

## Notes on the Communist Party of Switzerland/Marxist–Leninist 1963-1987

---

Published: *2020*

Transcription, Editing and Markup: Paul Saba and Sam Richards Copyright: This work is in the Public Domain under the Creative Commons Common Deed. You can freely copy, distribute and display this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works.

Please credit the Encyclopedia of Anti Revisionism On-Line as your source, include the url to this work

---

Switzerland was in the European avant-garde of the China-oriented left in the early 1960s when in 1963 the first break from the revisionist party took the name of the old [Communist Party of Switzerland](#) (CPS). The following year Nils Andersson and Luicen Mathys were expelled from the PCS central committee forming the *Centre Lénine*, in Lausanne publishing a newsheet called *Octobre*. A successor organization named the Organisation of Swiss Communists emerged in 1969. From this was founded in 1972 the most prominent pro-China organisation in Switzerland, the **Communist Party of Switzerland/Marxist–Leninist**

*Parti Communiste Suisse/Marxistes-Léninistes*, (in French)

*Kommunistische Partei der Schweiz/Marxisten-Leninisten*, (German)

*Partito Comunista della Svizzera/Marxista-Leninista*, (Italian)

## Maoists in three languages



Figure 1 October/Oktobre/Ottobre, Lausanne, October 1969

According to Schlomann / Friedlingstein the anti-revisionist publication 'October' appeared for the first time in Switzerland at the end of May 1964. (*The Maoists*, 1970:.229)

The first issue produced by the Centre Lenine set the task of “contributing to the organic reconstruction and ideological strengthening of a Marxist-Leninist party” in Switzerland.

Switzerland was officially a multi-national language society. The tiny Maoist Organisation of Swiss Communists, served an estimated few hundred members (never exceeding 80 members according to its Wikipedia entry) in three language through its *October/Oktobre/Ottobre* publication. Mainly in French, only the main article is translated in German and Italian. In the October 1969 issue (fifth volume) the lead article is devoted to the national housing shortage. The praises directed towards the Chinese Peoples' Republic and Albania elsewhere in this paper are not in German or Italian, nor is the quote by Ho, who considers the American defeat in Vietnam as imminent <sup>i</sup>

"October" #48 March 1972 reported, in the article "Documents from the founding convention of the Communist Party of Switzerland / Marxist-Leninist: The PCS / ML in the class struggle" on the founding of the Lenin Centre (1964) to the formation of the "PCS / ML". In the period of 1964-1967, ideological struggles took place within the Lenin Centre, which virtually led to the "ruin of the organization", to the exclusion of the cell "Rosa Luxemburg" (Lausanne) and the cell "Gramsci" (Ticino). In the third period starting from 1971, finally "October" could be issued in "three languages" (German, French, Italian), which prepared for "first convention of the PCS / ML", which finally to the establishment of the Communist Party of Switzerland / Marxist-Leninist.



*Figure 2 Nils Andersson in the early 1960s, in his office at the Bel-Air tower in Lausanne.*

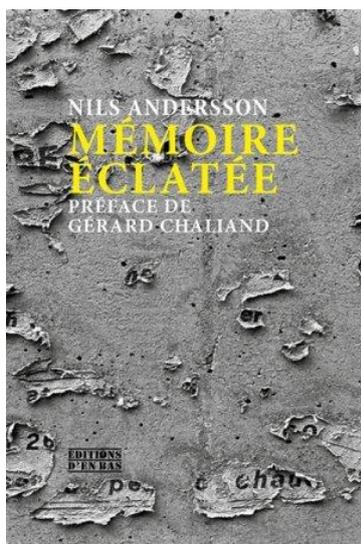
Set up in Lausanne by Nils Andersson who left the Swiss Communist Party after a three month membership, the Centre Lenine of Marxist study and documentation was housed in the same building as the left-wing publishing firm Editions de la Cité established by Andersson in 1957.

The reputation of the publishing firm was impressive reviving the era of the Resistance, when the Swiss houses took over censored works in France. On February 17, 1958, Editions de Minuit released a little book that deeply shook French public opinion. In *The Question* by Henri Alleg, an activist of the Algerian Communist Party, that precisely describes the methods of, and denounces, the tortures used by French paratroopers during the colonial war taking place in the Maghreb. The book was seized on March 27. Jérôme Lindon, director of Minuit, contacted Nils Andersson, who distributed his books in Switzerland. Fourteen days after its seizure this young man published *La Question*, augmented by a text by Sartre, under the acronym: "Editor: La Cité", in Lausanne. Other anti-colonial and banned titles follow including *La Gangrène*, *Les Disparus* by Jacques Vergès. In collaboration with Vergès the international journal *Revolution* was published from Lausanne before being moved to Paris.

The Cité Editeur becomes a crossroads where all the opponents of the Algerian war flock creating a network of publishers besides Jérôme Lindon, boss of the French publishing house Minuit, Andersson joins forces with François Maspero, based in the Latin Quarter of Paris, and the prestigious Milanese Feltrinelli.

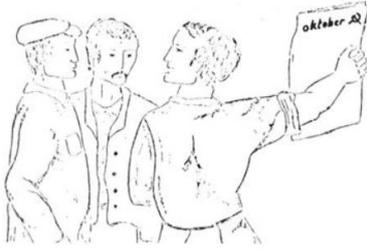
A not disinterested *L'Étincelle* would described Andersson as “this Swede who is trying to become the head of the ‘pro-Chinese’ movement in Switzerland... This gentleman who is the hireling of a foreign party and who produces various pamphlets paid for by that party.” Among the literature distributed were titles promoting the arguments from China e.g. *La révolution prolétarienne et le revisionisme de Khrouchtchev* (Lausanne: Editions la Cite, 1964) and *le pseudo-communisme de Khrouchtchev at les lecons historiques qu'il donne au monde* (Lausanne: Editions la Cite, 1964). Andersson's departure from the PSC was framed as due to his wanting to monopolies the sale of Chinese publications in Switzerland. There was also the tendency to refer to the Lenin Centre's publication, *Octobre* as “a sheet..financed by foreigners.”

The hatred of Andersson went as far as the PSC and L'Étincelle to support calls for his expulsion from Switzerland. The publisher's active militancy establishing the Lenin Centre, links with Mao's China, of which he publishes several texts including the first to publish in French ‘The Little Red Book’, and other maoist publications, supporting the FLN, distributing in France its newspaper, *El Moudjahid*. All this vexing to the authorities during the Cold War environment and virulent Swiss state anti-communism, saw the Federal Council in 1967 voted for Andersson expulsion for "endangering the internal and external security of Switzerland".



Although born in Lausanne in 1933, he still had a Swedish passport. Despite an international campaign of protest, later the subject of a 2007 documentary, [\*L'Expulsion\*](#), Eric Burnand produced for Télévision Suisse-Romande TSR, Andersson's expulsion is confirmed and he eventually arrives in Tirana and employment that lasted five years with the French section of Radio Tirana.<sup>ii</sup> The ban on staying in Switzerland was lifted in 1989.

These times recalled in *Livre et militantisme, La Cité Editeur, 1958-1967*, and Anderson's memoirs, *Exploded Memory From decolonization to the decline of the West*, Éditions d'en bas 2016.<sup>iii</sup>



“Membership of the cadre party KPS / ML was low. The party was organized into cells. For years, The Politburo consisted of two non-academics. Sympathizers were recorded in mass organizations (for women, students, Third World solidarity, etc.). Many of these came from the Swiss or '68 student movement from the early

1970s. Both the members of the cadre party and sympathizers were expected to make a large time commitment (newspaper sales before factory gates, ideological training) as well as meeting the financial expenses involved in party work.”<sup>iv</sup> (Wikipedia)



“Cells of the party existed amongst the workers in several industries, notably in the [Zürich](#) machine industry, in construction, in the hospital sector, and in the [Ticino](#) industry. In German-speaking Switzerland, new students of *École Polytechnique* provided a flow of members, particularly from agronomy and architecture.” (Wikipedia)

---

Internationally, the PSC/ML had good relations with other German and French speaking organisations: the KPD regard the KPS/ML (German abbreviation of PSC/ML)) obviously as a brother party in Switzerland, with the *Rote Fahne* carrying reports about the KPS/ML and reports regularly on struggles in Switzerland as well as criticizing the country’s economic role , presented not unfairly as a tax evasion paradise, reports on the Swiss capital links of the West German source shipping at the same time trying to protect Swiss capital against US capital July 1972). In 1975, as a refuge for the assets of bankrupt companies but also the competition of Swiss mechanical engineering. Reports of militancy of the metalworkers (1971) and Mayday street fight in Zurich and protests nationwide. There is communication and some co-ordination with the German KPD and friendly Vietnam committees from Switzerland whereas the KB reports on the participation of Swiss soldiers groups in the German antimilitarist meeting (1976) and is also dedicated to the anti-nuclear protest, including in Kaiseraugst (1977) The PCS/ML joined other European Marxist-Leninist and expressed support for the KPD when the German state attempted to criminalize it and others in the early 1970s. Donations for the '*Red Dawn*' were received from Zurich in Switzerland (Red Dawn No.9, Dortmund 2.3.1974)

## FROM THE SOLIDARITY ADDRESS - SWITZERLAND

Committee Hands Off the KPD: Bulletin No.1, Cologne (1973), p.12;  
*Rote Fahne* Nr.21, Dortmund 23.5.1973, p. 8 May 29, 1973

The Communist Party of Switzerland, the Communist Middle School Association and the Communist Student Union assure the KPD and its mass organizations, the LIGA (LgdI, d.Vf.) and the National Vietnam Committee (NVK, d.Vf.) their full solidarity in the fight against the reactionary SPD / FDP government and its attempts to criminalize it. The KPS will support the KPD with all its available forces.

With communist greetings, the Central Committee of the KPS, 17.5.1973. <sup>v</sup>



The Communist Party of Switzerland / Marxist-Leninist was the only Maoist grouping in the country to receive official recognition of the Communist Party of China and in the mid-seventies of the Albanian Party of Labour. Articles from the monthly party journal *October*, recorded greetings of the party leader, and reported news of party delegations invited to China. It took the position that - "The fight against the gang of four is a struggle of Marxism-Leninism against revisionism" (October #108 March 1977) supporting the post-Mao regime, - "The breakup of the Gang of Four prevents the restoration of capitalism in China" (October #110 May 1977). PSC/ML's greetings to the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in Peking from August 12 to 18, 1977 were published in *Renmin Ribao/People's Daily* along with 90 other messages from Marxist-Leninist organisations, progressive groups and well known personages throughout the globe.

From the mid-seventies, the PSC / ML had considered the Soviet Union as the main enemy and remain aligned to China's foreign policy position reflected in

publication of articles like - "The War Policy of Social-imperialism" (October #109 April 1977). This was underpinned by its adherence to the Chinese theory of the three worlds (October #117 December 1977). The endorsement of the Three World theory reflected a long standing position.

Andreas Frei argued that the PSC / ML represented positions that can be consistently characterized as bourgeois-democratic: unity with its own bourgeoisie in defense of the national independence of the country, including military defense; support of trade unions in the struggle for economic betterment positions and basic democratic rights; advocacy of nuclear power as a factor of independence and as technological progress; and criticism of the Party of Labour as an agency of Soviet interests—all this formally in continuation of the objective of realizing "*Red Switzerland*" and striving for the "dictatorship of the proletariat".<sup>vi</sup>



The 2nd congress of the PSC / ML, which took place in December 1977, and reported in *Peking Review*, saw the "Program of the Communist Party of Switzerland / Marxist-Leninist" adopted, the party's first formal programme. The communique of the Congress said that the party programme "demonstrates the progress of the party in the application of Marxism-Leninism to the situation and the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary struggle for socialism and a red Switzerland." It also said that the party "considers the struggle against revisionism as its principle ideological task... We see in the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the U.S.A., the principle enemies of our revolution." It regarded, "The most important revisionist force in Switzerland" is called "the Party of Labour, PdA". Other "revisionist forces" are organized in the "Poch - Progressive Organizations" and in the "Paa - Partito socialista autonomo". (October# 118 January 1978).

The PSC (ML), rewarded with a delegation to China in June 1978, limped on for another decade and in 1987, the party dissolved into the Liberal-Socialist Party (FSP), which lasted until 1989.

#### Further reading

---

Zimmermann, Angela (2006). *Maoisten in der Schweiz. Das lange rote Jahrzehnt der KPS/ML im Kontext der schweizerischen Linken 1972–1987*.

## **/Maoists in Switzerland. The long red decade of the KPS / ML in the context of the Swiss left 1972-1987** Thesis University of Zurich

### References

---

i *Octobre* available as scans at <https://www.mao-projekt.de>

- [KPS / ML: October, No. 47, February 1972 \(only the title page\)](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 48, March 1972](#)
  
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 108, March 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 109, April 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 110, May 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 111, June 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 112, July 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 113, August 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 115, October 1977](#)
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 117, December 1977](#)
  
- [KPS / ML: October, No. 118, January 1978](#)

ii Andersson left Albania in 1972 and moved to Uppsala in Sweden. Politically he was active in the Sweden-Albania Friendship Association / Svensk-albanska föreningen and collaborated with Folket I Bild/ Kultur front. He attended the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PLA in 1981 as Secretariat member of the Organisation for the Founding of the Communist Party of Sweden (Albania Today #6 1981).

iii See also <http://www.nilsandersson.net/>

iv See Laurent Vonwiller: Der lange Marsch in der Seifenblase. Die Kommunistische Partei der Schweiz/Marxisten-Leninisten (KPS/ML) im Rückblick, Frankfurt am Main 2008 p39–49 (quoted on Wikipedia)

v Information drawn from Jürgen Schröder (2005) Schweiz/ Switzerland .Materialien zur Analyse von Opposition / Materials for the Analysis of Opposition. <https://www.mao-projekt.de>

vi Andreas Frei: "Erinnerungen an Mao. Die "Drei-Welten-Theorie" und Ihre Propagierung in Basel – ein kritischer Rückblick", in: Paul Hugger (Hrsg.): China in der Schweiz. Zwei Kulturen im Kontakt, Zürich: Offizin 2005, p. 95–107 (quoted on Wikipedia)