician organization, joined the OMLE. During the following years, this splinter group of Spanish Communists was inspired by ETA / Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom), an armed Basque separatist organization in the Basque Country and by the 25 April 1974 military coup in Lisbon which overthrew the authoritarian Estado Novo regime. Thus it accumulated a number of sympathizers and well-wishers among left-wing circles. Franco’s illness was interpreted as an omen for future possibilities of progress as in neighbouring Portugal. OMLE were discussing the same themes as the PCE (ml) such as an intensification of the armed struggle in the obvious twilight of Franco’s rule. That discussion culminated in October 1975 with the founding congress of the Communist Party of Spain (Reconstituted) (PCE(r)), and its armed wing, the First of October Anti-Fascist Resistance Groups (GRAPO) led by Enrigue Cerdan Calixto.

The OMLE renamed itself "Partido Comunista de España Reconstituido" in June 1975. Its armed wing, GRAPO, which was founded next year, is actually better-known than the party itself; the date after which it is named, 1 October 1975, was the day on which the murder of four Spanish armed policemen, was considered the beginning of the armed struggle for the overthrow of Francoist regime and establishing of a Socialist republic in Spain.

Two months after Franco's death, in January 1976, during the Spanish political transition, the PCE(r) began a "revolutionary struggle" against the political reforms of the newly established monarchy of King Juan Carlos I. In order to carry about its struggle, the PCE(r) restructured, established various "sectorial organizations", including a student union (Organización Democrática de Estudiantes Antifascistas), a prisoner-support group (Asociación de Familiares y amigos de Presos) and an "antirrepresie" organization (Socorro Rojo).

Despite its initial successes, the PCE(r) became increasingly a marginal group after certain key-measures were adopted by the transitional Spanish government. Foremost of these were the 1977 amnesty for political prisoners, the democratic normalization, and the growing success of the newly introduced measures adopted by the Spanish police and the Spanish courts to combat terrorism.

During the country's transition it was becoming obvious that the process was going well, armed actions have intensified, even temporarily leading to the suspicions that the group name was just used as the cover by the supporters of previous regime who were trying to revert, or at least slow down the transition. This did not happen, because the consensus on the ways and goals of transition was achieved by all the relevant political groups, including the Communist Party of Spain and a number of far-left movements which were initially opposed to some elements of the process (e.g., preservation of the monarchy), and it was supported by overwhelming majority of Spanish people.¹⁴

While they were able to commit attacks of spectacular nature support for PCE(r) and GRAPO was decreasing during the 1980s, police pressure and political isolation ended up strangling the organisation, enabling the police to successfully neutralize the GRAPO; they were eventually marginalized committing robberies and kidnapping to sustain the group.

After the issuing of a new law concerning political parties in 2002, the Spanish authorities severely curtailed the activities of the PCE(r) in 2003. The party was banned in 2003 due to its support for armed activities although still exists as a clandestine organization and GRAPO inactive, but nominally still exist.

¹⁴ [Wikipedia](#), Tomislav Todorović, 19 September 2012

■ *Organización Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores*

ORT - PT

In Spain the Organización Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores/ Workers' Revolutionary Organization / ORT was different, it had its roots in the early 1960s and the PCE-controlled underground trade union movement, the Workers Commission/ Comisionen Obreras, emerging in 1969 out of the left-wing Catholic, Workers' Trade Union Action (Acción Sindical de Trabajadores).

“Within the ORT there were three tendencies: a communist one, a syndicalist one, and a Trotskyist-like one, formed by former militants of the FLP, and that soon disappeared” described Serrano¹⁵. “The communist faction, the biggest one, strengthened with the recruitment of Maoist students, such as Jose Sanroma (Intxausti), among others. Consolidated and spread throughout the country, in 1972 the ORT adopted Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and pointed to the objective of a Popular-democratic Republic as a transition stage to socialism.”

It operated clandestinely under Franco's authoritarian rule, declaring itself a party based on Mao Zedong Thought in 1974 and in the transitional period became a legal open party in 1977. It moderated its politics having joined the Democratic Convergence Platform promoted by the social-democratic PSOE. The youth wing of ORT, formed in 1975, was Unión de Juventudes Maoistas/ Maoist Youth Union [UJM] campaigned for a "Yes" vote in the 1978 constitutional referendum, and the trade union wing was the Unitary Trade Union (Sindicato Unitario).

In the 1977 elections, ORT launched the Workers' Electoral Grouping (Agrupación Electoral de los Trabajadores) and secured 146,000 votes (49,000 in Madrid) in 1977 national elections.

Success for the Revolutionary Workers' Organisation (ORT) and the Workers' Party of Spain (PTE) in the Spanish local elections, saw them win over 400 seats. The British ML paper *Class Struggle* judged: “The significance of this is that these 'victories, were based on a revolutionary communist line - not a reformist charade. The results show the growing maturity and strength of Marxism-Leninism in Spain.”¹⁶

The ORT was seen as amongst one of the successful of European Maoist formations¹⁷. Its weekly paper *En Lucha*, had a circulation of 100,000 in Spain. ORT played a leading role in the third largest union federation in Spain, the SU – Sindicato Unitario – with almost 400,000 within a couple of years of its formation in 1976. That was about half of the membership total that were in either the Workers Commission, PCE aligned, or the General Union of Workers close to the PSOE, the social-democratic party. In February 1978, in Navarre province, where the majority of workers were in the SU, the SU led a general strike of 40,000 workers from all industries to support demands of various unions in negotiations.

¹⁵

¹⁶ *Class Struggle* Vol.3 No.16 August 10th to 23rd 1979

¹⁷ See “ORT Deeply rooted in Spanish working class” for typical reporting by fraternal organisations

The public politics of the SU declared that:

“In the class struggle the SU takes a position irreconcilable with the capitalists’ interests and to strictly and actively defend the interests of the workers – on the road to the elimination of capitalist exploitation.”

There was a more active international profile Jose Sanroma Aides, General Secretary of the organisation, met and feted by the CPC’s Head of the International Liaison Department, Keng Piao, on November 11 1977 when an ORT delegation visited China.

The ‘Organisation Revolucionaria de Trabajadores’ [ORT] informed British comrades it would attend the planned 1978 Lisbon Conference on the Russian Imperialist Threat conference to explain their viewpoint.

While accepting that the two superpowers were the main enemies of the people of the world and the Soviet Union the more dangerous source of war, the Spanish ORT’s strategy “is to direct struggle at principal enemies, US Imperialism and its Spanish supporters. They have bombs, bases and economic control. Simply not materialist to [argue the] Soviet Union is [the] main enemy.”¹⁸

Workers' Party /Partido de los Trabajadores / PT was founded on July 1st 1979 through the merger of the Party of Labour of Spain (PTE) and the Workers Revolutionary Organisation (ORT). The Catalan branch of PT was known as Partit dels Treballadors de Catalunya (Workers' Party of Catalonia). *Class Struggle* reported that evening, some 7,000 supporters celebrated in Madrid. The Central Committee of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain (RCL) sent a message recalling how both parties were born in the struggle against fascism, and in opposition to revisionism (fake Marxism). The merger of the two parties, which already lead trade union organisations with a total membership of over half a million workers, will make the new Marxist-Leninist Party an even more significant force in Spanish politics.¹⁹

Why unity now? Answer provided by ORT envoy Sergio at his briefing to British comrades in March 1979 was that the “ORT & PTE, & working class defeated in General Election.” In the elections ORT received 148,000 votes and PTE 190,000. “We proposed joint list... PTE immediately called for unity. Negotiations begun & we seized the initiative. ORT Pol[itical] Bureau won on basic programmatic principles”.

Reported that ORT and PTE would hold a unity congress at the end of April and declare unity on May 1st 1979. Unity negotiations begun in 1976 on the initiative of PTE with ORT weary because they “objectively always tailed behind the revisionists... but ORT political guidelines accepted by PTE without self-criticism: i.e. revisionism main enemy; S[oviet] S[ocialist] Imp[erialism] most dangerous superpower; popular democratic stage of revolution precedes (sic) socialist stage in Spain.” Negotiations stalled with two years of struggle with the “revisionist leadership.”

¹⁸ Report on [RCLB] Meeting with Cde. Sergio of the ORT’ dated 7.5.78. Typescript. Private Archive Holding

¹⁹ Class Struggle, Political paper of the Revolutionary Communist League of Britain
Vol.3 No.16 August 10th to 23rd 1979 pp6-7

The proposal was for organisational guarantees that each organisation would elect half the Central Committee, which in turn elect half of the Executive body i.e 12 members “These bodies will remain for 2 years at least.....”

Sergio described the PTE rank and file as “rejoicing at the prospect of unity”, while ORT members were “anxious”. He explained that:

“PTE has federalist structure, not truly demo[ratic]-centralist; rejects Stalin; this [to] be discussed by new party. ORT particularly anxious over merging its secret organisation with PTE. So initially ORT expects lowering of [political] level & many problems. But confident that PTE leadership gang will not last – struggle between personalities will be transformed into struggle of line.”²⁰

PT proved short-lived succumbing in 1980 to a severe internal crisis that liquidated the organisation. The Canadian Workers Communist Party Chairman, Roger Rashi remarked:

“You may remember that a representative of the Workers Revolutionary Organization of Spain (ORT) spoke to our May Day meeting in Montreal in 1979. The ORT was a very strong Marxist-Leninist organization.

Its weekly newspaper had a circulation of more than 100,000 copies and the ORT led a class union, the Sindicato Unitario.

Early in the summer of 1979, the ORT united with the Workers Party of Spain, which was much weaker ideologically and politically. Since then the united party has been totally paralyzed. It hasn't published a single issue of its newspaper.

Why? Because the former leaders of the Workers Party of Spain moved further and further to the right, finally abandoning any idea of revolution.

They have since quit the united organization and are now in the social democratic "Radical Party."

Following this costly failure, the ORT cadres face the difficult task of rebuilding their party.²¹

After the 1982 elections PT leader, Jose Sanroma and other leaders began to collaborate with the PSOE.

1972-1974

■ *Organización Obreira*

Workers' Organization was founded in Galiza in April 1972 from a split of the PCE in Vigo. They were joined by members of the PCE's youth organisation Communist Youth Union of Spain, dissatisfied with the *Pact for Freedom* signed by the party the same year. It had two official magazines: *O Noso Mañán* (*Our Tomorrow*, directed at sailors) and *Organización*

²⁰ [RCLB] Report of meeting with Cde Sergio ORT 25.3.79 Typescript. Private Archive Holding

²¹ Roger Rashi, *The International Communist Movement Today*. October (Spring 1981) pp12-21 Journal of the (Canadian) Workers Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist)]

Obreira. Clearly very influential in the area of Vigo, especially in the local Workers' Commissions (CCOO) during the Vigo general strike of 1972, that shut down the city for one whole month.

The organization had a Frente Militar / *Military Front*, a structure with a defensive character, membership was reportedly "more than 100" with Xosé Anxo García Méndez the Secretary-General of an Executive Committee of 10 members.

State repression drew its toll on the organisation and members: In late 1973 there was a struggle within the organisation over the way forwards with conflict between the supporters of joining the Organisation of Marxist–Leninists of Spain (OMLE) and those who wanted to join the Galician People's Union (UPG). Finally, in 1974, Organización Obreira disappeared as one sector joined the OMLE, another fraction joined the UPG

Images from the movement:



■ *Unión do Pobo Galego*

The Unión do Pobo Galego / Galician People's Union had originally been established in 1963 as a communist and nationalist political party.

At first the UPG had a line of collaboration with the PCE, but this collaboration did not last long. The opposition to the construction of the dam of Castrelo de Miño (1966) was the first major public action of the UPG. The UPG organized the local peasants in *Assault brigades* that torched and burned the machinery. The UPG also helped the local peasants through an advocate of the organization.

In 1971 saw the expulsion of members who subsequently joined the Communist Movement of Spain. It remained a small group until it emerged from the 1972 General Strike in Vigo, reinforced by new allies from that struggle: Galicia Socialista and Organización Obreira. The first one was a marxist group that organized workers in some factories in the city and the second one was a radical split from CCOO. Galicia Socialista and a sector of Organización Obreira joined the UPG. This helped the UPG to have a far more important role among the working class and helped the organization to increase its membership significantly, challenging the PCE who were accused by the UPG of *españolismo* (Hispanocentrism).

In the spring of 1973 by the formation of the *Fronte Obreira* (Workers Front), directed by Moncho Reboiras and that acted as a union linked to the party. The following year Comisións Labregas was created to organise the peasants.

From 1970 there were voices within the party that postulated the need for an armed phase in the context of the national-popular revolution and with the support of ETA (pm) the UPG formed the *Fronte Armada* (FA, *Armed Front*. No more than 10 people). The FA did some robberies and some minor armed actions, but in August 1975 the police killed Moncho Reboiras and arrested 4 members of the armed group. After this events the party abandoned the armed struggle. The party leadership exiled in Portugal and although some joint events still be carried with ETA, the UPG stopped the armed actions, giving priority to the political action. The UPG supported the Galician National-Popular Assembly (AN-PG), which was presented publicly in January 1976 and was intended to unite the different left-wing galician nationalist organizations. There were respectable share of the popular vote and gained 258 town councillors and 9 mayors in Galiza region.

Previously, the hardline militant José Luís Méndez Ferrín, who had been expelled from the leadership of UPG, left the party and accused the UPG of rightism, and progressive compliance with the Spanish institutions and the politics of class collaboration. Méndez Ferrín founded in 1977 a new party: the Galician People's Union-Proletarian Line.

In the Spanish constitutional referendum of 1978 the UPG supported a *No* vote.

In the 1979 elections the UPG supported again the BN-PG, gaining 60,889 votes, the 6% of the vote in Galiza, making a huge gain since the first elections, although, again the BN-PG didnot elect deputies to the Spanish Congress. The progressive growth of the popular

support to the BN-PG was confirmed by the results of the local elections of the same year. The BN-PG won the 7.32% of the vote in all Galiza (78,216 votes) and gained 258 town councillors and 9 mayors.

In the spring of 1981 the UPG experienced an internal crisis between the supporters of professionalizing and giving more weight to the BN-PG, that were the minority, and those who opposed them, the majority. The crisis ended with the expulsion of the minority sector however they were the majority in Vigo.

After these dissensions, the UPG turned left and supported campaigns for the ETA prisoners, increased its relations with Herri Batasuna and even made joint events with the Communist Party of Spain (Reconstituted), the political wing of the GRAPO.

In February 1982 the centrist wing of the party left the UPG, led by former secretary general Pedro Luaces.

After the victory of the PSOE in the elections of 1982, the UPG declared himself opposed to any cooperation, since they saw the socialist government as the kind face of capitalism. However, when in 1986 there was acceptance of the state institutions by the UPG, and the Galician Nationalist Bloc (in which the BN-PG had been transformed), this led to the split in July 1986 of 13 Central Committee members and a few dozen militants who founded the Communist Party of National Liberation.

The UPG remains embedded within the Galician Nationalist Bloc participating as Members of the Parliament of Galicia, deputies in the Spanish Congress, provincial deputies, mayors and numerous town council members, always under the slogan: *O nacionalismo, a alternativa á globalización. Vivir, traballar e producir na nosa Terra* ("Nationalism, the alternative to globalisation. Living, working and producing in our land").

UCE 1973 – continuing

■ *Unificación Comunista de España*

The group that emerged around the publication *Tribuna Obrera* in 1968 was constituted as Unificación Comunista de España / Communist Unification of Spain /UCE in 1973.

The strategic line of the organisation was an attempt to unify the fractious left anti-revisionist groups. Its' overtures regarding unifying the Marxist-Leninist field saw meetings with other small groups and in 1976, the UCE seems to achieve some success and unites with:

the Movimiento Comunista de España / Communist Movement of Spain / MCE founded in 1972 by five small groups ~ the Basque component had its origins in the Basque New Left among Catholic University students and radical workers, led by Patxi Iturrioz and Eugenio del Rio who created a workerist tendency inside ETA in 1965. Expelled the following year they constituted themselves as ETA Berri. In 1969 ETA Berri changed its name to Kommunistak (The Communists) and then Euskadiko Mugimendu Komunista / EMK and

adopted a maoist political line; other components were Communist Organisation (Aragon), Communist Unification (Valencia), the Marxist-Leninist Formation Group of the Islands (Balearic Islands) and a grouping of independent communists from Asturias. The MCE were opposed to the armed struggle, advocating a two stage strategy starting with a national-democratic revolution transitioning into a socialist stage. The achievement of which was to be through a peasant-worker front allied to the anti-fascist bourgeoisie in a national democratic front. Whilst recognising the right of self-determination they defended a federal republic and identified popular democracy with national independence calling for the removal of American troops from Spanish soil. By 1975 they abandoned Maoism, progressing through a number of eclectic positions adopting the name Communist Movement [MC] in 1976 and a federal structure, abstaining in the 1978 referendum on the Constitution. MC eventually merged into the *Alternative Left* in 1991 which dissolved two years later.

FECO, the Federation of Communists (FECO)

and OCE-BR was founded in 1970 identifying themselves as Leninists. Originally emerging as the group Unity in 1968, they split from the PCE (i) critical of its leftism to form the Union of Revolutionary Students. Then fusion with a split from the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya/ PSUC by a sector of its youth wing created the Communist Organization-Red Flag.

In 1973 OCE-BR adopted its later name defining themselves as Marxist-Leninist. *Bandera Roja* (red flag) was the name of its newspaper. It defined itself as for revolution by stages and proposed a democratic-popular democracy. In 1974, the group of "intellectuals", headed by Jordi Sole Tura split from the organisation return to the PSUC he had left in 1969. Another split in its trade union sector in 1976 saw the emergence of PC (UR) / Communist Party (Red Unity) that soon faded away. The OCE-BR called for a boycott of the 1977 election and opposed the Constitution of 1978 as a means of perpetuating Capitalism's domination but for the integration of Spain into the EEC and NATO. Serrano notes that "the bad elections results and lack of allies drove the OCE (BR) closer to the PCE which they eventually joined in 1989.

The UCE engineered unity had a brief six months existence, the consequence of not unifying the ideological principles and positions. By 1976 MCE was restructured into a federal organization, and the name changed to *Movimiento Comunista*.

The UCE rejects the transition process as it would be a regime change that would allow American imperialism and the ruling class to preserve intact and even reinforce its economic, political, and military power. A transition that consists, as Santiago Carrillo will say, in "changing the Regime to preserve the State".

UCE launches the campaign for abstention in Spain. "No to the monarchy: to abstain is to vote for the Republic".

The First Congress of UCE declares a new Political Line that abandoned the strategic line of unification of the Marxist-Leninist groups (which had given name to the organization) and is replaced by the construction of the organisation independently, as a Party of the Spanish

proletariat. Following the attempt to merge with MC (Communist Movement) and contacts with PTE (Workers ' Party of Spain) and ORT (Revolutionary Workers ' Organization), all of Marxist-Leninist and "Maoist" inspiration, UCE firmly adopts the position of « From our own forces, think with our own head and walk with our own feet. »

It maintains the position against Soviet Social Imperialism, organising a protest the day after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in front of the Soviet embassy in Madrid. In the summer of 1980, starts the campaign against Spanish membership of NATO. The "Skull", the poster with which the campaign begins, becomes its symbol throughout Spain and Europe.

Meanwhile, the main Marxist-Leninist parties in Spain have disappeared. PTE and ORT their respective secretaries-general, Eladio García Castro and José Sanromá, announce their dissolution. The UCE "had fraternally warned them of the serious deviations of right of its line (acceptance of the Constitution and the Transition designed by the Oligarchy and Imperialism) and of the opportunist positions (electoral in the main) guiding their approach and their merger."

The UCE itself was the victim of a campaign of defamation initiated in 1982 by the main conservative right-wing party in Spain, Alianza Popular. This was supported by the PCE labeling the UCE "CIA agents" and a "destructive sect".

For its part in an echo of an earlier age, the UCE since 1992 though not integrated into the coalition, advised voting for the United Left in election campaigns.

In the new century small groups emerged, and old names re-appeared. There was some continuity with the resurrection of the PCE (ml) rebooted in 2006 led once again by Raul Marco, previous leader of the old pro-Albanian PCE(ml), and in 2009 the name of the Workers' Party reappeared in Spanish political life.

From a different political trajectory but reflecting the new internationalism based on the common ground of Marxism-Leninism, ICOR records a Spanish member Partido Marxista-Leninista (Reconstrucción Comunista) / Marxist-Leninist Party (Communist Reconstruction) / PML (RC). Registered since 2014 PML (RC) was created by ex-members of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) and of the Communist Youth Union of Spain (UJCE) who were dropped out their respective parties due to discipline problems and criticism of the revisionist political line of both organizations.

Fragments after the disintegration of the Maoist movements gravitating towards the 'against Chinese revisionism, for Mao' included the Grupo para la Defensa del Marxismo-Leninismo that became the Gnidn de Lucha Marxista-Leninista [Marxist-Leninist Union of Struggle], an early associate of the RIM tendency writing an essay on the ideological and

political errors of the early Marxist-Leninist movement in Spain. This extract ²² provides their assessment of the state of the movement in 1981:

~~private~~

January, 1981

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- (1) For those not very familiar with the political scene in the Spanish state, a brief explanation of the present situation of the political forces relevant to the content of this work is useful. The PTE, faithful follower of the Chinese revisionists, which only two years ago had a certain number of members, today is completely liquidated after a frustrated attempt to merge with the ORT. This revisionist organisation is liquidated in fact and there is no real chance that it can escape its present, gravest crisis. Thus pro-Chinese revisionism remains without organised representation in the country, aside from an insignificant little group and Carrillo, who on his trip to China last fall became a close friend of Teng. The MC holds on with great difficulty, sliding into a bottomless opportunism in which all kinds of tendencies are mixed: Trotskyism, Eurocommunism, "Maoism," and pro-Soviet revisionism, among others. This is a consummate model of eclecticism, similar to the Chilean MIR, with whom they maintain cordial relations. Lately they are very close to pro-Soviet forces. The PCEm-1 is Hoxha's mouthpiece here and it couldn't be in a tougher situation. Every day it becomes more reformist and more economist, agreeing to work with the most suspicious and equivocating people. Due to the crisis of its whole line and to the internal dissension created by the attacks on Mao and the lurches towards Hoxha, its membership is quite diminished, its press hardly exists, and given these symptoms, it has entered a period of not too far off extinction. The PCE(r) is practically liquidated, due to its reformism and also its absurd practice of "urban guerrilla warfare." Several years ago it moved towards eclecticism and pro-Sovietism. This group is a good example of what we call "reformists with guns," people like those "liberals with bombs" that Lenin criticised. The changing times are leaving all those "Marxist-Leninists" from around here in the lurch.

²²Gnido de Lucha Marxista-Leninista [Marxist-Leninist Union of Struggle]
History of Spanish Marxism [extract] *A World To Win* Preliminary Issue #1 (May 1981)

The Comité de Luita Popular Manolo Bello/ Committee of People's Struggle "Manolo Bello", based in Galiza, were signatory to Internationalist May Day joint statement, and 2009 article calling for a renewal on RIM on the basis of Maoism published in Maoist Road #1 2011.

Still within RIM's orbit but more third worldist inclined grouping were Gran Marcha Hacia el Comunismo / Long March Towards Communism appearing in the summer of 2006 supporting the orthodox Leninist party-building objective, ideological supporting the 1993 statement 'Long Live Marxism-Leninism-Maoism'. After the collapse of the RIM and when Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties and organizations of the world work for the unity and building of a new Communist international organization, Long March Towards Communism expressed its aspiration to actively participate to help achieve the ideological, political and organizational unity of the Communists of the world to produce a new general line for the International Communist Movement, "the Communists in the Twenty-first century, the Marxists-Leninists-Maoists need to unite in an International Communist of a new type" against the new variants of revisionism and opportunism defined as prachandism and avakianism. It would issue declarations on international issues, publicising greetings to parties like the Canadian PCR and joint statements with other marginal groups, for example Construction Committee of the Maoist Communist Party of Galicia, addressing the Madrid Conference organised by the Peru People's Movement in October 2012. It also offered a few suggestions on topics to discuss, including the "question of Lin Biao and the reasons for his elimination in 1971" which raised a ripple in the blogosphere.

Long March Towards Communism might contribute to internet-based dialogue with other groups overseas but it could make no headway domestically. In a statement issued in 2014 conceding failure in its party-building objective, it stated it was unable

" after more than 7 years of political and agitation work, to generate and consolidate an organisational nucleus able to take steps in the work of creating the revolutionary political party of new type of the proletariat, of the Communist Party, based upon Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, due to several reasons, including the enormous weight that the different bourgeoisie and revisionist ideological trends have among the proletariat and people's masses of Spain, together with the presence of sectarian and dogmatic trends, or the influence of nationalism, within the ranks of the detachments which claim themselves Maoists."

Similar experience was recorded by a participant active on the internet amongst supporters of Gonzalist Thought and the Guiding Thought position, the Odio de Clase collective *spent a lot of energy and effort into this ideological battle that eventually pretty much « burned us out »*.

SOURCES ~ *Unashamedly reliant on:*

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