The term *comrade* is used to mean "friend", "mate", "colleague", or "ally", and derives from the Iberian Romance language term *camarada*,[1] literally meaning "chamber mate", from Latin *camera* "chamber" or "room".[2] A political use of the term was inspired by the French Revolution, after which it grew into a form of address between socialists and workers. Ever since the Russian Revolution, popular media in the Western World have often associated it with Communism.

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### Background

Upon abolishing the titles of nobility in France, and the terms *monsieur* and *madame* (literally, "my lord" and "my lady"), the revolutionaries employed the term *citoyen* for men and *citoyenne* for women (both meaning "citizen") to refer to each other.[3] The deposed King Louis XVI, for instance, was referred to as *Citoyen Louis Capet* to emphasize his loss of privilege.[4]

When the socialist movement gained momentum in the mid-19th century, socialists elsewhere began to look for a similar egalitarian alternative to terms like "Mister", "Miss", or "Missus". In German, the word *Kamerad* had long been used as an affectionate form of address among people linked by some strong common interest, such as a sport, a college, a profession (notably as a soldier), or simply friendship.[5] The term was often used with political overtones in the revolutions of 1848 and was subsequently borrowed by French and English. In English, the first known use of the word "comrade" with this meaning was in 1884 in the socialist magazine *Justice*.[6]

### Russian usage

In the late 19th century Russian Marxists and other leftist revolutionaries adopted as a translation of the word "Kamerad" the Russian word *tovarishch* (Russian: Товарищ; from Old Turkic *tavar ishchi*; abbreviated *tov.*), whose original meaning was "business companion" or "travel (or other adventure) mate", deriving from the noun *товар* (*tovar*, i.e., 'merchandise')[^7][8] as a form of address in international (especially German) Social Democracy and in the associated parts of the workers' movement. For instance, one might be referred to as *Comrade Plekhanov* or *Comrade Chairman*, or simply as *Comrade*. After the Russian Revolution, translations of the term in different languages were adopted by Communists worldwide. As a result, even though many other socialists would continue...
to use "Comrade" among themselves (e.g., German and Austrian social-democrats and, to this day, members of the British Labour Party), it became most strongly associated in public consciousness with Communism as known in the Soviet Union. This is exemplified in its mocking use in stereotypical portrayals of the Soviet Union in Cold War films and books.

In the early years of Soviet power, the Bolsheviks used "Comrade" when addressing or referring to people assumed sympathetic to the revolution and to the Soviet state, such as members of the Communist party (and originally of other pro-revolution leftist formations such as the Left SR) and people from the "working masses". The more neutral republican form of address would translate as "Citizen". Accordingly, supporters of the White movement in the Russian Civil War would use "Comrades" mockingly as a derogatory term for their enemies – although at the same time, the various socialist anti-Bolshevik forces such as the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks also used "Comrade" among themselves.

By the mid-1920s, the form of address "Comrade" became so commonplace in the Soviet Union that it was used indiscriminately in essentially the same way as terms like "Mister" and "Sir" are employed in English. That use persisted until the fall of the Soviet Union. Still, the original meaning partly re-surfaced in some contexts: criminals and suspects were only addressed as "Citizens" and not as "Comrades", and expressly refusing to address someone as "Comrade" would generally be perceived as a hostile act or, in Stalinist times, even as an accusation of being "Anti-Soviet". [9]

The term is not used often in contemporary Russian society, but it is still the standard form of address in the armed forces and police, where officers and soldiers are normally addressed as "Comrade Colonel", "Comrade General", "Comrade Sergeant", or the like. The term is also used as part of idioms e.g., tovarishch po neschast'yu (fellow-sufferer, from German Leidensgenosse) or boyevoy tovarishch ([war] buddy), or as a part of such words atovarishchestvo(partnership) that do not associate with communism.

Chinese usage

In Chinese, the translation of comrade is "同志" (pinyin: tóng zhì), literally meaning "(people with) the same spirit, goal, ambition, etc." It was first introduced in the political sense by Sun Yat-sen to refer to his followers.

The Kuomintang (Nationalist Party), which was co-founded by Sun Yat-Sen, has a long tradition of using the term Tongzhi (comrade) to refer to its members, usually as a noun rather than a title; for example, a KMT member would say "Mr. Chang is a loyal and reliable comrade."[10]

Nevertheless, the term was promoted most actively by the Communist Party of China during its struggle for power. It was used both as a noun and as a title for basically anyone in mainland China after the People's Republic of China was founded. For example, women were nü tongzhi (female comrade), children were xiao tongzhi (little comrade) and seniors were lao tongzhi (old comrade). However, after the 1980s and the onset of China's market-oriented reforms, this term has been moving out of such daily usage. It remains in use as a respectful term of public address among middle-aged Chinese and members of the Communist Party of China. Within the Communist Party, failure to address a fellow member as tóng zhì is seen as a subtle but unmistakable sign of disrespect and enmity.

At party or civil meetings, the usage of the term has been retained. Officials often address each other as Tongzhi, and thus the usage here is not limited to Communist Party members alone. In addition, Tongzhi is the term of preference to address any national leader when their titles are not attached (e.g., Comrade Mao Zedong, Comrade Deng Xiaoping).

In October 2016, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a directive urging all 90 million party members to keep calling each other "comrades" instead of less egalitarian terms.[11][12] It is also in the regulations of the Chinese Armed Forces as one of three appropriate ways to formally address another member of the military ("comrade" plus rank or position, as in "Comrade Colonel"), or simply "comrades" when lacking information about the person's rank, or talking to several servicepeople.[13]

Chinese territories such as Hong Kong and Macau do not have comrade in its popular vernacular due to longtime administration by foreign Western powers which instilled a different language paradigm in the natives of those regions.
South African usage

During the 1970s and 1980s, comrade emerged as a popular revolutionary form of address in South Africa among those involved in anti-apartheid political activities. For example, members of the African National Congress and South African Communist Party frequently referred to each other as comrade. Among poor residents of the country's segregated townships, it was also used to specifically denote members of militant youth organisations. These radical activists led consumer boycotts, organised anti-apartheid rallies and demonstrations and intimidated those suspected of having ties to the South African government or security forces. In this particular context, the English title comrades was also used interchangeably with the Xhosa term amabutho.

Zimbabwean usage

In Zimbabwe, the term is used for persons affiliated with the ZANU (PF) political party. Members of other political parties mainly the Movement for Democratic Change are often referred by their names or Mr, Mrs or Prof. The revived Zimbabwe African Peoples’ Union (ZAPU) members also call themselves comrades.

South Sudanese usage

Members of the Sudan People's Liberation Army call each other 'Comrade'.

In other languages

- In Albanian, the word shok (meaning friend, from Latin socius) was used within communist circles.
- The Arabic, Urdu and Persian word رفيق (Rafiq) (meaning friend) is used with the same political connotation as "comrade." The term is used both among Arab communists as well as within the Ba'ath movement and the Lebanese Forces. The term predates modern political usage, and is an Arabic male proper name for a Palestinian. In Pakistan, the term is sometimes used to refer to members of Jamaat-e-Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba (the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami).
- The Armenian word for comrade սինկեր (unger) for boys and men սինկերուհի (ungerouhi) for girls and women. This word literally translates as "friend". It is used by members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Ramgavar and Social Democrat Hunchakian Party when addressing other members of the party. The term is also used by the Armenian Communist Party.
- The Azerbaijani word for comrade is Yoldaş (literally "co-traveller").
- In Balochistan, the term comrade can be translated as Sangat (in Balochi and Brahvi), and is often used by left-wing political activists and guerillas who are waging war against the Pakistani state.
- The Belarusian word for comrade isставары (tavaryš), with the same origin as the Russian word. It is usually used only with a political or historical meaning in connection with the Communists.
- The Bengali word কমিউনিস্ট (Komred) is used by all leftist groups especially by the Communist Party of Bangladesh (কর্মীবাদী পার্টি), Communist Party of India Communist Party of India (Marxist)and other Communist Parties in India (especially in the States of West Bengal and Tripura) and Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal-JSD (Bangladesh)) etc.
- The Bosnian word drug is used as an equivalent to comrade. For females drugarica is used. It is also used commonly as a word for friend.
- The Burmese word ဗုဒ္ဓဗေဒ (yēbaw) is used in the Communist Party of Burma.
- The Bulgarian word for comrade isдружар (drugar), femaleдружарка (drugarka). It translates as friend or colleague. In Communist times, it was the general form of address, also used in reference to schoolteachers etc.
- In Catalan, the word for comrade iscompany for males, companya for females. It is still in widespread use among communist and anarchist organisations, but it also occurs often in everyday speech to refer to neutral relationships such as classmates or flatmates with no political connotation.
- In Chinese, the word 同志 (pinyin: Tóngzhì) is used. The meaning of the word refers to a like-minded person. It is, through usage, associated with Communism, however it may be used as a friendly epithet between friends or colleagues, mostly of the older generation.
The Croatian equivalent to comrade is drug for males and drugarica for females. In the period between World War II and Josip Broz Tito's death in socialist Yugoslavia it was applied to almost everybody: teachers, officials, etc. Today it is not used commonly. It may be used with the meaning of friend as in Serbian, but this use is far less frequent in Croatian. It is still used among far left organization members, and calling someone drug/drugarica may also be used ironically to denote someone's perceived radical leftist.

The Czech word for comrade is soudruh (m.) and soudružka (f.). In 19th century Czech, it was a poetic word, meaning "fellow". As elsewhere in Europe, the term was originally introduced by the Czech Social Democrats and subsequently carried over to Czech Communists as well when these split from the Social Democrats. After the Communist Party gained power in 1948, the word displaced all prior titles like pan, paní ("Mister", "Madam") and became the title used generally for everyone. Nowadays, it is used only in (actual or more often, ironic) Communist context. After the Velvet Revolution, an attempt was made in the Czech Social Democratic Party to replace soudruh with přítel ("friend") as a form of an address, but it didn't catch on. A cognate to English word "comrade" kamarad, means "friend" in Czech. It is a very commonly used word and it has no political connotations. A cognate (now obsolete) to the Russian word tovarishch, tovarš, means "journeymen" in Czech and has no political connotations (cf. Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo lit. "Jesus' Journeymen").

The Dutch word is kameraad. In Common Dutch the word is mostly reminiscent of communists whereas in informal speech and dialects it can be used to indicate friends or acquaintances. It was used as a form of address in the Communist Party of the Netherlands as well as in the pre-war National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands the latter also using the female neologism kameraadské.[22] The pseudo-Russian word kameraadskí is used informally as a sobriquet for a person with leftist sympathies.

The Danish word is kammerat (plural kammerater) which literally translates as "thane," or "buddy". It is normally used to refer to someone's childhood friend or friends, but can also be used interchangeably withen, which means friend.

The Esperanto word for comrade is kamarado either in the sense of a friend or a political fellow-traveller in the latter case, when used in writing, it is often abbreviated tuk-do. It is the preferred form of address among members of Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda. The word samideano, literally "same-thinker", usually refers to a fellow Esperantist.[23]

The Estonian word is seltsimees which originally comes from German Geselle. Having initially a neutral meaning, the term was later adapted by local communists. Today it has an ironical meaning, referring to Soviet times.

The Finnish word is toveri which literally translates as 'companion'.

The French word is camarade. It is mainly used by communists and can apply to classmates or friends.

The Georgian word is დამამბაჯამო amkananji.

In German, the word is Kamerad for a male, or Kameradin for a female. The meaning is that of a fellow a companion or an associate. Since 'Kamerad' is the usual term for a fellow soldier in German military language, the word is associated the right-wing scene instead of left-wing groups. Communists and socialists, especially party members of the Sed and Spd use the word Genosse resp. Genossin with the socialist association that 'comrade' has in English.

The Greek word is συντρόφος (syntrophos, m.) and συντρόφισσα (syntrophissa, f.), used by communists, socialists and other left-wing groups. Other meanings of this word are: mate, pal, friend, companion, even partner or associate etc.

The Hebrew equivalent is Chaver (ח'א), a word which can mean both "friend" and "member" (of a group or organization). During the time of Socialist Zionist political and ideological dominance of the 1930s to the 1960s, the word in a sense similar to English "comrade" was in widespread use, in the kibbutz movement, the Histadrut trade unions, the owner-driven bus companies etc. At present, its political use is considered old-fashioned, mainly restricted to Israeli Communists; the same word exists also in Yiddish, which is one possible origin of the colloquial Australian word "cobber". The Hebrew Chaver and the female Chavera are still widely used in a non-political sense, as meaning simply "friend" (in certain contexts also meaning "boyfriend/girlfriend").

The Hindi equivalent for comrade or "Sahgave" is kaamred (कामरेड) or saathi (साथी). It is widely used among all leftist (communist) parties of India, e.g. Communist Party of India (Marxist) Communist Party of India Revolutionary Socialist Party (India) Forward Bloc and others.

The Hungarian word for comrade is elvtárs. Elv means "principle" or "tenet" while tár means "fellow". As the Hungarian Working People's Party gradually gained power after the Second World War, the word displaced all prior titles like úr ("Mister") and became the title used generally for everyone except for people who were obviously not "tenet fellows" e.g. those who committed political crime against the socialist state. After the democratic transition the word became obsolete and it is used derogatorily to address politicians on the political left.

The Icelandic word for comrade is félög. It is used as a less intimate alternative to vínur (friend). It is also the word used for a "member" of club or association. When used as a title to precede a name (i.e. félög Titó or félög Dimítroff) it has a communist implication.

In Indonesian, the words Komrad, Kawan, or Kamerad are used by communist, socialist, and nationalist political parties.

In Irish the word for comrade is chara or comrádai. Both phrases are used largely by Irish Republicans Irish Nationalists, Communists and Socialists in Ireland.

The Italian word for comrade is compagno (male) or compagna (female), meaning "companion". This word is in widespread use among left-wing circles, including not just communists but also many socialists. The literal translation of the word comrade is camerata, with the specific meaning of "comrade-in-arms" or "fellow soldier": it is
used by nationalist and militarist right-wing groups. Using one word or the other is a quick way to announce one’s political views.

- The Japanese word for comrade is "同志 (dōshi)", using the same Han characters as in Chinese. The word is used to refer to like-minded persons and the usage is not necessarily limited to Communists, though the word is to some extent associated with Communism. The word should not be confused with a homonym "同志", which is a more commonly used postfix to show people sharing a certain property.

- In Kannada, the word ಕಮ್ಮರೇಡ್ (Kammarade) is used among communist people’s while addressing its people.

- In Khmer, the word “comrade” (Khmer: សមាជបុរស Samakmit) was used by members of the Khmer Rouge during the communist rule of Pol Pot in 1975–1979 and by the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation during the People's Republic of Kampuchea era.

- In Korean, a good equivalent of the word would be 동무 (tongmu) or 동지 (tongji, senior comrade). Although the word was originally used by Korean people all over the Korean Peninsula people living south of the 38th Parallel began avoiding using the word after the communist state was set up in the north. In North Korea, the word tongmu replaced all prior social titles and earned a new meaning as “a fellow man fighting for the revolution”. The word originally meant "friend".

- In Kurdish, the word Heval ("friend" or "companion on a long journey") is widely used among Kurdish political parties and organizations.

- In Macedonian, the word is дружар (drugar) for males and дружка (drugarka) for females.

- In Malay, the words Komrad, Kawan and Sahabat are used among socialist organizations.

- In Malayalam, the word സഖാവ് (sakhavu) is used among communist organizations while addressing fellow members.

- In Mexico, the word is camarada (camrade) and compañero can be (and often is) used with no political connotation.

- In Mongolian, the word is хөхүү (nökhor). It is still in use but less than before.

- The Nepali equivalent for comrade iskaamred (कामरेड) or saathi (साथी) as in Hindi. It is used by communists in Nepal such as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) Janamorcha Nepal and others.

- In Norwegian, the word is spelled Kamerat. It can be associated with communist lingo, but is more commonly used to refer to a less close friend, a co-worker (arbeidskamerat) or a classmate in school (klassekamerat or skolekamerat). In everyday use, the word kamerat on its own is considered a masculine term, referring to boys/men. For girls/women, the term venninne (female form of venn friend) is used instead. When joined with other words, such as klassekamerat, the word is gender neutral. (Although Norwegians would understand what is meant by klassevenninne, it would also sound awkward and somewhat archaic.)

- In the Philippines, communist and left-leaning activists prefer the term kasama (roughly, companion), and the short form, Ka before the name (e.g. Ka Bel). Protestant (usually Evangelical) clerics and members of the Iglesia ni Cristo also use Ka before names or nicknames, but as a contraction of kapatiid ("brother"/"sister"), denoting spiritual brotherhood. Practitioners of law informally use the Spanish term compañeradcompanhera when referring to each other, albeit without any socio-political connotation.

- In the Pashto language, the word for comrade issmalgury. It is used by and refers to communists, socialists, or supporters of the communist system across the Durand Line (i.e. in Afghanistan and Pakistan) by Pashto speakers. For the last decade or so it has also been used by the nationalists. The word is also used by common people both male and female for a very close friend.

- In Poland, the word is towarzysz, which has the same origin as the Russian word. In non-political sense, it means “companion”.

- In Portugal and Brazil, the word is camarada, now being commonly employed to refer to communists or supporters of the communist system (result of the overusage of the term in post-revolutionary society). It is also prevalent in the army, and has been gaining popularity among nationalist movements. The term used among socialists nowadays tends to be companheiro/acompanheiro although in Portugal camarada is still commonly used. Brazilian president Lula is widely known for addressing his political mates and supporters acompanheiro, however this decreased during the last years of his presidential term, while it was very popular during the elections, often imitated by comedians who satirized Lula’s idiosyncratic manners. The terms camarada and companheiro(s)acompanheiro(s) are also used without political connotations, meaningmate, partner, fella.

- In the Punjabi language the word for comrade isSaathi (ਸਾਥੀ). However, the word “Comrade” itself, ਸਾਥਿ, is used to refer to a communist or communist party member and is often used as a more linguistically acceptable replacement for the word “communist,” with the communist party often being called “The Comrades” or communist thought being called ‘Comrade Sochni.”

- In the Romani language the word for comrade isDostsi as seen in the phrase Te vestinel o dosti Ţito, te vestinena o jugoslovenske manushaor Long live comrade Ţito and long live the Yugoslav people.

- In Romanian the exact translation is camarad, a neologism introduced from French in the 19th century which does not bear a political connotation, referring mainly to wartime allies and friends. During the communist era an older term, tovarăș, derived from a Slavic source, was used to convey the political meaning.
The Serbian word for comrade is 

The Slovak word for comrade is 

The Slovenian word for comrade is 

In literature, George Orwell featured the term in his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four. The word is also used in its generic context when speaking of members or opponents. It is frequently used ironically in that way. In the former Soviet Union, especially during the Cold War, to address someone as “comrade” marked either the speaker person addressed, or both as suspected communist sympathizers. It is frequently used ironically in that way, and it is still used in its generic context by some American socialists.

In literature

In George Orwell’s novel Animal Farm, the animals all refer to each other as comrade, as the story is a satirical look at the Russian Revolution. Also in Nineteen Eighty-Four, party members in Oceania refer to each other as comrade.
References

Citations

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Sources

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External links


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