

say that there is quite a lot to the doctrines of authoritarian Communists, but what is most strikingly absent is nothing other than communism.

Let it be clearly understood that in no way do we dispute the right of authoritarian Communists to adopt whatever title they see fit, whatever they like, and adopt a name that was our exclusive property for almost half a century and that we have no intention of giving up. It would be ridiculous to contest this right. But whenever the neo-Communists come to discuss anarchism and hold discussions with anarchists, there is a moral obligation on them not to pretend they know nothing of the past, and they have the basic duty not to appropriate that name to such a degree as to monopolise it, to such a degree that an incompatibility is created between the term 'communism' and the term 'anarchism' that is artificial and false.

Whenever they do these things they reveal themselves to be devoid of all sense of political honesty.

Everyone knows how our ideal, expressed in the word anarchism, taken in a programmatic sense of a socialism organised in a libertarian way, has always been known as anarchist communism. Almost all anarchist literature has, since the end of the First International, belonged to the communist school of socialism. Up until the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917 the two chief schools into which socialism was divided were, on the one hand, legalistic, statist collectivism, and, on the other, anarchist, revolutionary communism. What number of polemics, between 1880 and 1918, have we not engaged in with the Marxian socialists, today's neo-Communists, in support of the communist ideal as against their German-barrack-room collectivism!

And so, their ideal view of the reorganisation to come has remained the same, and its authoritarian overtones have even become more pronounced. The only difference between the collectivism that we criticized in the past and the dictatorial Communism of today is a tactical one and a slight theoretical difference, and not the question of the immediate goal to be reached. True, this links up with the State Communism of the pre-1880 German socialists - the Volkstaat, or 'people's State' - against which Bakunin directed such vitriolic criticism; and likewise the government socialism of Louis Blanc, so brilliantly demolished by Proudhon. But the connection with the revolutionary statist approach is only on the secondary level of politics, and not on the level of its particular economic viewpoint - that is, the organisation of production and the distribution of the products - of which Marx and Blanc had a rather broader, more general view than their latest heirs.

In contrast, the dichotomy is not between anarchism and a more or less "scientific" communism, but rather between AUTHORITARIAN or STATE COMMUNISM, rushing

headlong towards a despotic dictatorship, and ANARCHIST or ANTI-STATIST COMMUNISM with its libertarian vision of revolution.

If one has to talk about contradiction in terms, it must be not between the term communism and the term anarchism, which are so compatible that the one is not possible in the absence of the other, but rather between communism and State. Where there is a State or government, no communism is possible. At least, it is so difficult to reconcile them, and so demanding of the sacrifice of all human freedom and dignity, that one can surmise that it is impossible when today the spirit of revolt, autonomy and initiative is so widespread among the masses, hungering not only for bread, but also for freedom.

Luigi Fabbri A Short Biography

Although very little is known of Luigi Fabbri outside of Italian anarchist circles, he was one of the leading theorists and propagandists among the second wave of Italian anarchist-communists (which included Luigi Galleani, Camillo Berneri and Pietro Gori, amongst others), active from the late 1890s through the duration of his life. He co-edited the influential Italian anarchist journal '*Il Pensiero*', and wrote regularly for other publications such as '*Lotta Umana*' and the daily '*Umanita Nova*'.

In 1926, he managed to escape the "preventive counter-revolution" of Italian fascism, seeking refuge in France, Belgium, and finally, after being expelled several times, in Uruguay where he eventually died in 1935.

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Anarchism and Communism



Luigi Fabbri

There is a bad habit that we must react against. It is the habit that authoritarian Communists have had for some time now, that of setting communism against anarchism, as if the two notions were necessarily contradictory; the habit of using these two words COMMUNISM and ANARCHISM as if they were mutually incompatible and had opposite meanings.

In Italy, where for something over forty years these words have been used together to form a single term in which one word complements the other, to form the most accurate description of the anarchist programme, this effort to disregard such an important historical tradition and, what is more, turn the meanings of the words upside down, is absurd and can only serve to create confusion in the realm of ideas and endless misunderstandings in the realm of propaganda.

There is no harm in recalling that it was, oddly enough, at a congress of the Italian Sections of the first workers' International (IWMA), meeting clandestinely near Florence in 1876, that, on a motion put forward by Errico Malatesta, it was affirmed that communism was the economic arrangement that could best make a society without government a possibility; and that anarchism (that is, the absence of all government), being the free and voluntary organisation of social relationships, was the best way to implement communism. One is effectively the guarantee for the other and vice versa. Hence the concrete formulation of ANARCHIST COMMUNISM as an ideal, and as a movement of struggle.

We have indicated elsewhere [see Fabbri's *Dictatorship and Revolution*] how in 1877 the *Arbeiter Zeitung* of Berne published the statutes of a 'German-speaking Anarchist Communist Party'; and how in 1880 the Congress of the Internationalist Federation of the Jura, at Chaux-de-Fonds, gave its approval to a memorandum from Carlo Cafiero on *Anarchy and Communism*, in the same sense as before. In Italy at the time anarchists were more commonly known as socialists; but when they wanted to be specific they called themselves, as they have done ever since, even to this day, ANARCHIST COMMUNISTS.

Later, Pietro Gori used to say that socialism (communism) would constitute the economic basis of a society transformed by a revolution such as we envisaged, while anarchism would be its political culmination.

As specifications of the anarchist programme, these ideas have, as the saying used to go, acquired rights of citizenship in political language from the time when the First International was in its death throes in Italy (1880-82). As a definition or formulation of anarchism, the term ANARCHIST COMMUNISM was incorporated into their political vocabulary even by other socialist writers who, when it came to their own programme for the organisa-

tion of society from the economic point of view, did not talk about communism, but rather about collectivism, and in effect, styled themselves COLLECTIVISTS.

That was the position up to 1918; that is to say until the Russian Bolsheviks, to set themselves apart from the patriotic or reformist social democrats, made up their minds to change their name, resurrecting that of "Communist", which fitted the historical tradition of Marx and Engels' famous Manifesto of 1847, and which up to 1880 was employed by German socialists in a purely authoritarian, social democratic sense. Little by little, nearly all the socialists owing allegiance to Moscow's Third International have ended up styling themselves COMMUNISTS, disregarding the perversion of the word's meaning, the different usage of the word over the span of forty years in popular and proletarian parlance, and the changes in the stances of the parties after 1880 - thereby creating a real anachronism.

But that's the authoritarian Communists and not us; there would not even have been any need for us to debate the matter had they taken the bother, when they changed what they called themselves, to set out clearly what change in ideas was reflected in this change in name. Sure, the socialists-now-become-Communists have modified their platform as compared with the one laid down for Italy at the Genoa Congress of the Workers' Party in 1892. But the change in programme revolves wholly and exclusively about methods of struggle (espousal of violence, dismissal of parliamentarianism, dictatorship instead of democracy, and so on); and it does not refer to the ideal of social reconstruction, the only thing to which the terms communism and collectivism can refer.

When it comes to their programme for social reconstruction, to the economic order of the future society, the socialists-Communists have changed not at all; they just have never bothered. As a matter of fact, the term "communism" covers their old authoritarian, collectivist programme which still lingers on - having in the background, the far distant background, a vision of the disappearance of the State that is put before the masses on solemn occasions to distract their attention from a new domination, one that the Communist dictators would like to yoke them to in the not-so-distant future.

All this is a source of misapprehension and confusion among the workers, who are told one thing in words that leads them to believe quite another.

From ancient times, the term COMMUNISM has meant, not a method of struggle, much less a special method of reasoning, but a system for the complete radical reorganisation of society on the basis of common ownership of wealth, common enjoyment of the fruits of the common

labour by the members of human society, without any of them being able to appropriate social capital to themselves for their exclusive advantage to the exclusion or detriment of others. It is an ideal of the economic reorganisation of society, common to a number of schools of socialism (anarchism included); and the Marxists were by no means the first to formulate the idea.

Marx and Engels did write the programme for the German Communist Party in 1847, it is true, setting out its theoretical and tactical guidelines; but the German Communist Party already existed before that. They drew their notion of communism from others and were by no means its creators.

In the superb hothouse of ideas, the First International, the concept of communism was increasingly clarified; and it took on its special importance in confrontation with collectivism, which around 1880 was, by common agreement, incorporated into the political and social vocabulary of anarchists and socialists alike. From that time forward, the word communism has always taken to mean a system for the production and distribution of wealth in a socialist society, the practical guidelines for which were set down in the formula: FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO NEED (in contrast to the collectivist formula of "to each the fruits of their labour" or even "to each according to their work"). The communism of anarchists, built on the political terrain of the negation of the State, was and is understood to have this meaning, to signify precisely a practical system of socialist living after the revolution, in keeping with both the derivation of the word and the historical tradition.

In contrast, what the neo-Communists understand by "communism" is merely or mostly a set of methods of struggle and the theoretical criteria they stand by in discussion and propaganda. Some talk of violence or State terrorism which has to be imposed by the socialist regime; others want the word "communism" to signify the complex of theories that are known as Marxism (historical materialism, seizure of power, dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.); still others quite purely and simply are a method of philosophical reasoning, like the dialectical approach. So some - harnessing together words that have no logical connection between them - call it critical communism while others opt for scientific communism.

As we see it, they are mistaken; for the ideas and tactics mentioned above can be shared and used by communists too, and be more or less made compatible with communism, but they are not in themselves communism, nor are they enough to set it apart, whereas they could very well be made compatible with other, quite different systems, even those contrary to communism. If we want to amuse ourselves with the word games, we could easily