

# Interview with José Medeiros Ferreira: the establishment of the Socialist Party of Portugal (Lisbon, 25 October 2007)

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[Miriam Mateus] Having played a part in the Portuguese resistance, if I can put it like that, perhaps you know what the attitude of the European Socialist parties was in relation to Portugal during the country's democratisation. Was there any support or any help from them, either before, during or after the 25 April Revolution?

[José Medeiros Ferreira] I can speak only in political terms, and, in those terms, there was some support that was very objective and which is historically recognised and speaks for itself.

The Portuguese Socialist Party was founded in 1973 with the support of Germany's SPD, so that says everything about part of your question. But it wasn't only the SPD, the German SPD sponsored the meeting that formed the Socialist Party, let's say. And the UK itself, which was governed by the Labour Party at the time, was showing signs, especially after 25 April, of support for the Portuguese Socialist Party's ambitions, with particular regard to Portugal's application for accession to the EEC.

I'd perhaps like to say here that, bearing in mind not least that the half-yearly Presidency of the Community in the first half of 1977 (when we applied for accession) was held by the UK, our journeys in preparation for the application for accession — because we made two preparatory journeys, one delegation led by the Prime Minister, which included the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the then President of the *Comissão de Integração Europeia* [European Integration Committee] and now Governor of the Bank of Portugal, Victor Constâncio, I hardly need to tell you who the Minister for Foreign Affairs was — we were going to visit the nine capitals and began the journey in which we would inform the respective governments that we were going to apply for full membership — the appropriate time, therefore, came much more quickly than could have been imagined a few months previously, not on our initiative but on the initiative of the European countries themselves — and we began the journey in the UK, in London.

So, from that point of view, I'd say that, by coincidence, London accompanied us, as it were, as we acceded to the EEC, and not only because of party solidarity, because that was your question, but to illustrate the practical side of that solidarity, so to speak.

To go back a little, in February 1976, if I'm not mistaken, there was a large International Socialist meeting in Oporto, under the slogan 'Europe with us', I think. The Portuguese Socialist Party attended with its European partners to show the Portuguese nation that its struggle for representative democracy and for the country's progress was supported by the European Socialist and Social Democratic Parties. I think that that meeting in Oporto, if I remember correctly, because it was some years ago now, was held in February 1976, under the title 'Europe with us'.

And then there was a committee, but that was a little while before — I've jumped a little here — in August 1975 at the Helsinki Conference, which enshrined East-West *détente* and the famous Helsinki Final Act, which went some way towards stabilising relations on the European continent. A solidarity committee with Portugal and with the Portuguese Socialist Party was also going to be set up because of the unrest prevailing at the time, when there were still no representative democratic institutions in Portugal and when such institutions appeared to be threatened here and there.

So, for a clearer summary, I'd say that the solidarity of the European Socialist and Social Democratic Parties is clearly illustrated by the fact that the German SPD hosted the founding of the Socialist Party and by the fact that the European Socialist Parties had formed a solidarity committee with Portugal in summer 1975, in response to the period of transition prevailing in Portugal. Afterwards, in February 1976, there was the meeting of the International Socialist parties in Oporto under the slogan 'Europe with us', which was, moreover, also used in the Socialist Party's parliamentary election campaign in April 1976.