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**BY R. CORN.**

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**THE  
TWO COMMUNISMS**

In the present turmoil of ideas many an old truth is forgotten, which often prevents one from appreciating at their true value certain conceptions that are presented to us as new. Hence innumerable misunderstandings and confusion. THE idea of "Communism" as it is understood at present among the various parties and in the Press is a striking example of this.

The meaning now ascribed to the term "communism" dates from the time when the Russian Bolsheviks, breaking away from their Marxist colleagues—the Mensheviks—abandoned the name of "Social Democrats" and began to call themselves communists in memory of Marx and his celebrated Manifesto of 1848. And all parties who sympathised with them and adhered to the Third International followed their example. The new name was indeed of a nature to do honour to any party; it had a glorious past (in which the Marxists were far from playing the principal role) and it enjoyed the sympathy of the labouring masses. However, if the Bolsheviks have the right to call themselves Communists it is well to bear in mind that they are not the only ones who are entitled to this appellation and that alongside with authoritarian Communism there exists a free Communism namely Anarchist Communism. Let us cast a glance at history.

At its beginning Communism was authoritarian: Baboeuf, Cabet, and Louis Blanc conceived a Communist society as a kind

of barracks or convent where all the wealth is held in common and a powerful State distributes among the people all that they require. The fine maxim "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." was in 1848 mutilated by the interpretation given to it; that not the individual himself, but a power apart from him was to judge of his abilities and his needs. This conception prevailed from the time of the Jacobin successors right up to the State Socialists such as have existed for the last fifty years and the present day Bolsheviks.

Whether it is a question of the Social Democratic parties who have forsaken the idea of Communism and adopted a programme advocating merely that the private ownership in land and the means of production be suppressed, or of the Bolsheviks adhering more faithfully to the primitive idea of Communism, the dominant role is invariably assigned to the State, which is the characteristic feature of all their programmes. All citizens are to be salaried by the State on which their dependence would be all the more complete, since the State is to be the sole employer, the sole vendor, the sole buyer, the sole distributor of all the wealth. Within the State are concentrated all the political and economic power; the individual is entirely crushed, reduced to dust. If human thought were incapable of finding another solution of the social question, another means of doing away with economic inequality, then indeed we should have ground for the darkest pessimism. Fortunately it is not the case.

Proudhon had already protested against this barracks-like Socialism, but he wanted to substitute it by the private property

of each individual to the product of his labour. Later on the Federalist wing of the First International began to elaborate, under the title of Collectivism, a system of Socialism which would combine equality with liberty. The land and the instruments of production, according to this theory (conceived and developed within the womb of the Jura Federation) are to be held in common, but it is not to be ruled by any State. The State is to be suppressed and is to be substituted by a free association of trade unions and local communities. As regards the mode of distribution of the products, this question did not receive a uniform solution; it was left to each group to solve it according to the local conditions and requirements. This was, however, the most essential and the most difficult question. It was just *here* that it was necessary to find a way of reconciling the demands of economic equality with those of individual liberty. The first International failed to find that solution. Bakunin, too, occupied himself but little with this question.

But Anarchist thought continued to march in this direction. At their congresses the Italian Federation in 1876 and the Jura Federation in 1880 declared in favour of *Anarchist - Communism* as being alone capable of ensuring equality and liberty at the same time.

The great achievement of our comrade Peter Kropotkin in elaborating this idea on a broad basis is well known. He demonstrated that the Communist principle of "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." not only does not necessarily presuppose a State, but on the contrary, could find its full realisation only in an Anarchist society, by the efforts of



groups and associations freely federated. Along with the State must also disappear the *wages system* in all its aspects,


For the rest, economic evolution itself renders this imperative. In the first place, it is absolutely impossible to draw an exact line of demarcation between the means of production and the things of consumption: the same object may at times play, now this role, now that (coal, for instance). Under these circumstances it is impossible to socialise the one and refrain from touching the other unless at the risk of causing great difficulties and complications.

Furthermore it would be impossible to remunerate labour in a *just* manner, since it is impossible to estimate the value of the labour of any one individual's contribution to the common wealth. For this reason Anarchist-Communism proclaims that "Everything belongs to everybody". For this reason it introduces into Socialism a new conception which, unfortunately, is as yet far from penetrating the minds of many sincere Socialists, so much is it opposed to all preconceived notions. In the usual idea of things, a man works and receives for that, remuneration wherewith to satisfy his needs. Anarchist-Communism separates these two things, a man contributes his share of work to the common treasury because he is a member of society, because he feels solidarity with his comrades and gives to the community, by mutual agreement, what lies within his powers, while his right to a part of the common wealth is quite independent of this: it is due to him as his right to existence as a man, who ever he may be and however important or unimportant the services that

he is able to render may be. There must be no other connecting link between these two notions-production and consumption.

The two units of the Communist formula, "From each according to his abilities," and "To each according to his needs," are dissociated. The Anarchist Society does not concern itself with what work such-and-such a member could render, and does not concede to anyone the right to judge of the social value of the individual members, for the Anarchist is well aware as to what disputes and what injustice this may engender. However poor a community may be, those who have fought to do away with the privileges of the past cannot introduce new privileges into the new world they create. Or shall we say rather that there will be a good many privileges, but for whom? For the weakest members of the community, the children, the aged, the infirm: all those in short who appear to be capable of rendering the least services. As to the strong, the healthy, the energetic, these will have but one advantage, one that is enviable: that of giving of their best efforts, without asking themselves what reward they will receive for it.

We are constantly being told that Anarchist-Communism is a far distant Utopia. But has not history amply demonstrated to us that the "Utopists" are often much more practical people than the advocates of "Realpolitik"? [realistic politics].



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