

ABSTRACT

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*Mercato e occupazione:
insegnamenti dalla storia dell'economia politica e prospettive future*

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Alternative organisation of production in non-capitalistic society : St. Simon and Utopian and Ricardian socialism.

In the first industrial revolution, after the dreams and promises of Enlightenment, the so called Utopian Socialists depicted a future world where the organization of labour and society were based upon rules different from capitalistic ones and considered at the same time as more “human” and more “rational”. The hard contrast between the images of Enlightenment and the real standard of life of labourers was the common, objective starting point of all Socialists, whereas the opinions about human and rational social rules were of course very different. In the present paper I consider first the two “utopies” of C. H. de St. Simon and C. Fourier, that is the technocratic world of the *société des producteurs* and the rational dream of a sharp and tasteful critical eye.

Then the thought of their British contemporary John Hodgskin is discussed, as an example of Socialism based upon the (classical) economic theory, rather than the fancy of a happy world thanks to technology or better knowledge of human psychology. He was a so-called “Ricardian” socialist; the limit of this group was, according to Marx, that they did not understand the capitalistic production as historically determined; on the contrary, they regarded it as everlasting; they shared this weak point with the great classical authors, like Smith and Ricardo. However they had a strong feeling of the bad standard of life of workers and claimed for radical social changes. In this sense the label of “socialist” fits much better Hodgskin than St. Simon, whose social reform would have to be implemented by the Third State; and also than Fourier, who was rather anarchic.

Can utopia play a role in the analysis of the crash of Soviet Union? This is the final point of the paper. The great similarity between the organisation of production in Western world and Soviet Union (where there was virtually full employment and little differences in the salary ranking) may have been the cause of scarce productivity of labour and economic troubles in Socialist country. A different set of incentives, property rights and controls is urgent in any project of trespassing capitalist society. The suggestions of Utopians and Ricardians might be useful in order to think of a really new society. In fact, the three authors considered find here their linkage: the rotation of unpleasant job in a world where production is scientifically organized, labourers do have power and the person is the real subject and scope of economy

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