

1986–2011: Twenty-five years of activity of the FdCA

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

3 November 2011

The *Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici* (Federation of Anarchist Communists) completes its 25th year of existence, making it the longest-lived anarchist communist political organization in Italy ever.

With the experiment that was the *Organizzazione Rivoluzionaria Anarchica* (ORA), following the abandonment of all hope of moving the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana* (FAI) towards firmly class-struggle positions, efforts were made to set up a political organization of anarchist communists back in the mid-1970s at a time when there were several hundred activists and militants who had emerged from the class struggle in the period of 1968–1977. However, it was only in the first half of the 1980s that the conditions were right for the most determined anarchist communist militants to come together into a nationwide organization, conscious as they were of the need for a new approach.

On the one hand, this was a decision which was almost a countertrend, given the waning situation in the class struggle and the phase of profound capitalist restructuring that was modifying both production and social relations. But on the other, it was a necessary choice given the need to analyze the new capitalist phase and the reorganization of communist and libertarian opposition forces if there was to be a new boost to the social struggles.

After a long and difficult process of debates on theory, strategy and programmes, two complementary areas were seen to be converging: the *Unione dei Comunisti Anarchici della Toscana* (UCAT), which combined rigorous materialist analysis of the material conditions of exploitation and dominion with intervention by anarchist communists rooted in the local territory and in the workers' mass organizations; and the ORA, which combined theoretical and strategic unity within the organization and activity as an autonomous, visible political participant in the struggles.

In 1985, a **Congress of Unification of the ORA and the UCAT** was held in Cremona. Although the theoretical and strategic unity was based on pre-existing documents, it was decided to maintain the double name (ORA-UCAT) for one year. The new organization immediately launched itself into what would be decisive political and cultural battles in Italy, with the labour struggles against the reduction of index-linked wages, the environmental struggle against nuclear reactors, the anti-clericalist struggle against the new Concordat, and political and organizational

support to the Anti-Clericalist Meetings in Fano. Nor did it hesitate to throw itself into the political arena, in supporting both the referendum to repeal the law cancelling the index-linking of wages and the referendum to force the closure of nuclear reactors. The ORA-UCAT had members in the regions of Tuscany, Apulia, Lombardy, Marches, Veneto and Piedmont.

In 1986, the 2nd Congress was held once more in Cremona and it was decided to adopt the name *Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici*. It was a congress of organizational consolidation, giving the first tactical indications on union work, environmental work and neighbourhood work. But the organization's analytic position on the evolution of capitalism as not having a specific theoretical reference point (with the monetarist option having already been proved to be insufficient) was also taking shape. The organization launched a political and cultural magazine, "**Homo Sapiens, materiali della Sinistra Libertaria**", whose readership was intended to be from among libertarian-leaning movements and grassroots organizations in the community.

In 1992 the 3rd Congress was held in Livorno. The Livorno-based *Organizzazione Comunista Libertaria* (OCL) joined the FdCA, bringing with it the magazine "**Comunismo Libertario**". It was a period when the FdCA was growing, with a new presence also in the region of Friuli.

The fall of the authoritarian socialist regimes in Eastern Europe required fresh analysis of international capitalism. It could now be seen that what had been hypothesized in 1976 — that is, a tendency towards a strategy where finance and goods flow without a set timetable or flag — was coming true.

The 3rd Congress also dealt thoroughly with the tactical union intervention of the class-struggle component with the CGIL and "opened" to the early instances of self-organization among the grassroots unions (the "base committee", or CoBas, movement). The first indications of changing production relations were highlighted, and there were early analytical references to the tendency towards casualization, flexibility, the exploitation of migrants and the need for autonomous groupings of workers. A new strategic line on the question of the environment was traced, which placed continued emphasis on self-organization, as opposed to the politicist drift of new organizations such as the Green party.

In 1994 the 4th Congress was held in Florence. This was an extremely important congress as it updated our vision of union work and sought to analyse the institutional changes that were taking place in Italy. The processes of "globalization" could already be felt and, with them, the processes of de-industrialization and the decline of risk capitalism. The result of this was a profound criticism of the mainstream trade-unions in Italy and renewed struggles on pay and on union democracy, based on the role of anarchist activists within the CGIL and in the grassroots unions, increasingly seen as organized class-struggle sectors. There was also a clear tactical choice to defend parts of the Constitution which arose out of the Resistance, faced with attacks on and both formal and material attempts at dismantling rights and freedoms on the part of the new right that was emerging in Italy in the early '90s. The organization's intervention in the various social movements was also re-launched, beginning with migrants and women's struggles — both driven to the margins of society by the new capitalist government of society — and also with the choice to cooperate with social centres on aspects regarding education and the job market.

Several months later in the same year, an Extraordinary Congress of the FdCA was held in Florence at which an attempt to transform the Federation into a synthesist organization was defeated. The attempt sought to abolish the principles of theoretical unity and collective respon-

sibility, which define the anarchist communist organization. The sad result of this congress was the loss of several members and of the magazine “Comunismo Libertario”, which left together with the minority. The majority then found itself in a situation where it had to reduce the programmes of the FdCA that had emerged from the 4th Congress. It was the start of a phase of reconstruction and a slow generational changeover.

In 1997, after three years of intense public and internal debate, the 5th Congress was held in Florence at the Centro Popolare Autogestito social centre. This Congress was dedicated to the **Anarchist Communist Minimum Programme**, a work of analysis and proposals which served to relaunch the FdCA as a political and organizational point of reference for both younger and older comrades who were discovering anarchist communism and could consider the FdCA as a home for incisive, concrete political action.

The motions approved at the 5th Congress enabled the FdCA to become a leading actor in the struggles against so-called “globalization” and the effects deriving from it on conditions at work and in society, contributing to the European marches against unemployment, casualization and emargination. The organizations launched the magazine “**Alternativa Libertaria**” and a year later a new series of pamphlets entitled “**Quaderni di Alternativa Libertaria**”. There was renewed activity in the anti-militarist struggle with the war in Kosovo and in labour struggles with the attacks on the Workers’ Statute.

In 2001, the FdCA joined the **International Libertarian Solidarity** network (ILS/SIL), which included trade unions and sister political organizations from all over the world. The SIL supported projects aimed at supporting the struggles and popular grassroots organizations.

In 2004 the 6th Congress was held in Cremona at the Kavarno social centre.

The previous seven years produced great changes within the FdCA which, though remaining a small organization compared to the rest of the revolutionary left, grew considerably both geographically and numerically. The Federation had launched a website, increased its propaganda and intensified its political activities both on a national and local level, all of which had brought many new, young militants into the organization. The 6th Congress concentrated on **General Tactics**, with new analyses of the evolution of capitalism (the “neuronal” strategy), together with analysis and proposals for intervention in the various specific areas of struggle, from the trade unions to the neighbourhoods.

With regard to the trade unions, the new line seeking to develop “**conflictual syndicalism with a libertarian praxis**” is consolidated as a method of anarchist and libertarian union activists’ action and interaction; a new group was also set up dedicated to studying and developing gender policies and ethics. The Federation launched a new political, cultural and arts magazine called “**Antipodi**” and an online news-sheet called “**Alternativa Libertaria**”.

In 2005 the FdCA was among the organizations who developed the multilingual international anarchist communist news site, **www.anarkismo.net**.

In 2006 the 7th Congress was held, once again in Cremona’s Kavarna social centre.

This Congress dealt with updates to the FdCA’s **Basic Strategy** documents, most of which dated back to 1985. Our analysis of international capitalism and imperialism in the era of globalization was reviewed, ranging from the USA to the EU, from the ex-USSR to China and the new emerging powers. A new document was approved on the State, its historical, political and economic role and on the need for its liquidation as a strategic objective of the proletarian revolution.

In 2007, the FdCA published a new edition of the 1926 Organizational Platform, by the *Delo Truda* group. “**La Piattaforma Organizzativa dei Comunisti Anarchici: origine, dibattito e significato**” also featured other texts from the period and was edited by Nestor McNab.

In 2009, the organization published “**Comunisti Anarchici, una questione di classe. Teoria e strategia della FdCA**”, edited by Nestor McNab and Donato Romito, containing a reprint of Saverio Craparo’s theoretical work together with several FdCA documents of Theory and Basic Strategy.

In 2010 the 8th Congress was held in Fano, coinciding with the inauguration of the **Centro di Documentazione “Franco Salomone”**.

This Congress was held at the FdCA’s new national headquarters, a venue which is also dedicated to housing the historical and political memory both of our late comrade Franco Salomone from Savona, who died in 2008 and after whom the Centre is named, and of anarchist and libertarian communist organizations and movements from the 1960s to the present. The Congress updated the organization’s **Political Strategy** with regard to the analysis of capitalism in these years of one of its deepest crises; it approved documents on the role of anarchist communists with regard to the crisis of democracy in Italy, the trade union movement during the economic crisis, the movements and struggles in the community, universities and for common goods. Following the resignation of comrades from Tuscany, it was also decided to stop publication of the magazine “Antipodi”.

By now, the FdCA had a presence in the regions of Emilia, Friuli, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardy, Marches, Apulia, Sicily and Veneto, and also in Switzerland.

The huge quantity of theoretical and political writing produced over the last 25 years was now available on the FdCA’s multilingual website and contributes to the development of other anarchist communist organizations throughout the world. The Federation also maintains the website www.archiviofrancosalomone.org.

In 2010 and 2011, the FdCA participated in two continental conferences of the European organizations participating in the Anarkismo.net project. The aim of these conferences was to find ways to coordinate joint action; six organizations participated at the Paris conference in 2010 with the figure rising to 8 at the London conference in 2011. This latter conference set up the **Anarkismo European Coordination** (or EuroAnarkismo), part of the Anarkismo International Coordination which groups around 30 political organizations from all over the world.

2010 also saw the publication in Chile, with the support of the Centro di Documentazione Franco Salomone, of the book “**Los orígenes libertarios del Primero de Mayo**”, with the aim of recovering the history of the working class for the working class and restoring the role of anarchists to their rightful place in the history of the workers’ movement in Latin America.

In 2011, three new books were published by the Centro di Documentazione Franco Salomone which are intended to enrich anarchist communist writings and fill a gap in historical writings on the Italian and international anarchist movement:

- “**Un rivoluzionario di ponente. Franco Salomone: le lotte di ieri l’alternativa di domani**”, edited by Roberto Meneghini and Donato Romito, containing the biography and writings of Salomone and the organizations he was a member of, now preserved at the Centre which now bears his name in Fano;

- **“Gli anarchici di Piazza Umberto. La sinistra libertaria a Bari negli anni ’70”**, a reconstruction by the young Bari historian Luca Lapolla based on documents contained in the Centro Salomone’s archives together with oral sources and a photographic collection;
- **“Manifesto del Comunismo libertario. Georges Fontenis e il movimento anarchico francese”**, containing the 1953 Manifesto of Libertarian Communism by the late George Fontenis together with other texts on the French anarchist movement, edited by Nestor McNab.

In celebrating 25 years of activity of the FdCA, it is also necessary to remember and thank all those comrades, groups and organizations all over Italy who, since the 1960s have contributed to that movement and political debate that the FdCA is rooted in and whose historical and political contribution it seeks to protect. The stories and struggle experiences that represent the efforts of that “best of youth” that sought to bring the organized anarchist movement back to its rightful place and its proactive, revolutionary role in society. Among the workers, in the struggles, part of the collective construction of a future of equality and freedom.

Today like yesterday.

The FdCA’s 25th anniversary celebrations

On 29 and 30 October 2011, the *Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici* celebrated its 25th anniversary in Cremona — where it was founded in 1986 — thanks to the hospitality of the comrades from the CSA Kavarna social centre.

On the evening of the 29th, the party was attended by around a hundred comrades from various parts of Italy and was sprinkled with speeches alternating with numerous toasts, with wine from bottles bearing a special FdCA label for the occasion. Among some of the speakers were Gino Caraffi for the National Secretariat, Khader Musallam for the Fano/Pesaro branch and Fabrizio Acanfora for the Genoa branch, all of whom joined the Federation at various stages through the years. There were also speeches from founding member Beppe Oldani from the Cremonese federation and another founding member Donato Romito on behalf of the *Centro di Documentazione “Franco Salomone”*.

The evening was also enlivened by the wonderful voice of Mara Redighieri (ex-vocalist with the band *Üstmamò*), whose repertory included some wonderfully original versions of anarchist songs, to the great delight of the enthusiastic audience.

The FdCA wishes to thank our sister organizations who sent their greetings, such as the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front from South Africa, the Workers Solidarity Alliance from the USA, the *Federación Anarquista Uruguaya*, *Organización Socialista Libertaria* and *Colectivo Libertario Anarquista* from Uruguay, and also the *Federación Comunista Libertaria* (Chile), the *Unión Socialista Libertaria* (Peru), *Libertäre Aktion Winterthur* (Switzerland) and Ilan Shalif of the Israeli Anarchists Against the Wall (apologies if any are missing), with whom we share the struggle and work towards the strengthening of the class-struggle anarchist movement.

The FdCA would also like to thank all those who remained in Cremona until the next day, when around 50 comrades held a lively, open-mike debate on the subject of “The crisis, the movements and direct democracy”. The debate was opened by a speaker from the FdCA and continued with innumerable contributions from those present and dealt very thoroughly with the current

situation and the prospects for the future from the point of view of political work and social mobilization in the community and throughout the country against the crisis, for the libertarian alternative.

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