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Contents

Seen this way, we may seem to be simply living in the past. But we also draw some of our aspirations from what the anarcho-communist current became since. Among our more recent influences, lets quote: the journal Noir et Rouge, a magazine published in France in the 1950's that tried to actualize anarchism, the organization of revolutionary anarchists in the 1970's that tried, in the post-may 1968 context, to have an organized platformist practise, the anarcho-punk explosion (mainly for the DIY experience) and different contemporary anarchist organizations such as Alternative Libertaire and the Organisation Communiste Libertaire in France, the Anarchist Federation in the UK, or the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland. Among the non-anarchist influence (but still libertarian in our mind) we find influences in the surrealists, the Situationists (mainly Vaneigem), Socialisme ou Barbarie and Castoriadis, the German and Italian autonomists movements, the social ecology movement, the various feminist currents and the different ultra-left and council communist currents.

To know more . . .

On anarchism and anarchist-communism:

- Anarchism, Daniel Guerin (Monthly Review)
- No Gods No Masters: An Anarchist Anthology, also Daniel Guerin (AK Press)
- A Short History of Anarchism, Max Nettlau (Freedom Press)
- Anarchism and Anarchist Communism, Peter Kropotkin (Freedom Press)
- The Conquest of Bread and Other Essays, Peter Kropotkin (Cambridge University Press)
- What is Communist Anarchism, Alexander Berkman (Phoenix Press)
- The End of Anarchism?, Luigi Galleani (Cienfuegos Press)

In NEFAC's 'Aims and Principles', it is said that the federation is "an organization of revolutionaries coming from different movements of resistance who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism (1)". This may raise eyebrows when read by many people as they ask themselves what the hell we mean by that. Anarcho-communists, libertarian communists, communist-anarchists . . . Is this a contradiction? Was there a secret alliance between Marx and Bakunin, Lenin and Makhno, Mao and Pa kin? Are we Bolsheviks in disguise aiming to subvert anarchism and recruit little soldiers for 'The Party' (whichever it is)? Of course not! Let's look at it closer.

What does the word communism really means? Communism is the doctrine that says we should put all means of production and distribution, as well as the socially produced wealth, in common. It's the dream of the abolition of class system and wage slavery, replaced by a worldwide community, without classes. In our opinion, real communism can only aim at the destruction of the State, because the State is the political organization based on the domination and class rule. As long as there is a State, there can be no communism because there is necessarily a system of classes (at least one: bureaucrats!).

While everyone does not agree on this, there can be communism and centralization (like there can be self-management and centralisation). Communism can adapt to many political and organizational frameworks. We are for a federalist organizational framework, based on direct democracy. This said, an anarchist framework does not necessarly imply a communist framework (and the contrary). There are individualist anarchists, collectivist anarchists, mutualist anarchists, etc. Just like there are autoritarian communists, council communists, primitive communists, etc. We are anarchist communists. That's why we say "anarcho-communists" or "libertarian communists". One word defines the other.

The Roots of Anarchism

Anarchism was born, and developed, in the International Working People Association (IWPA, or First International, 1864–72). In the beginning, the International was conceived as a pact between British and

French trade unionists so that French workers would not be used to break strikes in Britain (which was a common tactic used by British bosses at the time). The organization spread and rapidly grew to include more than two million workers in its midst. It was acting as much as a solidarity center — organizing collections in various countries to help strikers of others, for example — as a revolutionary laboratory where many socialists tendencies where present. Even if there was theoreticians and social movements that led the way — such as Proudhon — anarchism as a doctrine and movement crystalised in it's midst around activists like Mikhail Bakunin, Carlo Cafiero or James Guillaume and movements like the watch makers of the Swiss Jura, the Italian and French craftsman and the Spanish workers.

The first anarchists where generally collectivists and were opposed to the 'communism' defended by Marx and others. There idea was that the workers of a given work place where to seize the means of production and manage them together. They were to become the collective owners of the factory by the mean of their associations (a little bit like a cooperative). The distribution of the wealth was to be done essentialy by a remuneration based on the amount of work given by each worker. The problem was that this way we risked to end up in a sort of collective capitalism. What's more, there was no garantee of solidarity, and those who were not actual 'workers' didn't have a say and were essentially dependant upon the workers. The situation of children, the eldery, the phisically challenged, etc., in this system would not have been much better than their situation in the old one.

The criticism of the collectivist model developed in the 1870's. "The type of anarchism which appears when collectivism is worked out in more detail is communism. This is the view that it is not enough for the instruments of labor to be held in common, but that the products of labor should also be held in common and distributed on the principle of the slogan, "From each according to ability, to each according to needs." The communist argument is that, while people are entitled to the full value of their labor, it is impossible to calculate the value of any one person's labor, for the work of each is involved in the work of all, and different kinds of work have different kinds of value. It is therefore better for the entire economy to be in the hands of society as a whole and for the wage and price system to be abolished.(2)"

Compared to collectivism, which is only interested in producers and only gave rights and a voice to people as such, communism had the advantage, by abolishing the idea of a family wage, to free women who wanted independence from their husbands and open the door to the recognition of 'women's labor' which has been traditionally relegated to the home, and therefore hidden. In other words, while collectivism only gave value to the social production of wealth, communism reconized both social production and reproduction and so say that all, without exception, have an equal right to socially produced wealth, whether they directly participate in it's production or not.

It's in 1880, at the conference of Jura Federation [the anti-authoritarian worker's federation of the mainly French-speaking Swiss Jura], that for the first time an anarchist conference opted in favor of communism as a mode of economic organization. Here's how the Italian revolutionnary Carlo Cafiero was defending the communist thesis at this conference: "One cannot be an anarchist without being a communist. Indeed, the slightest hint of limitation carries with it the seeds of authoritarism. It could not show itself without promptly spawning law, judge and gendarme. We have to be communists, because the people, who do not understand the collectivists' sophisms, have a perfect grasp of communism, as friends Reclus and Kropotkin have already indicated. We must be communists, because we are anarchists, because anarchy and communism are the two essential terms of the revolution.(3)"

"The leading figures of the anarchist movement at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century — such as Kropotkin, Malatesta, Reclus, Grave, Faure, Goldman, Berkman, and so on — were communists. Going on from collectivism and reacting against Marxism, they postulated a more sophisticated form of revolutionary anarchism — an anarchism containing the most carefully considered criticism of present society and proposals for future society. This is an anarchism for those who accept the class struggle but have a wider view of the world. [. . .] Since the 1870s, the principle of communism has been accepted by most anarchist organizations favoring revolution.(4)"