entire workers movement. *Fanal* was also affected by these conditions. When the four-month ban expired, Mühsam did not possess the means to continue to publish the magazine. He distributed occasional circulars to his friends and comrades and finally, as a replacement for *Fanal*, he wrote a work that summarized the view of the world and of life that animated the magazine. Mühsam set forth, as he pointed out, the basic features of his anarchist doctrine. The essay in which he did so appeared under the title of "*Die Befreiung der Gesellschaft vom Staat Was ist kommunistischer Anarchismus?*" in 1933. This essay must be considered as the most mature expression of Mühsam's anarchism.

Mühsam had constantly striven, with regard both to his own life and with regard to his attempt to influence the outside world, to propagate his ideal.

Together with his oratorical and literary activities in every sector of the population, he devoted special efforts during his last years to regroup the dispersed remnants of the revolutionary workers movement to incite it to a spirited struggle against the fascist threat. His efforts in this regard, along with those of his friends and comrades in the struggle, failed in the face of the arrogance of the big parties that called themselves proletarian parties and had brandished the banner of the class struggle, but which actually had no intention at all of engaging in class struggle. Their fate could not be deterred. Mühsam's activities came to an end at first with his arrest. That was when his martyrdom began. The unequal struggle that Mühsam had fought for sixteen months shows us not just the poet and the writer, the propagandist and the agitator, but above all the hero. His heroism during the last year and a half of his life made him an immortal martyr of the proletarian cause and erected a monument to his memory in the hearts of the exploited and the oppressed of all times and all countries.

Mühsam, Erich: His life, his work, his martyrdom

Augustin Souchy

1934

ator of the motions of the human soul and of the inclinations of the heart. He feels and understands what motivates the individual; what forces are at work within him; and by what laws or complex causes human beings behave in one way rather than another. If a complex man, or any man for that matter, arrives by way of the unfolding of a multitude of causes at actions that are hard to explain, and which are condemned by the masses because they do not understand them, then it is the mission of the man who possesses an intuitive knowledge of the human soul, the poet, to be simultaneously judge, doctor and criminologist and to report on the obscure forces of human nature. Mühsam understood this mission that the modern era imposed upon the poet, and pursued it enthusiastically and with profound seriousness. Just as Kleist's Michael Kohlhaas once aroused sympathy and garnered support, Mühsam demonstrated that Max Hölz, in the proletarian and social context, was a man who cannot be condemned as a criminal, but who did what he did out of love for the proletariat, to which he belonged and in whose emancipatory struggle he took part, and that what is really deserving of condemnation is the current exploitative society.

In the same year Mühsam published, under the title, "*Sammlung: Auswahl aus dem dichterischen Werk*", on the occasion of his 50th birthday, a collection of his most important poems, and one year later, in 1929, he published his account of the Bavarian Council Republic, which appeared under the title, "*Von Eisner bis Levin*é".

Meanwhile, he worked tirelessly on the propagation of his anarchist views. As the reactionary forces grew in strength, his activities were once again hindered. In July 1931 the social democratic police chief of Berlin, Grzesinski, banned the distribution of the anarchist magazine published by Mühsam, *Fanal*, for four months. With the growing reactionary backlash, the circle of those who met to discuss anarchist ideas was diminished. The consequence of this backlash, together with the very high unemployment rate and the increasing poverty of the proletarians, was a financial crisis for the

the working class periodicals praised this play, while the bourgeois press condemned it for its proletarian and revolutionary content.

After his release from prison, he wrote a little pamphlet, "*Standrecht in Bayern*", in which he castigated the disgraceful class justice of the Bavarian Courts. Once out of prison, he worked on an edition of polemical writings and manifestos that he wrote over a period of twenty years, which was published in 1925 under the title, "*Alarm*". In that same year he wrote a number of revolutionary, class struggle, burlesque and marching songs, which were published under the title, "*Revolution*".

Mühsam was a poet of unique dynamic power. He was a man of his time; he swam in its current, but he did not let himself be dragged along by it. Instead, he sought his own current, in order to push events in a different direction. In this current of freedom, at the margins of the vast swamp of the social conservators and beneficiaries in the body of capitalist society, Mühsam found himself in the company of those who also accepted the revolutionary tendency. Thus, Mühsam took up the cause of a man who was rejected by many "revolutionaries": Max Hölz. In 1926 he published a pamphlet entitled, "*Gerechtigkeit für Max Hölz*", in which he set forth, at the level of the most detailed psychological analyses, and in a truly libertarian and anarchist manner, the social motivations and impulses of the so-called gang leader Hölz in the insurrection in central Germany. Just as he did when he was thirty years old, when he so bravely stood up for Harden, he did not hesitate at the age of fifty to write an exculpatory essay in defense of a revolutionary combatant anathemized by the entire bourgeois press, and to some extent by the working class press as well, as a bandit chief. Mühsam did not perceive his task as one of arranging words that would have a perfect meter, without worrying about the content. He interpreted the mission of the poet in human society quite differently. To set down words on paper was for him a job, like any other. But the poet is the beneficiary of the rare gift that one who is not a poet does not possess: he is familiar with and a cre-

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But he did not campaign only on behalf of the political prisoners of Germany. There were no borders for him when it was a matter of defending the victims of class justice. Whether it was Sacco and Vanzetti, the persecuted blacks, or Mooney and Billing in America, or the workers of color in the colonies, the followers of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement or the persecuted combatants of the Russian Revolution of October, he was always on their side and placed his passionate eloquence and his great literary talents at their service with all his moral and material resources.

After the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti he set to verse, at the request of the proletarian anarchosyndicalist organization of Berlin, the real drama of the two anarchist martyrs. The work appeared under the title of *Staatsräson* and was performed by Berlin actors. It may have been one of the best artistic treatments of this affair; an affair that already had such a dramatic character. Since this poem cannot be publicly recited in Germany after the victory of national-socialism, the workers organizations of the countries where fascism has not yet come to power must see to it that the recital of this poem should preserve the memory of the two Italian anarchists murdered in the country of the dollar as well as the memory of the anarchist poet who wrote *Staatsräson*.

Mühsam's literary activity was quite wide-ranging during the period that extended from the outbreak of the war to the publication of *Staatsräson*. He wrote a polemical piece in 1914 entitled, "*Die Freivermählten*", in which he proclaims the rights of free human beings of different genders to unite in amorous association and to live together without state or ecclesiastical sanction. During the war and while he was in prison, he wrote a large number of poems that were published in 1920 under the title, *Brennende Erde: Verse eines Kämpfers*. One year later he addressed the perennial problem of the traitor, the problem of Judas in the workers movement, in a play. It is a play whose background is the revolutionary workers movement, and its "hero" is a traitor. This play was staged by the famous director Piscator in Berlin and was a major success. All

his works, so that not only his comrades in ideas, but also many members of the public with political and literary interests became familiarized with anarchist ideas thanks to Mühsam.

To make ends meet and to support his family, Mühsam wrote short literary sketches and articles about German literature in the democratic-bourgeois press. But more than half of his daily work was devoted to propagating his anarchist ideas and, especially after having been released from prison, to soliciting aid for political prisoners. Mühsam was not just an excellent propagandist, but also a sensitive man with delicate feelings, among whose basic traits a spirit of solidarity, goodness and scrupulousness stood out. He felt the material needs of the prisoners as if they were his own. He was the purest idealist. He was not the kind of idealist who pursues unreal fantasies or a nebulous or imaginary romanticism, but the kind who, with both feet on the solid ground of real life, rebelled against resistance and for whom the ideal served as a bridge towards a new worldly reality without state oppression and without capitalist exploitation, towards a reality based on freedom, on the well being of all and on beauty.

After his anarchist propaganda, his principle activity was work on behalf of political prisoners. He spoke at hundreds of meetings in favor of freeing the prisoners. He visited the prisons and the jails, intervening to alleviate the conditions of the prisoners, to provide reading material for them, and he was always interested in looking after their physical and spiritual welfare. How many victims of class justice he helped save with his sharp pen, how many miscarriages of justice he prevented! He endured privation, but he spent entire days to collect money for sending a proletarian with tuberculosis to a sanitarium in the mountains, whose health had been ruined by imprisonment. One rarely meets a propagandist who is as inspired by such a profound love for all living creatures as was Erich Mühsam. He often travelled all the way across Germany on borrowed money to visit an innocent man sentenced to prison or a political prisoner, in order to give them advice and hope.

The German Social Background

Less highly developed than it was in other countries, anarchism in Germany has produced only a handful of combatants and thinkers. Social democratic state-worship overwhelmed all libertarian thought; its representatives were not fighters; they preferred to describe the struggles that others were fighting.

Besides Lassalle, who may have possessed more militant qualities, even though they would lead him to collaboration with the ruling classes, neither Karl Marx, nor Frederick Engels, nor even Kautsky or Cunow, could be described as militants in the strict sense of the word. The German Revolution of 1918 might perhaps have provided the impetus for the creation of a new type of revolutionary in the workers movement, but statist and authoritarian social democracy, in alliance with the bourgeoisie, stifled all attempts to cultivate free, revolutionary personalities.

Even among the martyrs of the German Revolution, there are few really revolutionary figures. It is undoubtedly true that among those who fell in the Revolution that began in November of 1918, one finds strong personalities, but among those who were well known, not all of them deserve the name of fighters, since some were placed by chance in Ministerial positions, where they were exposed to and attracted the hatred of the reactionaries. Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Leo Jogisches, Leviné, and perhaps also Kurt Eisner and Gareis, were exceptions in the country of social democracy, whose leader, Ebert, admitted that he "hated revolution like the plague" and, consequently, hated the revolutionaries most of all. Thus, we need not look for revolutionary militants among the ranks of German social democracy, since the latter did not provide a suitable terrain for their development.

If you want to find idealistic figures in the history of the German workers movement, you have to go back to the time of the anti-socialist laws. August Reinsdorf and Johann Most were men who went far beyond the narrow circles of the party in their thought

and action. In the purely theoretical domain, from almost a century ago, we have Max Stirner, and then his successor, the poet Henry Mackay, whose audacious thinking has not been matched to this day; but men who united the theory and practice of the revolutionary struggle, like Kropotkin in Russia, Malatesta in Italy, or Proudhon in France, were rare in Germany.

In our time two personalities stand out who might very well in the not-so-distant future be counted among the classic figures of the anarchist movement in Germany: Gustav Landauer and Erich Mühsam. If the former can be compared to Proudhon, the latter, in accordance with his nature, can be compared to a Bakunin transplanted into German conditions. Both came from the bourgeoisie, not from the proletariat. It can be shown that a great number, if not the majority, of the so-called guides of the militant proletariat came from the ranks of the petty and middle bourgeoisie, and some even came from the haute bourgeoisie. All the great Russian revolutionaries, from Lavrov to Bakunin, and from Alexander Herzen to Kropotkin and Lenin, came from the nobility or the bourgeoisie, and received the most conventional bourgeois education. The same is true of Germany and France, as well as other countries. Marx was born into a Jewish family of Rabbis in a comfortable bourgeois environment; Lassalle came from a family of Jewish wholesalers; Engels was an industrialist, and only Bebel, and from the previous generation, Johann Most, and before him Weitling, were born among the proletariat or the petty bourgeoisie; but a large number of socialist theoreticians were connected by birth and by their character to the bourgeoisie. Landauer and Mühsam were also descended from bourgeois families. The former, from southern Germany, the latter, from the coast. Both enjoyed a classical education and were intended by their parents to become liberal professionals. But both took the road to the proletariat.

It was during the period of the anti-socialist laws and shortly thereafter that opposition against the official social democracy first appeared in Germany, an opposition that rebelled against the

workers there were not satisfied with a change in political representatives in the State and with the introduction of general suffrage.

Whoever lived among the people and experienced on a daily basis the resistance the proletariat faced, knew that the revolution was definitively buried. Nor was it possible to expect a reactivation of the revolutionary actions with help from Russia. But the world looked very different to someone who had lost contact with the outside world since the days of the revolution and was compelled to recapitulate in his imagination the revolutionary days, in order to keep alive the association between the silent life of prison and the past.

This was what happened not only to Mühsam but also to all those who, like him, were imprisoned for many years, and filled up the present time and the future primarily with the events of the past once they were released. Whereas we, Mühsam's comrades in arms and in ideas, had long considered the revolution of 1919 sold out and betrayed and thus terminated, for him it was still aflame. Upon leaving prison, he took up the thread of his propaganda activities at the point he left off in 1919. One year after his release from prison he founded the monthly magazine, *Fanal*, which at first was his personal magazine, but later became the organ of the Anarchist Union. He used the magazine solely for his anarchist propaganda, while his publications prior to the war still served literary ends. Mühsam had passed through the purifying fire of the revolution. The emancipation of the proletariat, which had previously been of such great interest to him and during the revolution became his true life's goal, had now become the sole content of his life. He wrote most of the articles that appeared in the magazine. His articles on current affairs were written with an elegance that is seldom found in any left wing journals. But he was always careful, while considering all kinds of political and economic events, to highlight the anarchist point of view, which for him was the starting point and the spur. The irreproachable literary form and the brilliant style of his essays in *Fanal* attracted the attention of an extensive audience to

March 1925, he went to Berlin. Thousands of workers rallied at the train station to welcome the survivor of the Bavarian Council Republic, who had to pay dearly for his activity on behalf of the proletariat and the revolution, after the latter, by the unaided efforts of the social democracy, was bloodily repressed.

Mühsam felt out of place in his new circumstances. When the prison doors closed behind him, Germany was still in the midst of a revolutionary situation. The first attempt of the revolutionary workers and peasants to found a socialist Council Republic was shattered by the forces of reaction supported by the social democracy; reaction had won the first battle against the revolution, but the country was far from pacified; the junkers and industrialists still felt that their dominant positions were in danger, even though they had been saved with the help of German social democracy during the critical months of 1918, and Germany underwent the transition from the Monarchy to the democratic Republic; the power of the revolutionary proletariat had not been totally crushed. When, in 1920, one year after the fall of the Bavarian Council Republic, the reactionary forces, with the Ehrhardt Brigade, Ludendorff and Lüttwitz, and under the command of the famous Kapp, attempted to carry out the first large scale coup to restore the old political powers, the workers movement was still capable of responding to this reactionary putsch with a brilliantly executed general strike and by means of armed resistance which brought the coup to an unexpected end and defeat. One year later, the rebellion broke out in central Germany. It was suppressed, since it was not the action of the entire united working class, but a particular action on the part of the communists, launched at the command of Moscow to serve the purposes of Russian foreign policy. A year later, the so-called workers government of Saxony was formed, which was composed of independent social democrats and communists. Noske, the social democratic minister of defense, sent Reichswehr troops against this government. Thuringia was occupied by army troops, because the

party's adaptation of its politics and tactics to those of the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes. This movement of the "young" was spiritually nourished by the example of the socialist movement in the Latin countries, which was more revolutionary and less parliamentarian, and carried on the tradition of the Bakuninist First International; it would also find inspiration in the example of the anarchist movement that was flourishing at that time in France, which counted among its proponents the brothers Reclus, Kropotkin, Jean Grave and others.

In Germany two factions or currents soon emerged from the ranks of the oppositional movement of the "young", and these currents took quite different paths, not so much as a result of their spiritual attitude as because of their practical goals. One current, which found most of its representatives from among the intellectuals, emphasized action on the spiritual plane. A movement of young writers arose led by the brothers Hart, Bruno Wille, Gustav Landauer and Benedikt Friedländer, who were later joined by Arno Holz and Gerhart Hauptmann. At that time the socially critical dramas of Ibsen were fashionable in Germany, whose works, however, were not allowed to be performed. With the support of the workers of Berlin these writers and artists founded a movement for a free theater, one that did not by any means abide by the accepted formal esthetics, but which placed social criticism at the center of its action, and thus sought to serve the latter purpose in a literary, artistic and theatrical form. Gustav Landauer, Mühsam's spiritual mentor, took an active part in the movement. The second field of activity engaged in by this circle was the struggle against the moral power of the church. With youthful zeal, and with an extraordinary energy, this movement declared war on Puritanism and the omnipotence of the state church. This was the era of naturalism, and an intensive propaganda was unleashed against the obsolete Christian dogmas. After a short time these efforts led hundreds of thousands of people to leave the state churches. By this means, as

well, a powerful blow was delivered against the belief in God-given temporal authority of the ruling class.

The other current of the "young" opposition engaged in action on the trade union plane. This was the era of the establishment of the German central trade union federations. The leaders of social democracy wanted the workers trade union groups to constitute a mass base and a docile tool for their parliamentary aspirations. The party claimed that socialism would be created by the party itself by way of the people's free State, when, once the masses raise the party to the highest echelons of power, the party attains a parliamentary majority. This view resulted in parliamentary politics being considered to be the crucial lever for change among the most important part of the workers movement, and the Trade Unions were supposed to subordinate their goals to the parliamentary politics of the party. The "young" opposition protested against this policy, and maintained that the Trade Unions must be schools of socialism. This opposition also fought against the centralization of power in the hands of the executive committees of the trade federations, by means of which, on the one hand, the party sought to achieve its political aims and, on the other hand, the purely economic actions of the workers could be held in check. Later, when the propaganda for the general strike as a device to achieve the workers economic demands was disseminated, particularly by Dr. Freideberg, the social democratic party leadership and the executive committee of the Trade Unions tried to find a way to use this form of direct action on the part of the workers for the purposes of electoral propaganda and the conquest of universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage, which they called the political mass strike.

Both opposition currents, however, the one that was focused on intellectual propaganda and the one that was devoted above all to action on behalf of the economic liberation of the proletariat, held the same views on many points and were working towards the same goal. In imperial Germany, militarism had become a terrible power, and social democracy could not entirely avoid being

lution in the name of liberty, with legitimate moral indignation, demonstrates more clearly than anything else that the revolution also obliges the anarchists to resort to means that they would reject in non-revolutionary times.

Erich Mühsam was a Bakuninist in the sense that he considered the formation of a revolutionary executive absolutely necessary for the period of the revolution and he also sought to confer upon this executive the power to issue decrees and to implement them, so that the revolutionary conquests on the economic, political and social terrains could be defended and fortified.

The position the anarchists assume in the next revolution will perhaps fall somewhere between the views of Malatesta and Arshinov. Anarchists and anarchosyndicalists will have to aspire to exercise as much influence as possible in the revolutionary events by participating in the Committees in all domains of the social formation, which must be reoriented by the revolution towards a new path, one that is economically egalitarian and politically libertarian for the classes that have up until now been exploited and oppressed.

It is in this sense that Mühsam and Gustav Landauer, the admirer of Proudhon, were Bakuninists in their activities in the Bavarian Council Republic; and this revolutionary disposition and this activity were bequeathed by Mühsam as his legacy to the younger generation of the anarchist movement. If it follows this road anarchism will experience a new regeneration and will fulfill the hopes of those who, after the defeat of the workers at the hands of the social democracy and bolshevism, are seeking new ideals and new goals.

Mühsam in the Weimar Republic

After Mühsam was released from the fortress of Niederschönenfeld, in Bavaria, where he had been held for almost six years, in

circle of Kress von Kressenstein and the rest. If the time comes, and it just might, when the poor bourgeois, who was the day before a rich bourgeois, is compelled by circumstances, I say by circumstances, to sweep the streets, to clean the sewers, then it will be possible for someone who can no longer feel compassion for the proletarians, to direct their compassion towards the bourgeois. And I say that I have always had compassion for the proletarians who were forced to engage in such toilsome labors for decades, and I have compassion for the victims of society, whether they are thieves, con men, every kind of rascal; for the victims of our social conditions who suffer in the prisons and are transformed into habitual criminals; and if I were to possess, in addition, even one drop of compassion left over, which is uncertain, I might also have compassion for Kress von Kressenstein, Buttmann and the editor Lechman, who were taken hostage. Right now I have no room for this compassion in my heart, which is otherwise capacious enough, because all my compassion is discharged for the misery of the proletarians, and the misery of the unemployed…. As long as we do not know whether we are safe, as long as we have to fight against a nameless and anonymous tribe of aristocrats, bourgeoisie and conspirators, we cannot yield to the Central Council…. I am aware of the fact that in Bamberg, the first plank of the demands of the bourgeois parties is the release of the hostages, and the second one is the old capitalist monopoly of the press—they did not express it that way; naturally, they said, 'Freedom of the press must be reestablished'…."

This speech by Gustav Landauer, which Erich Mühsam reprinted in May 1929 on the tenth anniversary of Landauer's assassination, not only had Mühsam's wholehearted support, but also addressed the problem of what the anarchists should do in the revolution from the practical perspective. That it was precisely Gustav Landauer who would make such a speech, when, shortly before, in his essay, "*Briefe aus der französischer Revolution*", he quoted Lavater, who opposed the executions that took place in the French Revo-

influenced by it. August Bebel, the acknowledged leader of the party, was the son of a non-commissioned officer, and did not fight against militarism as such, but only certain excesses of militarism, in the name of the party. Wilhelm Liebknecht, the father of the Karl Liebknecht who was assassinated during the German Revolution, defended the Prussian military state in 1870 as a bulwark against the Czarist Empire of the knout. "If there were to be a war against Russia, I would shoulder a rifle, even at my age", August Bebel declared in the German Reichstag. Nor was it purely by chance that Bebel, who represented the social democracy in the Reichstag's military committee, was succeeded by Gustav Noske, the field marshal of German reaction in its fight against the workers movement.

The opposition in the German workers movement, driven by its combativeness and its goals, was increasingly assuming a more clearly anarchist character. It declared its opposition to parliamentarism, militarism, and intellectual oppression by the clergy, and advocated the methods of direct action, defending the autonomy of groups and the development of the individual initiative. The intellectual opposition sought a new cultural life without interference by the State; the trade union opposition of the "localists" wanted to transform the Trade Unions into the vehicles of the economic functions of socialist society, in accordance with the interpretation of this goal that was propounded by the First International.

The development of this opposition was interrupted by the world war. During the Revolution, for a brief time, the major differences that separated the various currents were temporarily overcome. In the revolutionary uprising, and especially in the Bavarian Council Republic, not only did the syndicalist and anarchist tendencies unite, but there was also fruitful cooperation between the Independent Social Democratic Party, which had been formed during the war, and the representatives of the anarchist movement.

It was not long before the "young" opposition movement clearly developed as an anarchist movement that sought to unite all the forces that carried on the struggle for the economic, spiritual and

social emancipation of the proletariat outside the Social Democratic Party. Within this anarchist movement, there appeared a man who stood out as a result of his intellectual qualities and the impressiveness of his personality. This was Gustav Landauer. Of the various currents of the anarchist movement, it was the anarchist-communist current that emerged as the dominant current in the end. Gustav Landauer, who had painstakingly studied the socialist schools of England and France, declared in favor of P.J. Proudhon, the greatest of all the libertarian socialists. In order to achieve practical influence, Landauer founded a "*Sozialistischen Bund*". Landauer wanted to provide a point of convergence, outside the Social Democratic Party and the Trade Unions, for all those socialists who sought to free themselves from the coercion of the State and the exploitation of the capitalists and who really wanted to begin to live a socialist life. Against the doctrines of the social democracy, according to which socialism would mature as the fruit of the tree of capitalist development and would arrive automatically after the necessary collapse of the capitalist social order, but that without this development of capitalism socialism cannot be achieved, Landauer, in his classic, *For Socialism* [*For Socialism*. Telos Press, St. Louis, 1978. Available online at: http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/gustav-landauer-call-to-socialism], expressed the simple thought that socialism is not bound to a particular economic form and it will always be possible for men who want it badly enough. If socialism was "raised" by the Marxists to the category of "science", Landauer strove to return it under the rubric of real life, so that it could be accessible to all men. He called upon the workers not to wait for the Marxist jubilee when mankind will be made happy as a result of the accumulation of capital after the expropriation of the expropriators, but to strive to bring about a living socialism now. If the Marxists always spoke about man being the product of his environment, Landauer called the attention of his contemporaries, with his incomparable rhetorical passion, to the

to misunderstandings among the population and led many to the counterrevolutionary camp. A minimum of the means of life must be guaranteed to all after the revolution.

But the view of the German anarchosyndicalists, like that espoused by Berkman and the one I hold, sidesteps the real problem. The question of the use of revolutionary violence and the oppression of counterrevolutionary elements and conspiracies is not thereby resolved. The counterrevolutionary forces do not derive their power exclusively from purely material motives and factors, but from moral ones as well.

The anarchists in the Bavarian Council Republic were forced to take a practical position with regard to this question. After Kurt Eisner was assassinated on February 21, hostages who were members of the counterrevolutionary movement were seized in Munich. The social democracy proposed at the Council Congress of March 6 that the hostages should be unconditionally released. It was Gustav Landauer, whose voice attracted the serious attention of even the bourgeois press due to his cultural status and his importance for German literature, who made a passionate speech against the social democratic proposal, a speech that Erich Mühsam approved of without reservations. Landauer said:

"Hostages have always been taken in critical situations in society. And it would be ridiculous to say that we live in a stable society. What prevents us from saying this? We are still threatened by the counterrevolution. I am not afraid of it, but I will defend myself against it. I am an advocate of taking measures of defense against it insofar as the threat exists, insofar as such measures are necessary.... The statement made by the former Minister of War von Hellingrath to someone who had been arrested, 'Now we fight fire with fire', will probably also apply to us in our struggle against the counterrevolution.... I do not think it is right to appeal to our compassion and say: 'Set the hostages free'. We must first know just what our situation is.... We have to penetrate into the way the proletariat feels in order not to squander our compassion on this

Platformism, which has been advocated by Arshinov in the most clear and concise manner within the anarchist movement, cast the problem in another light. It was stressed that the anarchists must create a powerful revolutionary organization, following the model and the character of the Bolshevik Party of Russia. This organization must be responsible for defending the revolution and also for the organization of the new free society in the economic, cultural and social domains.

For the anarchosyndicalists of Germany the problem was seen from a different perspective. For the inhabitants of a highly industrialized country, with an extraordinary concentration of industrial life in a few sectors, making sure that they will be fed on the day after the revolution must be the first priority. They elaborated a kind of schematic, according to which the federations of workers syndicates that extend across the entire country and embrace every industrial sector in economic life will be responsible for making sure that on the day after the outbreak of the revolution there will be bread for all. This would mitigate the threat of counterrevolution; and it would also significantly reduce the need to implement coercive measures, measures that would doubtless imply a blow against individual freedom from the start.

Alexander Berkman adopts the same point of view in a book that has so far only been published in English: *Now and After* [*Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*, Vanguard Press, 1929—Translator's Note]. He maintains that violence will be necessary in inverse proportion to the degree to which the people's food supply is guaranteed, which viewpoint is based for the most part on the experience of the Russian Revolution. In my 1920 book, *Wie lebt der Arbeiter und Bauer in Russland* [*The Workers and Peasants of Russia and Ukraine: How Do They Live?*, first published in German in 1922—Translator's Note], I expressed the same opinion. I pointed out that the favorite slogan of the Ukraine communists—"He who does not work, will not eat", which in reality was more seriously violated by the soviet bureaucracy than by anyone else—gave rise

fact that the historically-attained conditions were ultimately the result of men's actions, and that a transformation of their mutual behavior must finally lead to new conditions. Socialism was thus for Landauer "the tendency of will of united persons to create something new for the sake of an ideal". With these words, he began his famous For Socialism, which was first published in 1908 but which was reprinted in various editions during the November Revolution and the following years.

This appeal to socialism found an echo in only a small part of the German proletariat; the masses were for the most part still in the spiritual grips of social democracy. Even in the anarchist movement, it was greeted with only partial approbation by the *Sozialistische Bund* that was founded by Landauer. In one sector, however, Landauer's book was received with enthusiasm. Erich Mühsam joined the *Sozialistische Bund* and founded a local branch of the organization in Munich. From then on he was at Landauer's side, and agitated alongside him; both played active leading roles in the Bavarian Revolution, after the defeat of which Landauer was brutally murdered by the henchmen of the social democrat Noske, who was minister of war in Berlin. Mühsam, arrested a few days later, barely escaped the terrible fate of his friend and mentor. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but fourteen years later he would fall victim to the reaction, murdered no less cruelly and brutally than Gustav Landauer.

For more than thirty years Erich Mühsam stood out as a leading figure in the anarchist movement, in which he occupied a special position, well known and highly esteemed by the class-conscious proletariat of Germany. His activities and his brilliant ideas, expressed in his incomparable rhetoric, made him one of the most well known representatives of German anarchism. His career, his life and his activity, his ideas and his shocking fate, are set forth in the following pages.

Man and Author

Erich Mühsam was born on April 6, 1878 in Berlin, the son of a pharmacist of Jewish origin. At the age of six weeks he was brought to Lübeck by his parents. They wanted their son to be a pharmacist so he could take over the family business and therefore be assured of a livelihood. They sent him to the *Kathrineum* in Lübeck. There, he was punished for socialist agitation. He received his Baccalaureate at Parchim, Schleswig-Holstein, and then went to work at his father's pharmacy in Lübeck.

Having earned his degree, he began to work at his father's pharmacy. But, as the young pharmacist compounded the drugs, his thoughts wandered in the realms of poetry, theater, literature and finally militant politics. This augured change. In his veins ran the seething blood of a Pegasus; he did not have the aptitude to remain with his retorts and he rebelled against all mental dullness. He inundated everything in a mordant satire that burst forth from his spirit. Compounding drugs was an occupation that was too boring for the yearning spirit of the eager youth, who felt no satisfaction at all in the performance of this task. As a result of his constant inattention, which could have had fatal consequences, the career that his father planned for him was interrupted. He devoted himself to literary studies, and thanks to his zeal and to his evident powers of dedication he soon exhibited profound knowledge not just of contemporary literature, but also of the philosophical literature of the world.

He was a pharmacist until his 24th year—according to information provided by his companion, who took refuge in Prague after his tragic death—spending some time in Berlin after he reached the age of 22.

In Berlin he came into contact with the circle of literati and Bohemians who were grouped around the Scheerbart brothers. The older of the Scheerbart brothers, who had already achieved fame and respect, quickly discovered the brilliant qualities of the young

the revolutionaries must do once they emerge victorious from the revolutionary struggles. If the entire population were to support the anarchists and follow their advice, then the problem would be quickly and easily resolved. But since, up until the present, the anarchists have always comprised only a minority—and this will be true for the foreseeable future—they must decide how they are going to conduct themselves with respect to the other tendencies of the revolutionary proletariat.

It was Bakunin's position throughout his life, and in all the revolutionary movements in which he participated, that the anti-authoritarian elements must organize to take the leadership of the revolutionary struggle. The logical consequence of this is that in revolutionary periods the anarchists, too, will issue decrees and will have to utilize armed power to see to it that they are obeyed. In order to safeguard revolutionary insurrections, the anarchists will have to take revolutionary measures which will be perceived by those upon whom they are imposed as forms of pressure and coercion. During this period, there is no individual freedom for the counterrevolutionaries and their followers. In such circumstances, anarchists might easily discover that their actions contradict their convictions. In a sense, this is an internal tragedy of anarchism.

Malatesta, a disciple of Bakunin, accepted the implications of this conundrum, at least during his last years. When revolutionary Italy in 1919 and 1920 saw him as its savior and its liberator and praised him in these terms; when the great masses of the workers believed that he would be the Italian Lenin: the chosen leader of the revolutionary people had to disappoint the masses. He did not want to be either a revolutionary leader or a dictator. He defended the point of view that it was not the mission of the anarchists to create, after the revolution, unitary economic and political forms for the entire population. The socialists and the communists can do that. The mission of the anarchists was the constant struggle, even under revolutionary conditions, against the establishment of new authorities and for freedom.

other things, a conversation he had with Axelrod, in which the latter says that the communists did not support the first Council Republic because it had not been sufficiently prepared. If this was indeed the cause of the communist policy vis-à-vis the first Council Republic, then the communist orators, with Leviné at their head, should have openly explained their position before the Council assembly. Instead, according to Mühsam's account, they only uttered a few trite expressions, loudly denouncing the social democrats with whom they did not want to collaborate. This schismatic tactic of the communist party then led to the serious difficulties that resulted in a deplorable weakening of the proletariat. Mühsam's pamphlet, which is both a defense and a justification, is an indictment of the communist party, which at that time, when it was still in diapers, when it had only existed for a few months, aspired with criminal arrogance for absolute sovereignty, an absurd rule which it defined with ridiculous presumptuousness as the dictatorship of the proletariat, but which in reality could only be the dictatorship of the party over the proletariat. Mühsam has shown us, contrary to his intentions, or in any event without explicitly saying so, how the communist party was exclusively engaged in the pursuit of its own party interests, even at the risk of splitting the proletarian forces at the most decisive moment of the revolution.

On the basis of the above considerations, we can conclude that the proletariat is always sold out and betrayed when it trusts a political party and that the social revolution is only effectively underway when it knows how to remain independent of all partisan politics and influence.

Within the anarchist movement, after the Russian Revolution, and after the events in Hungary, Bavaria, Germany, Italy, Argentina and Spain, the question of what the anarchists should do in a revolution was debated. The fact that anarchists and anarchosyndicalists have to take an active part in revolutionary uprisings—concerning this question there is no divergence of opinion. Disagreement only arises with regard to the problem of what

Mühsam and became fast friends with him. Together, they collaborated on the production of a satirical magazine.

Mühsam then attempted to publish a humor magazine on his own account, but because of his lack of means only a few issues were published. Both magazines contained better writing than *Simplizissimus*, which was founded shortly thereafter in Munich and for which Mühsam would be an assiduous contributor.

He was about 24 years old when he met Gustav Landauer and collaborated with him on the *Sozialist*, gaining recognition for his propaganda against social democracy and parliamentarism.

In 1906 he was in Munich, at that time the center of literary and artistic Germany. It was in Munich that the most famous painters and authors congregated, the brothers Mann, Leon Feuchtwanger, the dramatist Frank Wedekind and many others. During one of his visits to Munich Mühsam met Peter Altenberg and made contacts with Viennese literary circles. His efforts during these early years took the form of poems that were published in various magazines and in a book that appeared in 1904 under the title of *Die Wüste*. In 1905 he was in Ascona, where he met internationally known anarchists, the Austrian economist Gumplowicz, the well-known Zurich doctor, Dr. Brupacher, the brothers Nacht, Bertoni (from Geneva), and others. This experience played no small role in his journey towards anarchism.

We shall now transcribe the following excerpt from a letter from his companion:

"In 1906 Mühsam moved to Munich. There, his most fertile period as a poet began. In 1907 he published his second volume of verses: *Der Krater*. He was a contributor to *Simplizissimus* and *Jugend* and performed in the cabarets in satirical topical pieces to make money. He founded the anarchist group *Tat* in Munich. This group was by no means inactive. During the 1909 unemployment crisis in Munich, this group designed some posters that were pasted on the walls of the city with this text: 'Unemployed, come out of your rooms! Meet on the Marienplatz! Come on foot and

silently demonstrate against your poverty.' On the appointed day the demonstration took place in Munich and completely paralyzed traffic as it passed down the streets. The social democrats repudiated this great demonstration, and told the workers: 'Do not let yourself be led by unscrupulous provocateurs.' But in response to the demonstration the city immediately instituted a series of construction projects and the unemployment crisis came to an end. The group *Tat* had assumed the mission of propagandizing among the so-called lumpenproletariat (the proletariat in rags [*sic*]). One of its initiatives was the action undertaken against the Spanish consulate after Francisco Ferrer was shot.... Afterwards, Mühsam went to Berlin and there he was arrested and he and his friends were tried in Munich for disturbance of the public order. During this trial, thanks to the attitude of the lumpenproletariat, he was declared innocent for lack of evidence. In April 1911 he founded the monthly journal *Kain*, which appeared regularly until August 1914, despite major financial difficulties. Once the war broke out the magazine had to suspend publication due to its opposition to militarism and to the statist party of social democracy, and its polemics against the social order, the police and Puritanism, but above all against the censorship...."

The spirit of the young poet was not content with literary activity alone. Immediately after the era when Nietzsche, Ibsen, Tolstoy and Strindberg had influenced the spiritual life of Europe, a decade after Arno Holz inaugurated naturalism in literature, by means of which the poverty and misery of the big city, until then scorned by poets as too prosaic a topic, became the object of lyrical poetry, no artist who aspired to freedom and truth could remain unmoved by the social problem. Mühsam was ahead of his time in his recognition that all spiritual creation and especially the activities of writers cannot be divorced from the progressive aspirations of mankind, and particularly those of the proletariat, for freedom and justice. From the very first page he wrote the young poet never belonged to that category of esthete for whom art and literature

in Würzburg, there were armed clashes between the supporters of the Council Republic and the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat was defeated and the supporters of the Council Republic were arrested. The workers of Munich still tried to salvage the situation, and convoked an assembly of all the factory councils, where exhortations to the unity of the whole proletariat were issued and proclamations in this sense were devised. But the communists always remained aloof. On the night of April 13, Mühsam was arrested with a number of other officials of the Council Republic, after which they were brought to the train station and transported to the north of Bavaria. When the workers of Munich found out, they besieged the train station in order to free their comrades, but they were too late.

Up to this point we have followed Mühsam's narrative. It provides a faithful account of his activity....

After the arrests of the members of the R.A.R. and of many members of the Council government, the Council regime could no longer function. The communists got what they wanted. They formed a new government composed solely of communists, which could not rely on as much support from the proletariat as its predecessor. The majority socialists and the bourgeoisie called upon the Reich to help them against this government. The national government sent Noske, who led his troops against Munich and overthrew the communist Council government. Landauer had no position in the second Council government, but the reactionaries hated him more than anyone else. He was brutally assassinated by the invading troops as one of the most dangerous enemies of the bourgeoisie. Leviné was killed, and a large number of revolutionaries had to suffer the rage of the reactionaries. So ended the Bavarian revolution.

Erich Mühsam speaks of the communists with a great deal of moderation in his memoir. He discusses his own tactical shortcomings at length and expresses the view that the communists had the most appropriate tactical orientation. He reproduces, among

again refused to attend. Some members of the R.A.R., who were also members of the Communist Party, declared their readiness to collaborate, even if their party would not do so. The assembly overwhelmingly voted for the proclamation of the Council Republic. Among the members elected to the provisional Council of People's Commissars were: Dr. Lipp, an Independent Socialist, Commissar for Foreign Affairs; Soldmann, an Independent Socialist, Commissar of the Interior; Paulkum, an Independent Socialist, Commissar of Trade; Kübler, a member of the Peasant Council, Commissar of Justice; Silvio Gesell, a well known anarchist and physiocrat, most famous for his theory of money, which was based on the work of Proudhon, Commissar of Finance; Hagenmeister, an Independent Socialist, Commissar of Public Welfare; Gustav Landauer, an anarchist, Commissar of Public Education; and Killer, an Independent Socialist, Commissar of Military Affairs.

The Council Republic was proclaimed on Monday, April 7. But the fact that neither the majority socialists nor the communists gave it their wholehearted support rendered the proclamation somewhat precarious from the very beginning. Mühsam relates that it was decided that the prominent members of the R.A.R. should speak at various locations in Munich, and that they treated the day like a holiday. But even as the proclamation was being broadcast, certain unpleasant events were taking place that indicated that the workers did not entirely support the Council Republic and that the bourgeoisie had no fear of this Republic, since they saw the discord that afflicted the proletarian camp and understood that this great occasion would not last much longer.

The Council Republic only functioned for six days. The majority socialists had formed a counter-government in Bamberg and incited the rural areas against the Munich Council Republic. While the Council regime acquired more and more supporters in the south of Bavaria, in the north any sympathies it may have garnered were reduced by the slanderous campaign waged by the majority socialists and the bourgeoisie. Already, on April 5,

only existed as a result of their efforts and for their benefit alone. For Mühsam art was the means of expression of the personality that was engaged in spiritual struggle, and like that personality, its activity could not be disconnected from the community. Artistic creation in the service of the totality, in natures as sensitive as that of Mühsam, could not just turn their backs on the injustices of current society, the oppression of the personality by the State and the exploitation of the masses by the capitalist economic system. Mühsam put the literary activity of the poet and dramatist at the service of the struggle against oppression and domination, and demanded that the other poets and dramatists do so as well. Long before "proletarian art" had become a fashionable slogan, during the period prior to the world war and before the Russian Revolution, Mühsam called for an art at the service of social revolutionary agitation. He was a trailblazer of political art, which, especially after the revolutions in central Europe, became the center of all artistic creation.

Just as Mühsam ridiculed the so-called pure esthetes with these words: "I don't care what they call themselves, crazy or decadent", so he also castigated bourgeois education, whose principle end consists in educating the youth for the hunt for wealth.

He directed a no less mordant critique at social democratic reformism, which had grown immensely in the pre-war period. German social democracy enjoyed "one victory after another" during the first decade of the century. Each succeeding election saw its vote increase, but with this outward growth it lost more and more of its socialist content; it had been a long time since any trace of revolutionary enthusiasm could be found within it. The idea that socialism could be achieved when the party obtains majority support in parliament stifled all other ideologies. Mühsam and his friends, who were not members of the Trade Unions and did not belong to the party either, expressed much more radical opinions and were much more daring in their ideas and their aspirations than the great party. They comprised to some extent a literary Bohemia where

they lived without prejudices; they had emancipated themselves from the bourgeois view of the world and were inspired by a faith in the social revolution. Mühsam not only worked with the pen as a writer, he was also a performer, reciting his own verses in cabarets and theaters. It was in a Zurich cabaret that Mühsam first read the poem about the "revolutionary lamplighter" that would become a classic of revolutionary German poetry. In this poem Mühsam reveals his skills as a great artist and literary creator that would later make him so famous and such a feared adversary. He changed the word "revolutionary" a little and created the word "*Revoluzzer*" (something like a revolutionary, but in a pejorative sense) and thus expressed by means of his creative poetic genius the nefarious and ridiculous attitude of social democracy, which was pursuing allegedly revolutionary ends, but in reality was afraid of the revolution and afraid of its own proclaimed revolutionary goals which, in order to avoid having to engage in struggle, it projected into the mythical future. The social democracy was not a party of real revolutionaries, but of *Revoluzzer*, vain, conceited, liars. The poem speaks of a revolutionary, a lamplighter by trade, who joined with other revolutionaries to start the revolution. They advance boldly down the streets where the lamplighter was cleaning the streetlights. The revolutionaries knocked down the lampposts to make barricades, and the lamplighter began to shout at them and demand that they respect his lamps; since they ignored him he went home, embittered, to write a book whose purpose was to harmonize the revolution with respect for and cleanliness of the streetlights.

All of this is expressed with humor and biting sarcasm.

It was during this period that Mühsam wrote his first play, a comedy, *Die Hochstapler*, which was published in 1906. He had previously published his impressions of Switzerland in a work that was published under the imprint of Ascona. Over the next few years he became quite well known in the artistic world of Munich, for his carefree but witty lifestyle. Munich became the scene of an artistic Bohemia, and Mühsam was considered to be its leader. He earned

eral outlines of the Council Republic were proposed and the people who were to serve as people's commissars were elected. The social democrats proposed that those who were currently serving as government ministers should henceforth serve as people's commissars. Landauer and Mühsam objected to this proposal. In the end, the problem of who should be named as people's commissars was resolved. A provisional Council government was proclaimed in which the majority social democrats, the independents, the communists and the anarchists would participate. Landauer had to accept the position of Commissar of Public Education. But since the representatives of the Communist Party did not attend, the session was postponed.

On the night of April 4 the representatives of the parties and tendencies mentioned above met again. In the midst of the debates a delegation from the Communist Party arrived—consisting of persons from Berlin who until then were completely unknown—declaring that their party would not participate in the Council government. Mühsam assumed that this party wanted all the power in its hands in order to exercise a party dictatorship, rather than the power of the entire proletariat. This declaration of the Communist Party gave the representatives of the majority social democrats the excuse to propose that the session be postponed once again. They declared that, in view of the situation created by the attitude of the Communist Party, the proclamation of the dictatorship of the Councils should be postponed for 48 hours. In vain, Landauer and Mühsam attempted to convince the assembly of the danger of this delay; the majority approved the social democrats' proposal.

On April 6 the assembly of the various parties met once again. But none of the social democratic ministers were present; only a few representatives of the majority party attended. Instead, the independents, who had sent their most outstanding representatives, dominated the debate, among whom was Ernst Toller. The R.A.R. was present in full force, while the Communist Party had once

This compromise solution demanded that the Diet appoint a socialist minister and also recognize the Councils of workers and soldiers. The revolutionary workers did not consent to this and continued to demand the proclamation of the Council Republic. This demand became all the more insistent and clamorous when on March 21 news arrived in Munich of the proclamation of the Council Republic of Hungary. The government became nervous and put its faith in an attempt to pacify the working class masses by means of the proposals of the minister of socialization, Neurath. But this did not prevent the masses from persisting in their demand for a Council Republic.

The Communist Party had played no role in the events up until this point. Mühsam, according to his own account, was always named as an orator for this party, although he was not a member, an insinuation that grew more persuasive with each passing day. During March 1919, the Communist Party bowed before Mühsam. But in the following weeks the tragic events of the Bavarian Revolution took place.

On the fourth of April, or the previous day, the proletariat of Augsburg declared a general strike, demanding the proclamation in Bavaria of the Council Republic. They sent a delegate, by the name of Niekisch, to Munich, in order to incite the government to proclaim the Council Republic. The Munich government, composed of majority social democrats and independent socialists, was completely in agreement with the proposal and was prepared to form, along with the other tendencies of the proletariat, a Republic of Workers Councils after the Hungarian model. Some preliminary meetings were held that were attended by members of the R.A.R. and the government, where it was publicized that the counterrevolution sought to intervene in order to prevent Neurath's socialization plans from being implemented. The Communist Party was not present at these deliberations where the proclamation of the Council Republic was being debated, nor did they later send official representatives to take part in the proceedings. The gen-

this title as a result of his charming wit and his brilliant repartee. He sported an unkempt beard and a shock of wavy and disheveled hair, and when he appeared in cabarets the philistines and well-mannered citizens laughed at him, and he was pictured in all the caricatures as the specter of terror. Numerous anecdotes spread concerning his activities, and even though not all of them were true, they contributed to the fact that whenever a good bourgeois heard the name Mühsam he always associated it with something monstrous. We shall mention a couple of these anecdotes in order to show the kind of life he led:

Once, when a social democratic reporter at a workers congress told him, "But Erich, you have such a nice clean collar today", he responded without missing a beat: "That does not matter, young fellow, when one's heart is dirty". With this riposte he tore the disguise from bourgeois morality: behind its beautiful words it generally conceals the most crass egoism, behind the clean shirt is a dirty heart. But the man remains the same; a villain is not ennobled when he tries to hide his villainy behind a well-groomed appearance. This was the meaning of his laconic response.

After the publication of his first play, "*Die Hochstapler*", he wrote the satiric piece entitled, "*Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung*". Before he was scheduled to give a public reading of this play in 1909 in Berlin, Mühsam wrote a letter to the *Nationalzeitung* about the upcoming event:

"Erich Mühsam, the well-known poet, whose lifestyle, it would seem, has definitively set the standard for the popular concept of the literary gypsy for the Berlin scene, has proven to be even more in love with the theater than was previously believed. His first work, "*Die Hochstapler*" has now been followed by another.... It is about the grotesque transformation of a pastor whose well-grounded existence is turned upside down and debauches into a life of adventure. It will remind you a little of the great "Professor Unrat" of Heinrich Mann. Mühsam has read this play before a circle of artists and has met with many signs of approval.

Now we must see whether or not the public will like this daring erotic-burlesque piece."

Throughout the pre-war years Mühsam was a contributor to the magazine, *Morgen*, a German journal devoted to culture, edited by professor Werner Sombart, Richard Strauss, and the great historian Georg Brandes, and to which the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal frequently contributed. On the occasion of the Eulenburg-Maximilian Harden affair, a scandalous trial that caused almost as much a stir in Germany as the Dreyfus Affair did shortly before in France, Mühsam openly took the side of the famous publicist Harden and wrote a pamphlet defending him with the title, "*Die Jagd auf Harden*", in which he allowed his anarchist convictions to be revealed. In this pamphlet he condemns the two-faced morality of bourgeois society and advocates a free, but responsible, morality. Maximilian Harden, the most important and most brilliant publicist in Germany, reported on certain goings-on in the immediate entourage of the German Emperor in his magazine *Zukunft*. He wrote about the personal friends of Wilhelm II, the prince Eulenburg and the Count Moltke and about their "Liebenberg Round Table", focusing in particular on the male friendships of these personalities and shedding a unique light on them. There were various trials that brought to light accounts of homosexuality and perjury, after which Harden was sentenced to several months in prison, although he never spent a day in prison. In his pamphlet on this case, the thirty-year old Mühsam depicted morality as the tacit agreement of the vast majority concerning the limitations of their common interests; a majority that, on the basis of its physical power, is called the totality. That which is in conflict with the feelings and the will of the masses is immoral. The will of the majority has created resources for its imposition and to ensure its unconditional authority. These resources are the public rules and prescriptions along with their functionaries of Church and State. These are the written laws, the orders, the ordinances, the punishments with their officials of God and King, priests, policemen and politicians. Mühsam defended the

class, until its influence declined as that of the Communist Party increased.

The government was in the hands of the social democrats, who, in following the directives of the national Social Democratic Party, called for the convocation of a National Assembly. Eisner, the prime minister, was afraid, however, that the R.A.R. would offer resistance to the elections to the National Assembly, and ordered twelve well known members of the R.A.R. and the Communist Party to be arrested on January 10, 1919, among whom were Erich Mühsam and Leviné, the leader of the Communist Party in Munich. As a result of these arrests, Kurt Eisner suffered a loss of prestige in the eyes of the workers of Munich; but he did not thereby gain the confidence of the bourgeoisie. Eisner was a pacifist and opposed German chauvinism and militarism. This was why he was later assassinated by Count Arco. This time, however, Eisner had to yield before the pressure of the masses of workers and released the prisoners. Eisner was assassinated on February 20, 1919. This was a signal for the proletariat to proceed with more radical measures than it had previously employed against the counterrevolutionaries. The reputation of the council republic was increasing daily, but it was incapable of consolidation. The Congress of Councils was composed of representatives of all the tendencies of the proletariat and when on February 28 a proposal largely drafted by Mühsam was submitted that called for the proclamation of the Bavarian Council Republic, it won the support of only 70 delegates, against 234 opposed. The Congress instead voted to recognize the Diet, where the social democrats held a majority.

In opposition to the demands of the revolutionary workers of Munich, a conference was convoked on March 7 by the Independent Social Democrats of Berlin in alliance with the right wing socialists and the moderate Peasant League; this conference adopted a compromise solution in order to satisfy all sectors.

"That was when the struggle of the radicals against the moderates, of the revolutionaries against the social democrats, began…."

The revolution broke out in Munich two days before it did in Berlin, on November 7, 1918. A council of workers and soldiers was formed that constituted the strongest bulwark of the Bavarian revolution until April 1919. The social democrats immediately formed a government in which Kurt Eisner was named as prime minister. The Council of revolutionary workers had reserved the right to cooperate in government affairs, and on the second day of its existence Mühsam was admitted to its ranks and shortly thereafter so was Gustav Landauer, both of whom were well known even before the war as anarchists. Later, at the initiative of the Council of Revolutionary Workers (the "R.A.R."), a workers Council was formed after elections held among the factory councils. Throughout the country elections were held for the Councils of workers, peasants and soldiers. The Workers Council of Munich resolved, at its first session, under the influence of libertarian elements, not to admit paid party or trade union officials into its ranks. This was a blow against the social democratic party and the reformist trade unions, and as the events unfolded the disagreements between the various currents of the proletariat became more pronounced. The members of the R.A.R. belonged for the most part to the Independent Social Democratic Party. The proletariat was divided as follows: first, the members of the Social Democratic Party; second, the supporters of the Independent Social Democratic Party; third, those who supported the Communist Party; and fourth, the anarchist tendency, which had no organization behind it. The Communist Party did not exist until the outbreak of the Revolution, but was formed over the course of the revolutionary events. At first, the future communists were active in the Spartacist League. Erich Mühsam formed, together with some of his comrades, a League of Revolutionary Internationalists of Bavaria, which, during the early stage of the revolution, won the sympathies of the great masses of the working

independence of the personality and embraced Harden's statement about sexual morality: "The concept of publicly controllable honor stops at the navel; what happens below that point, is nobody else's business, whether of right or left". In the face of this great trial of behavior and scandal Mühsam proclaimed, in his own inimitable style, complete "genital freedom", and thus rejected the property-based morality of capitalist society in the field of love as well.

During the strike of the Berlin communications workers in the fall of 1932, Mühsam met with the editorial committee of a major Berlin daily newspaper, and asked the editors: "Gentlemen, do you know who has organized the first strike in the communications industry?…" Since he did not obtain a response, Mühsam told them: "It's simply Lisistrata", and he left amidst the derisory laughter of the editors.

The period of the rise to bourgeois respectability of the social democracy was simultaneously a chapter in the decline of revolutionary ideas in the German workers movement. The anarchists and localists, and then the syndicalists, were too weak to prevent the stagnation of the workers movement. When the Eulenburg scandal of the German Emperor's entourage was made public, it was not the social democracy that assumed the leadership of the struggle against a bestial system. It was the great publicist of the German Empire, Maximilian Harden, who was in the vanguard of the struggle with his magazine, *Zukunft*. When Harden was persecuted because of his articles and put on trial, it was Mühsam who would break his knightly lances for Harden, writing the pamphlet, *Die Jagd auf Harden*, which first appeared in 1908. With this pamphlet, Mühsam first made his name among the public as a brilliant political publicist, who attracted not only the sympathies of all men of liberal thought, but also the attention of the police and judicial authorities.

It was during this period that Mühsam became a very close friend of Landauer. The latter, like Mühsam, was a distinguished author, and was linked by the strongest bonds to the proletariat.

He had already spent two decades in the struggle for libertarian socialism. Besides his literary activity, Landauer was primarily occupied with propaganda for the anarchist ideology among the German proletariat. Mühsam discovered in him a comrade in arms and a friend, to whom he remained faithful until Landauer's tragic end. Mühsam was an anarchist by sentiment and by his inveterate instinct for freedom even before he was exposed to anarchist ideas. The social democratic party and the trade unions were too encumbered by the weight of bureaucracy for Mühsam to join them. He rejected the idea of the necessity of the State; he thought parliamentarism was corrupting and harmful; he fought against militarism. With views like these there was no place at all for him in the ranks of the State-approved social democracy. Instead, he was much more interested in the dissidents in all fields and he was always closer to their way of thinking. When Gustav Landauer read his speech in 1909 that would later became famous under the name of *For Socialism*, Mühsam was one of Landauer's first and most enthusiastic supporters. What Landauer had been telling the German proletariat thirty-five years ago was not delivered from outside the proletariat. Landauer had lived for more than twenty years in the workers movement and that was where he carried on his struggle; it was the understanding derived from twenty years of experience that resonated in him and gave him the right and the duty to speak and to issue the appeal for socialism. Mühsam had several years of experience in the spiritual circle of the same ideas that Landauer was proclaiming, and would remain one of the most brilliant spokespersons for the Landauerian interpretation of socialism.

Landauer used the word socialism, but he gave it a completely different, libertarian meaning. Anarchy was for him the negative part, the negation of the current forms of rule of society that are expressed in the form of the State and capitalism and are maintained with the help of a system of centralized oppression and exploitation. These forms must be overthrown and new, socialist forms

the steps at Theresienwiese. There, only Eisner and Auer spoke. The first, against the war; the second, in favor of a demonstration for peace. Mühsam shouted only one word: 'Revolution!' To which Eisner and Auer responded: 'Do not allow yourselves to be provoked by these words'. And the proposal of the social democrats to meet on November 7 at the Theresienwiese for a demonstration against national defense and for peace was accepted. On that day, there was not one single business in all of Munich that was open. Bourgeois and workers gathered at the Theresienwiese in vast crowds. Auer and Eisner spoke. A peaceful demonstration marched towards Friedensengel. While the two speakers were addressing the crowds, a wounded sailor appeared, unfurled an enormous red flag, and shouted: 'Long live the revolution!'. Erich, some of our friends and I were struck dumb by the apparition of this sailor. 'Let's go with him,' Mühsam said, 'these people are the traitors to the fatherland'. And we joined this revolutionary sailor. In the sea of humanity we lost contact with the sailors. We went with our friends in the demonstration towards Maximilianstrasse…. We arrived at the Türkenkaserne barracks, where the king's personal regimental guard was stationed. There, we were once again joined by our sailors. They now had a truck and their huge flag. There were about ten of them. Mühsam climbed up into the truck and shouted: 'Bavaria is a republic! The king is dethroned!' And the soldiers, tired of the war, left their barracks. We went with this regiment from one barracks to another and all of them surrendered without a shot being fired. Our troop was received enthusiastically. The last barracks, which hosted the Second Infantry Regiment, put up a fight but had to surrender and Mühsam only later realized that it was a mistake to allow these men to remain neutral. While the revolutionary soldiers were besieging the barracks, Eisner was named prime minister at the Mäthaser beer-hall. Mühsam observed: 'We have provided the fireworks for the prime minister'."

Mühsam's text reflects only his own personal experiences. He wanted to vindicate himself with respect to the accusations that had been leveled against him by the communists and, with this purpose in mind, following the advice of one of his comrades in prison, he wrote this pamphlet and caused it be sent to Lenin, who, as Mühsam points out, acknowledged its receipt and read it. The pamphlet is worth reading and is essential for anyone who wants to get an idea of the conditions that led to the proclamation of the Bavarian Council Republic.

Since this analysis is aimed at non-German readers, whom we must assume cannot read German, we would like to provide a brief summary of the situation in Bavaria up to the moment of the proclamation of the Council Republic.

Mühsam's companion wrote the following about those days:

"In 1918, when the first strikes broke out among the munitions workers, Mühsam was called upon one morning in March by the workers at the Krupp works and cheerfully welcomed: 'Erich, come to speak to the workers in the munitions factories'. He enthusiastically accepted the offer. Mühsam, Eisner, Fechenbach and Unterleitner, who was a metalworker at Krupp, spoke at the various factories and led a demonstration. Eisner was arrested, along with Fechenbach and Unterleitner. Then Mühsam organized a march to the police station with the anarchist Sondheimer in order to free the prisoners. On the following day, Mühsam and Sondheimer were arrested at their homes and transported to forced labor at Traunstein, where they would remain until November 5, 1918. Eisner had already been released from prison on November 3."

"There was a rally at Trefler (in Munich), where professor Max Weber, from Heidelberg, was to speak in favor of national defense. Erich was allowed to address the crowd first. He shouted, 'Down with the war! We demand peace!', etc. We led the crowd to Hackerkeller. There, Eisner spoke. Auer addressed other crowds at other locations. Because the place was so crowded it was resolved, despite the winter conditions, that the orators would speak from

must be put in their place. For him, socialism was the positive part; it means the libertarian reconstruction of human society. Of particular value in Landauer's *For Socialism* was his critique of Marxism, a Marxism that cloaked itself in classical forms and which is still accepted by the deceived social democratic workers.

Landauer called for the formation of socialist leagues. These leagues must once and for all put an end to the eternal cooperation in parliaments, to the capitalists and to the State; they must declare war on all of capitalist society in every domain of social life, simultaneously situating themselves outside of capitalist life and really devoting themselves to the construction of the socialist way of life.

Erich Mühsam formed a local chapter of Landauer's Socialist League in Munich, as we have already mentioned. The conferences it held addressed the outcasts of society, the lowest ranks of the proletariat, and preached to them their right to live, which society had taken from them. These conferences were deemed as subversive of the authoritarian public social order and the public prosecutor's office filed charges against Mühsam. At that time the song of the general strike was on everybody's lips, and the general strike is still very much alive today among the revolutionary proletariat of Germany. It was accompanied by the melody of the French song: "*Nous ne voulons ni Dieu ni maître*", but it had its own words. At a time when the German workers movement was debating for and against the general strike, Mühsam put his hand to his lyre and sang for the German proletariat the song that will always echo and would be like a manifesto in favor of the general strike.

His magazine, *Kain* (1911-1914) was intended to express the struggle against a social order that, according to him, had originated in the generation of Cain. Every issue was written entirely by him alone. The subtitle of the magazine is: "No collaborators are desired. All articles come from the pen of the editor." This monthly magazine was devoted to criticism of society, the theater and art. But it was not just critical; it also propagated anarchist

ideas. It had the advantage of being sold in all the news kiosks and bookstores at the train stations and had a large readership, composed of people who would have never otherwise even considered reading anarchist essays. The originality, the spirit and the humor of the editor and his fame as a theater critic and as a satirical poet spread throughout Germany; Erich Mühsam found a place in the German literary and ideological world. After a decade of activity, he had not just become well known, but he had contributed no small amount to the spread of anarchist ideas to a much broader audience than would have been possible without his magazine.

It was in this spirit that Mühsam acted as a troublemaker and inexorably exposed, with his mordant criticism, the evils of the capitalist social order right up to the outbreak of the war. *Kain* was forced to suspend publication in July 1914. His views had not changed, as did those of so many of his literary colleagues. He remained faithful to his ideals and attempted to continue the struggle against militarism during the war. But he encountered a world of incomprehension. At first he stood alone, in constant contact with a few anarchist friends, especially with Gustav Landauer. Later, when the world war still refused to end, the discontent against the rulers grew and he found comrades who fought by his side. He wanted to convince a number of famous personalities to take part in an action for peace. The police were informed of his plans, however, and as a result he was kept under constant police surveillance until the end of the war.

But the fronts collapsed in 1918, and with this collapse the revolution came, and for Mühsam it was a new stage of his activity, a new chapter of struggle in his tempestuous life.

Mühsam and the Bavarian Council Revolution

During the war Mühsam had tried to convince various left wing personalities to join a movement calling for peace without indemnifications or sanctions. As a result of this activity he was finally arrested. When the Russian Revolution took place, he passionately declared his support for the revolutionary workers and peasants of Russia. He was confident that a revolution in Germany would put an end to the butchery of the war. And he worked to bring this revolution about, sensing that it was an irresistible force.

A complete history of the German revolution has yet to be written; nor has a history of the Bavarian council republic been written, which was one of the most important and significant chapters of that revolution. The accounts we possess originated from the camp of the reactionaries, the social democrats or the communists. Unfortunately, the libertarian socialists and the anarchists who participated in the Bavarian revolution have written no historical works.

It is therefore most gratifying that comrade Mühsam, who was one of the most active individuals in the Bavarian revolution, has spoken of his experiences during the revolutionary period or, as he says, he provided an "eyewitness report of the events from Eisner to Leviné".

Erich Mühsam was declared guilty of high treason on July 12, 1919 by the Munich court and condemned to fifteen years imprisonment. On December 20, 1924, he was released from the prison at Niederschönenfeld; his sentence had been commuted to eight years and he was released on parole for the next three years. On July 14, 1928, the national amnesty law took effect. Mühsam was released from the terms of his parole and the Bavarian Justice Ministry was forced to return to him the materials that it had held until then. Mühsam thus regained possession of his manuscripts, among which was the one that we shall utilize for the account that follows.

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Augustin Souchy
Mühsam, Erich: His life, his work, his martyrdom
1934

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Translated from the original Spanish edition: Originally published in Spanish: Souchy, Augustin. *Erich Mühsam: su vida—su obra—su martirio*, Barcelona: Guilda de amigos del libro, 1934. This translation is based on: Souchy, Augustin. *Erich Mühsam: su vida, su obra, su martirio*. Valencia: Ateneo Libertario Al Margen, 1999. In German: Erich Mühsam. *Sein Leben, sein Werk, sein Martyrium*. Trotzdem Verlag, Grafenau 1984. ISBN 3-922209-53-X.

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Erich Mühsam and Soviet Russia

The Communist Party of Germany and its representatives had presented Erich Mühsam as a semi-communist and semi-bolshevik. It cited his friendly relations towards the Bolsheviks during the Bavarian Council Revolution, and the declarations in which Mühsam, from behind bars, had made in 1920 in defense of the Soviet Republic, as well as the fact that Mühsam had been a member of the Red Aid organization for years.

If Mühsam often had to defend himself against communist calumnies while he was alive, after his death, when he was no longer able to defend himself, the calumnies directed against him were sure to continue.

Mühsam's attitude towards Soviet Russia was, during the first years of the Russian Revolution, strictly connected with his activities in the Bavarian Council Revolution. During the latter revolution, and for six years afterwards, when Mühsam was imprisoned in the fortresses of Bavaria, his impressions of the situation in Russia were confused by a lack of accurate knowledge. This same circumstance was repeatedly encountered in his magazine, *Fanal*, and on many other occasions. When the communist Paul Werner wrote a pamphlet about the Bavarian Council Republic, which depicted the conduct of Mühsam and Landauer in a false light, Mühsam felt obliged to respond. While in prison he wrote a "personal report" that he sent to Lenin, so that the latter could judge his conduct and that of Landauer. Muhsam wrote the following concerning this episode in his magazine, *Fanal*, Volume 3, Issue No. 7, in 1929:

"It was tacitly agreed that Lenin should be the judge of whether, during the decisive days of April 4-12 of 1919, the conduct of the Communist Party led by Leviné or that of the anarchists, that is, the conduct of Landauer and myself, was more advisable from a revolutionary perspective. This is why my report was prefaced with the notice, 'For the edification of the creator of the Russian Soviet Republic, in the hands of comrade Lenin'. Concerning the inter-

nal struggles among the revolutionaries in Russia itself, in 1920, not even the least news had reached my cell, so that at that time it was in my view entirely understandable to enthusiastically acknowledge Lenin as the representative of the Soviet system, since I had not even the least idea of that system having been falsified as the dictatorship of the party. In any event, Lenin—whether he was informed by way of my report or by other means—did not declare his support for the tactics of the Bavarian communists." Mühsam also said, later in the same article: "The Russia of the present [1929], which prevents free elections to the Councils and restricts the rights of the Councils, has not even preserved the appearance, but only the words, Soviet Republic." Concerning his exculpatory report of 1920, Mühsam says in the same article, nine years later:

"Today there is no need to justify the conduct of the Bavarian anarchists to the party communists, but there is a need to respond to the objections that some anarchist comrades themselves might make in the name of our general libertarian principles. To take an example at random: in my report there are expressions that might seem strange. My own interpretations of that time casually utilize such terms as communist, spartacist or bolshevist. It would be good to not confer such an excessive value on the words, but to examine the matter in depth. During the period of the revolution these concepts were mixed together and confused. The label, 'communist', did not at that time mean a member of the communist party, and I think that an anarchist communist today would not cease to be a communist just because a Marxist party has appropriated the name. In 1916, the word, 'Bolshevik', did not yet have the strictly organizational meaning it has today; it meant for us, simply, support for the slogan: 'All Power to the Councils', which since the revolution of October 1917 had been propagated as the basic Bolshevik demand, and which the anarchists accepted and still accept. Today the word, 'Bolshevik', undoubtedly belongs to those who employ it as the name of a party; these are the same people who no longer want to know anything about the unifying formula of the revo-

lution: 'All Power to the Councils', and in its place wave the flag of a 'Workers and Peasants Government' over the proletarian future. As for the name 'Spartacist', it was, since November 1918, the characteristic catchall word for the rebellion that ensued in Germany. It had originally denominated Liebknecht's group and the groups of independent revolutionaries during the war that had created the organization entirely spontaneously and voluntarily, but it was afterwards used by the bourgeoisie and the social democrats as an expression for everything they found disturbing. Spartacus was the terror of the bourgeoisie, and hence a title of honor for the revolutionary. This must be recalled, in light of the fact that today, both by party communists as well as anarchists, there has been an attempt to transfer to the past the limitations of the concepts that have long since been imprinted with distinctive meanings. In the exciting period of the revolution in progress, to call someone a spartacist, a Bolshevik, a communist or anarchist was just a way to call that person a revolutionary, and that is as it should be, because the revolution brings about unity."

"Something different would happen with the expression, 'dictatorship of the proletariat'…. The regime of Stalin in Russia, which is distinct in a social sense, but not with regard to political methods, from fascism, is expressly acknowledged by the supporters of that system as the dictatorship of the proletariat. If Landauer, I and the other anarchist participants in the Bavarian Revolution had proclaimed that we were in favor of a similar slogan, if we had approved of it or consented to it without resistance, then the reproach that we had abandoned the principles of anarchist thought would have been justified. But nothing was farther from our intentions than to understand the governmental power of a clique as the dictatorship of the proletariat. We used the word as it reflected the content that results from the demand: 'All Power to the Councils'. But we could not renounce the word, because the revolutionary masses assumed it as the formula of their class rights and we would not have been understood if we had attempted to dissuade them from

doing so. Once, when Landauer presented clear demands for the securing of the revolutionary process at the Congress of Councils, a social democrat shouted: 'This is pure dictatorship!', and Landauer replied: 'Yes, it is the dictatorship of the revolution'. The formula, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' never meant anything else to us than the violent safeguarding of the revolution against attack and the suppression of the defeated power, measures that the proletarian class needs if it does not want to abandon its victory without a struggle. It was in this sense that I used the word, and this has unfortunately caused me to lose precious friends. But I declare that with regard to this matter nothing has changed as far as I am concerned. I still believe today in the need for revolutionary decrees, dictated by the proletariat's councils, in order to deprive the bourgeoisie of the pleasure of the counterrevolution. I still believe today in the need for revolutionary Committees that, as in Bakunin's manifesto of September 26, 1870 for the Commune of Lyon, 'exercise all power under the direct control of the people'. It was this state of affairs that we anarchists sought to bring about when we proclaimed the Council Republic, the Council Dictatorship, which we called, in conformance with the usage of the proletarians, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. After the subsequent events in Russia unfortunately justified all the fears expressed by the anarchists over the previous decades regarding the social democratic agitation in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and since this term has, in the consciousness of broad sectors of the revolutionary proletariat, acquired the meaning of party dictatorship, under whose authority the proletariat must remain, it is clear that the expression, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' no longer means what we would have liked it to mean."

In order to provide the most effective support for the comrades who were still suffering in the prisons and fortresses, Mühsam, after he was released from prison in 1925, thought that the best way to do so was to join the Red Aid association. He spent four years as a member of this supposedly non-party organization, until he be-

martyr for freedom. His spirit was strong and flexible; like a steel bullet on a stone pavement, that was how his genius deflected every surface impact and all contact with the enemy. What uniquely distinguished him was his steady character. A master of language, poet of the highest rank and a great writer, he did not want to have authority over anyone. Gifted with cutting spiritual weapons, he knew well that the struggle for the abolition of the powers of oppression and exploitation was still difficult and would cost many victims. And he was one of the noblest victims of all.

In Mühsam, the international anarchist movement lost a combatant and a representative who, despite his age, despite his past sufferings and the marks they left in him, fought at our side. Mühsam's life was an example and a model for us all. We shall honor his memory by making a commitment to continue to fight for the liberation of the oppressed and the exploited, as he did.

came convinced that it was not a non-party organization at all, but a branch of the Communist Party, and he submitted his resignation. In a letter dated January 18, 1929 addressed to the president of Red Aid, he set forth his reasons for leaving the organization. The most decisive one was that Red Aid was then seeking to engage in a fund raising campaign for the central organ of the Communist Party of Germany. He went on to say: "Because of my participation on the committees and on behalf of Red Aid, I have attracted a great deal of hostility among revolutionary circles; I have exposed my views for years at a time to the most serious misunderstandings; but I endured all of this for the comrades who are hoping, as the victims of class justice in the prisons and fortresses, for the solidaric cooperation of all working class organizations."

For those comrades who were still in the prisons, Mühsam spent four years as a member of Red Aid, until he finally felt that he had to resign.

But it was not when he quit the German Red Aid society, but after he was released from prison and became aware of the fact that the revolutionaries were persecuted in Russia, that he worked on behalf of their liberation and demanded that the Soviet Government release all the revolutionary combatants of October. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, the Moscow evening newspaper, "*Wetscherniaya Moskwa*", asked him to submit an article in commemoration of the event, and he wrote a letter to this newspaper in which he said:

"On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Revolution of October, all my sentiments and desires are passionately devoted to the revolutionary workers and peasants of the Russia of the Soviets. My greatest desire is that the spirit of fraternity should also find an external expression by a decree of complete and unconditional amnesty for all the imprisoned, exiled and persecuted revolutionaries, regardless of what group or party they belong to, since in October 1917, they were part of the proletariat, under the red flag and with the slogan, 'All Power to the Soviets', and all of them helped

to defeat the bourgeoisie. The revolutionary proletariat would be gratified if, by means of an amnesty for the anarchists, syndicalists, maximalists, left social revolutionaries and supporters of the workers opposition, a conflict which has rendered all the aspirations for the unity of the proletarians impossible and has hindered the struggle for the liberation of the proletarian political prisoners in the capitalist State, could thereby be overcome."

Mühsam devoted all his energy to the liberation of the Russian revolutionaries in Soviet Russia. When various left wing revolutionary organizations in Germany formed a joint committee on the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution for the purpose of bringing about the liberation of the Russian combatants of October, Erich Mühsam and the anarchist association he founded were in the front line of its activities. He spoke at various meetings and demanded in the press, with his powerful pen, that all the revolutionary combatants should be released. And he worked with special ardor for the liberation of the well-known social revolutionary Maria Spiridonova.

The claims made by the communists that Mühsam had been very close to Soviet Russia are, as can be deduced from his own writings, nothing but mystifications. Mühsam was, like all anarchists, an enemy of the Bolshevik State, but he was a defender of the Russian Revolution.

The anarchist thought of Mühsam and his concept of life

Although he had been publicly advocating anarchist ideas since the turn of the century, he did not present a detailed exposition of his anarchist views until November 1932, when he published "*Die Befreiung der Gesellschaft vom Staat*". It was by no means a sign of weakness in the brilliant author and critical spirit that he had not previously written any anarchist propaganda pamphlets. His

his treatment, Mühsam told him: 'Don't bother; go play a game of chess; that would be better.'"

It is not possible to go into details about all the tortures to which Mühsam was so brutally subjected. At the Oranienburg concentration camp, the last camp to which he was sent, his situation did not improve. It was there that he would be murdered. On the great night of murders of July 31, 1934, Hitler wanted to liquidate those friends of his that were too close to him as well as his enemies. The SA troopers were no longer trustworthy enough for Hitler. Even though they had tortured Mühsam and thousands of other victims, they knew too much and still had faith in national socialism. They were therefore dissolved by the SS units, Hitler's private guard corps. These individuals, bought by Göring for the purpose of tormenting the prisoners, murdered Mühsam on the night of July 9. According to one of the comrades in the prison, they put a rope around his neck and twisted it until he was strangled. The news broadcast by the national socialist press that he had committed suicide is a lie. Shortly before his murder, Mühsam told his companion, on the occasion of one of her visits: "Whatever happens, do not believe them if they say I committed suicide."

Erich Mühsam's Calvary in the Third Reich is as shocking an ordeal as one can imagine. Not since the times of the middle ages and the bonfires of the Inquisition, has a man been persecuted and tortured for his ideas as the national socialists treated their victims, especially Erich Mühsam, who, not only due to his life and his achievements, but especially because of the suffering he endured, has become a heroic figure for the international proletariat. He will be remembered and he will be spoken of with respect and admiration while the memory of his murderers will be accursed by all of humanity. He died like a knight of freedom, as a sincere and rebellious combatant. He was a spokesperson, fearless and unblemished, for the oppressed and the persecuted; a brave militant in the proletarian struggle for freedom; a powerful herald of libertarian socialism and anarchism, and he was, above all, a valiant

get those eyeglasses?' He spent eight days like this in the prison without any medical treatment. Then he was sent to the infirmary. Shortly before he was taken away, he said to me: 'You know: death does not frighten me. But this slow murder, it is horrible.'"

Another prisoner at the Brandenburg camp recounted how a monkey had escaped from a traveling circus and found his way into the concentration camp. The prisoners adopted the animal, and played with him, especially Mühsam, who was a great lover of animals. In order to torture Mühsam, the guards tormented the monkey and then shot him right before Mühsam's eyes.

Eleven different prisoners who were incarcerated with Mühsam made declarations before witnesses and submitted written reports concerning the shocking tortures to which Mühsam was subjected in the various prisons and concentration camps. Every day Mühsam endured martyrdom, but world opinion remained silent. None of the tens of thousands of prisoners detained in the concentration camps underwent the same terrible tortures that were inflicted on Mühsam.

Mühsam's companion, who had always bravely stood by his side, left Germany after his murder and wrote an article in *Aufruf*, a magazine published in Prague by the League for Human Rights, regarding Mühsam's last days:

"When, for example, in January of this year (1934) he was expressly allowed to receive hot coffee, an SA trooper yanked the thermos out of my hand and said these words: 'Halt! You won't be taking any of this liquor to that filthy Jew.' It causes me a great deal of pain to write about the inhuman way they tortured Erich. How they broke his thumbs, how they spit in his mouth, how they made him eat dirt, etc. Many of his comrades in prison visited me after they were freed, and haltingly described Mühsam's unbreakable spirit. When Erich once again returned to his comrades covered with blood and semi-conscious, after one of the sadistic torture sessions, and one of his indignant comrades wanted to complain about

work took the form of poems and articles of various lengths, essays in literary magazines, speeches broadcast on the radio or at public meetings. He advocated the anarchist view of the world in hundreds of magazine articles and took advantage of every opportunity to reveal new variations of the goals and methods of the anarchist struggle. There were always special cases or collective phenomena to which he would refer, and he would use these instances to illustrate all the aspects of anarchist thought to oppose the current social order or the state socialist ideas of the Marxists.

Mühsam's anarchist literature was unlike that produced by all other anarchist writers, especially because he does not quote this or that theoretician to support the correctness of his views in contrast to those of other anarchist thinkers. He sketched his depiction of anarchist ideology, which each person may add to or subtract from according to his inclination and by the reading of which he may fortify or challenge his own convictions.

For Mühsam, anarchism is the doctrine of freedom as the basis of human society. "He who raises the freedom of the personality to the category of a lever for the entire human community, and who, conversely, makes the freedom of society equivalent to the freedom of all those human beings who are linked to it in community, has the right to call himself an anarchist. He who believes, however, that men must be subject—whether for the purposes of order, or of society, or of the alleged individual freedom—to external coercion, has no right to call himself an anarchist."

By communism Mühsam understands the social relation based on the community of goods, which allows each person to work according to his abilities and to consume according to his needs. He believed that this economic form provided a more secure guarantee of the basic socialist demand for equal rights for all the members of society than collectivism or mutualism, which seek to establish a standard of equivalence for the common share of the products in relation with the labor performed. Mühsam did not take a position vis-à-vis the various schools of the socialist or anarchist

movements. He was of the opinion that libertarian socialism allows enough room for different possibilities. Only the experiments and experiences of the future, he maintained, will establish the proportions required by the free satisfaction of needs in relation to the particular properties of goods destined for personal consumption.

He did, however, resolutely distance himself from those who were exclusively "individualist anarchists", who saw egotistical advancement or the imposition of one's personality as the only means for the negation of the State and authority and rejected socialism and all social organization in general as oppression of the self-sufficient ego.

According to Mühsam, "socialism is, considered economically, a classless society, where the land and all the means of production are withdrawn from private control, and thus neither land rent nor entrepreneurial profit nor the surrender of labor power for a wage or salary, will deprive the hands and the brains of those who labor of the product of their efforts. Instead of private or State exploitation, there is the planned common administration with collective property; instead of the privileged minority of owners in each country, the totality united in the people, in all countries."

"Socialism is, besides an economic concept, a moral and spiritual value. For it not only means the rational regulation of labor, of distribution and consumption and therefore the satisfaction of all the natural needs of material life for all; it also means the satisfaction of that moral demand whose rejection constitutes a more serious injury to men and whose absence is more humiliating than hunger and any corporal privations: the demand for equal rights."

Socialism, for Mühsam, as for his mentor Landauer, is not only a problem of the satisfaction of physical hunger, but also a problem of a moral order. Anarchist socialism seeks the freedom of the personality and the equal right to existence for all, regardless of how much there is to share. The demand for equality indicates that, regardless of the existing quantity of material goods, they must all be distributed in an equitable manner. Either everyone has nothing, or

of the prison guards raised his fist again: 'You were in jail, were you, pig? Your masters put you in jail because they were afraid that you would be shot down in the street, and that is why you were leading the revolution from jail. Jewish pig!' Erich absorbed another punch. He fell onto the straw mattress. The prison guards surrounded him, punching and kicking him. Later they turned to us, and one of them said: 'Here you can see just how miserable the leaders you have followed are. Have you finally understood?' None of us said a word. We stood with our faces frozen in anxiety. The prison guards straightened up their uniforms and left. The iron doors creaked."

"One evening, the doors creaked again: 'Mühsam, get out here; we have to cut your hair.' We could hear Mühsam protesting through the Judas and through the door. To no avail. When he returned, he was completely disfigured. His head was bald and part of his beard had been shaved. It was very hard to make oneself understood when one talked to Mühsam. His hearing had been impaired as a result of all the beatings he had received."

"The 24th of October was a horrible day. In the evening, we heard it again: 'Jews, get out here!' Through the iron doors, we heard blows delivered with regular frequency. After an hour, our four Jews returned. But Mühsam was still outside. One told me: 'First we had to play like children, and we had to poke each other with our fingers; then we had to hit each other with our hands. Generally, we faked the blows, but when the prison guard noticed this, he said: 'That is not how it is done. You have to do it like this.' And he hit Mühsam in the face as hard as he could. We had to imitate him. A half hour later, Mühsam returned, staggering. His face was bruised and swollen. His eyes were bloodshot. When the prison guards left, he fell on his straw mattress. We tried to help him. 'Those pigs spit in my mouth.'"

"On the following day, his left ear was enormously swollen, and his ear canal had a large blister. Both of his eyes were black and blue, and bloodshot. The guards taunted him: 'Where did you

the morning, shortly after we awoke, and we heard the cry, 'Jews, get out here!', he had to get his sponge and bucket. His body was battered from long years in prison. He was hard of hearing. He could hardly bend over. We soon became aware of his condition and squabbled among ourselves for the right to do his work; but this was to no avail. When the prison guards saw this, he was reassigned more work and had to wash the stairwells again. If he did not work fast enough, they kicked him."

"One night, we heard the hinges on the iron doors creak again: 'Attention! Everyone on their feet!' Two prison guards appeared. 'Mühsam, front and center!' One of the prison guards, a big fellow with broad shoulders, had a copy of *Arbeitertums* in his hand. 'Mühsam, here is an article about you.' And then he addressed the rest of us: 'You have an important figure among you! Mühsam, where were you in 1919? In Munich? Weren't you some kind of government minister?' Erich Mühsam stood before the prison guard and spoke calmly. 'In 1919 I was a member of the Executive Committee of the Munich Council Republic.' The prison guard retorted: 'And what did you do there?' Mühsam answered, 'I was trying to make the proletarian revolution.' 'Stupidity!', the guard shouted, and punched Mühsam in the face. The other guard gave Mühsam another punch. 'Twenty-two hostages, you pig; you had them shot.' Erich tripped over a bench and fell on a straw mattress. The guards fell upon him and continued to hit him. We stood still, clenching our fists and our teeth, and we had to be content with watching what happened. Experience had taught us that the most insignificant gesture would get us two weeks of punishment and put us in the hospital."

"The prison guards picked up Erich and roughly told him: 'Let's go, you won't die in this little hole.' One of them roared again: 'Is this how you did it in Munich?' One of Erich's eyes was bleeding. His voice quivered slightly. He spoke: 'When the twenty-two hostages were shot in Munich, the Social Democratic government that was in power at the time had already imprisoned me.' One

everyone has a little; in this way no one can be displeased. When, however, there is only a little of something to distribute, and it is unjustly distributed, some receiving much and others not enough to live, then injustice arises and the foundations of the moral order are shattered.

In this connection, Mühsam challenged the Marxists. The latter, Mühsam said, "are mistaken in their assumption that the intellectual and moral qualities of man mechanically arise from the economic forms of production, that the religious, juridical and scientific ideas of an era are nothing but an ideological superstructure of the materialist realities. In this regard there is an uninterrupted circulation, which does not allow for any differentiation in the order of succession. Capitalism needs spiritual conditions as much as material conditions in order to impose its rule on the peoples; it must placate the spirit of men by solicitous attention to their education and training so that they will endure the iniquity of exploitation and inequality as unalterable conditions of fate. Socialism also requires spiritual preparation for its realization, and for its justification, not just for providing material benefits to the majority of men, but also for its moral content. But this justification is only possible if socialism is acknowledged and demonstrated to be a spiritual value above and beyond its capacity for developing material values. The renovation of economic relations in socialism can only be effective under the sun of equal rights, with the simultaneous renovation of the moral relations between men; for only renovated moral relations are capable of creating a cohesive socialism in the economic domain from individualism and inequality."

Mühsam, as a defender of communist anarchism, by demanding economic equality as the foundation of the relations between men, considered the social transformation, in contrast to the doctrines of Marxism, which only have a material orientation, not as the single content of his aspiration, but as one of the ineluctable conditions for the vast social reconstruction that embraces all the relations of life. But Mühsam does not want to be understood as saying that

equality means simply equalization. It means: equal rights for all. He expressly admits that the capitalist mode of production leads to a particular kind of behavior for both capitalists and proletarians. "The Marxist formula, however, according to which man's existence determines his consciousness, as his existence is characterized by the economic state, is extremely debatable. The consciousness of man is determined by, in addition to material values, numerous impressions and sometimes receives from psychological motives the strongest stimulus even with regard to participation in capitalist affairs. Together with the conditions of production, the conditions that emanate from character may also play a role, or from one's spiritual characteristics, or one's connections with other people, the climate, and cosmic events; and conduct can be stimulated by sensations that originate in the moral sense independently of any form of production."

In opposition to Marxist arrogance, Mühsam said: "With logic alone and even with the scientifically gilded doctrine of historical materialism one does not refute the economic system of capitalism unless you fight it or replace it with a better system."

In Germany the majority of the workers believed in the theory, preached by the social democrats and communists, of historical materialism. This doctrine made capitalism into a socially necessary phenomenon, which cannot be arbitrarily dissolved, not at a particular moment by the workers, but only after a long series of regular ineluctable developments that lead towards socialism. All the non-Marxist propagandists and especially the anarchists and syndicalists had to fight against this theory, since its consequences exclude a voluntarist historical determination by the proletariat, even though these conclusions were especially rejected by the communists. Mühsam was also forced to criticize this doctrine. He did so in his pamphlet, as follows:

"From the development and action of capital a law is derived as if the institutions that men have created were conditioned by nature itself; this law is adorned with the pearls of philosophical

"'Out of pride and happiness, I bit my lips until they bled'."

"Uncle Bremer paused for a moment, then he continued:"

"'Yes, Peter, they can murder us and abuse us. They can destroy our families, imprison our mothers, daughters, fathers and sons; they can do anything they want to us, but they cannot rob us of our moral force and our convictions. In this respect we are superior, and this is the source of our strength; that is why, in the end, we shall be victorious and will march towards freedom and socialism.'"

Another comrade who was imprisoned with Mühsam recounts that the brown-shirted torturers wanted to force Erich Mühsam to sing the "Horst Wessel" song, and when he refused, he was beaten so savagely that he lost consciousness. During that night, however, he sang the battle song of the revolutionary proletariat, "The Internationale", in the mortal silence of the camp. He was dragged from his cell and beaten again until he had to be sent to the infirmary.

After he was released from the infirmary, he did not return to Sonnenburg, because the camp was decommissioned. Mühsam was then brought to the prison at Plötzensee, near Berlin. There, he was under the supervision of ordinary guards, and he was treated somewhat better. He was allowed to write in his diary and was not tortured. A comrade who was also held at Plötzensee wrote the following about Mühsam in an article that appeared in the communist newspaper, *Gegen Angriff*:

"I saw him for the first time at Plötzensee. Every day, after the second hour of recreation, which took place at ten, a solitary man walked with rapid steps across the great courtyard. His body was somewhat stooped, his hands behind his back. The guards were watching him. At times this man raised his head a little and looked at the row of barred windows, but then lowered it again and gave the impression of being deep in thought. 'That's Erich Mühsam', my cellmate said during the recreation period."

"At the beginning of September, we were transported to Brandenburg, to the old military prison. During the first three weeks, we hardly even knew we were in Brandenburg. When, early in

"'Mühsam did not even look at the man, he did not do him the dignity of looking at him. He was very far away in his own thoughts. On his lips, there was a smile.'"

"'Finish me off at once,' he said to the commander of the squad. 'My road has been a long one and I am tired'."

"'They had expected Mühsam to throw himself onto the ground, to beg for forgiveness and to plead for mercy. Instead, there he was standing before them, a man of unconquerable greatness.'"

"'Embittered and confused, they departed.'"

"'They brought Mühsam to the courtyard. The SA squad that was to carry out the execution was armed and ready. They loaded their rifles. Mühsam was stood up with his face to a wall. Above, the blue sky, where some little white clouds were gathered, which seemed like a herd of sheep in search of the protection of the shepherd against all danger. A murder of crows flew over the prison towards the north. Above, all was still free.'"

"'A storm trooper took a shovel and handed it to Mühsam, shouting:'"

"'Here! Take this shovel, you dirty Jew, and dig your own grave.'"

"'Mühsam took the shovel, carefully, as a mother would handle her baby. Then, with the handle firmly gripped in his hands he threw it at the legs of the storm trooper, ripped open his prison shirt, showing his bared breast, and shouted, so loud that you could hear him throughout the whole camp:'"

"'Here I am. Shoot, you dogs; but I don't have to dig my own grave.'"

"'He stood before the execution squad as their accuser. The SA troopers were silent; they were confused and did not know what to do.'"

"'Finally, the commander shouted an order. They returned Mühsam to his cell. As a result of his spiritual superiority and the strength of his soul, he had won'."

"'We heard steps coming down the hall, and the custodian closed the cover of the peephole.'"

knowledge and undeniable science, and to those who want to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism, it says: socialism cannot grow except on the very same basis as capitalism; materialism, which is the basic material of capitalism, must be recognized by historical materialism, and therefore as the basic material of every social order. The materialist interpretation teaches that capitalism can only be what it is, the expression of modern slavery, the depersonalization of man, the submission of the will to the mechanism of a purely economic activity, because, even when not theoretically, but practically, it makes material usefulness the lever of all social forces. But you socialists, say the Marxists, you are better than the capitalists because in addition you also have a theory: go and create socialism, and base your work on the materialist method!"

"Could a greater service be performed for the holders of capitalist power than such a doctrine offers? Is not everything morally justified when the socialists opt for the idea that is the basis for their accursed system, as the foundation of the world itself? The means for the destruction of a social edifice that is considered to be evil can be forced by its defenders into the hands of its attackers, just as a fight against armed opponents can only be undertaken with arms; but he who wants, for the construction of a new society, to use the stones of the destroyed one, will simultaneously build the new door through which the old spirit may return. Socialism has nothing in common with capitalism, neither with regard to its economic structure nor with regard to its ideological concepts. The fact that socialism must replace capitalism is not due to the practical and expedient logic of the economy, but due to the moral consciousness of thought. The hunger of the poor is revolting to us, but because it is unjust!"

"For the dogmatic Marxists this critique was like a red cape to the bull. Morality, justice, reciprocity, are for the Marxists 'idealist' demands which, according to their view, have nothing to do with the class struggle. The German Marxists condemned all appeals to

spirituality or morality. Socialism, according to them, comes, without moral concerns, from the economic process of development. You would have to be an anarchist to take into account the power of will, justice and other sources endowed in the moral essence of man!"

After having criticized historical materialism and after explaining the position of anarchism on man in relation to society and on the need for self-responsibility, Mühsam considers the principle of organization. He calls for a complete reform of the principles of organization in social and economic traffic. What he says in this regard is nothing new for an anarchist. He refers to the difference between the State and society and rightly criticizes the false formulations of the social democrats and communists who are always speaking of the "Class State", without realizing that every State is a Class State, even the so-called proletarian State.

"Speaking of a Class State", Mühsam said, "is like speaking of iron steel. The State is nothing else, it can be nothing but an executive centralist service of a separate class of the people for the domination of the disinherited and subjugated class of the people. The administrative state procedures therefore divide human society into a class society in order to protect the land and the means of production created by men as the private property of the privileged class. Only where the right of the masters exists in opposition to the right of the slaves, does the State make sense, does it find work to do. Only when the development of personal property reaches the stage where men are exploited, does the State appear. With the development of capitalism, which made the material principles of exploitation the center of man's whole life, the State constantly expanded the net of the laws, of coercive and surveillance measures, by means of which the proletariat is maintained in obedience to the privileged class. But, once again, it is the Marxist socialists who want to use, in addition to the materialist view of the world, the centralist form of organization, that typical sign of the capitalist

continued whenever there was a change of the guard. He was there for one week…."

Another prisoner, who managed to escape from this inferno, wrote a lengthy account of the abuse and mistreatment of the prisoners in the prisons and in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. This is what he said, under the pseudonym of Peter Cornelius, about Mühsam:

"'In the section where I was held, I was talking to a young comrade who was working as a custodian', uncle Bremer recalled. 'He was just coming down the corridor near my cell. The guard company was in the courtyard, drilling the prisoners. As a disabled war veteran, I was exempt from these exercises. There were no SA troopers or police present. All we heard was the shouts, the smacks and thuds of the blows and the barking of orders from the courtyard."

"'The custodian and I had become friends, and from him I found out everything that went on in the camp.'"

"'He came to the door of my cell, and sliding the cover off the peephole—what we called the 'Judas'—said, 'Listen, they want to make him go crazy, they want to shoot him. They tried, but he laughed at all of them and showed them that he was superior to them'."

"'I went to the peephole and asked him: 'Please tell me, who are you talking about, buddy?'"

"'Mühsam', he said, 'Erich Mühsam'."

"'I understood. He was a rock in the stormy sea to which one clings. He was a model for us all. We thought of him, at night during the pogroms, when the whips were cracking in the air, when the rubber truncheons were beating down on our backs, our arms and our feet.'"

"'It was at dawn', the custodian said. 'A squad of SA troopers entered his cell. The commander was in the lead; he read, with fierce gestures, an order that was a death sentence. According to the order, Mühsam was to be shot in half an hour.'"

and forced to march by the soldiers. One SA trooper pulled out his revolver and wanted to kill Mühsam on the spot, but he was prevented from doing so. Even the *Sonnenburger Anzeiger*, a national socialist newspaper, featured an article about how Mühsam was mistreated when he was brought to the concentration camp.

At the camp, a veritable hell began to unfold for Mühsam. Prisoners who had been released, or escaped, have reported on the martyrdom to which the prisoners were subjected. Foreign journalists have visited the camp; but the prisoners did not dare tell them anything, for they knew that their martyrdom would be much worse later if they did. Erich Mühsam suffered more than anyone else. One of his comrades in the prison wrote the following about Mühsam's Calvary:

"Almost sixty years old, very weak and with a very bad heart, he was forced to engage in the hardest forms of labor. He had to chop firewood, mop the floors, wash the windows, all of it under the 'personal attention' of the SA troopers. During the exercise periods, he was isolated from the group, humiliated, insulted, slapped and kicked. In my presence, he was beaten so badly in the cell that he fell to the floor and I thought that he had been killed. When a few comrades and I tried to pick up the unconscious man, we were prevented from doing so. The torturers went and found a bucket of water and dumped it on him to make him come around. This was in October and it was already very cold. Almost every time there was a change of the guard, he was called to the door, where he was slapped and abused. As a result of these repeated beatings, Mühsam went totally deaf. After one particularly serious beating, Mühsam wrote a letter of complaint to the commandant. This letter was brought to the block warden, who did not deliver it to the commandant, but instead forwarded it to the guard who had mistreated Mühsam. The guard commander came into our cell with the complaint in his hand and, infuriated, began to mistreat Mühsam again and forced him to withdraw the complaint. The beatings and abuse

State, as foundation for the construction of a society emancipated from capitalism."

After rejecting centralism and depicting federalism as a social network of groups and parts of the whole, as a community from the bottom up as a guarantee for the freedom of the personality, Mühsam attempts to prove that so-called State socialism, which is more properly called State capitalism, has nothing to do with real socialism.

"And it makes no difference at all that the State should be conquered by the proletariat so as to accommodate it, over the course of a gradual transformation, to socialist conditions of life, or that in the place of the State of private capitalism destroyed by the revolution another State will be created, in which state powers pass in advance over the heads of the consumers' demands, to which their consent is not given. Disposal over and use of their working energy.... A State is not overthrown but reinforced when the foundations upon which it is built are replaced. The foundations of the State are the capitalist class conditions, and it makes no difference that the class contradictions proceed from the private appropriation of the few of the land and the means of labor or are produced by the transfer of this appropriation to a selection of state representatives.... For those who work it makes no difference if the fruits of their labor end up in a corporation or if it is the State that takes the product of their labor. The outcome is for them the same: the product of their labor does not belong to them, and they benefit not from the product directly, but only from their receipt of a wage for its production. In the wages system nothing is changed in the least by the passage from private capitalism to State capitalism; but wage labor is itself characteristic of exploitation."

Mühsam marshaled his acute logical powers against the theory of the so-called transitional State between capitalism and socialism. He saw clearly the basis of the essence of the State and State power. "The 'state order' is based on the process of selling public services to separate employees for this goal of the totality. It was sought, af-

ter the fall of the capitalist social order, to establish socialism by the same means, to repeat the process that produced, in the division of social functions for the cultivation of the land and defense of the country, the oppression of those who labor by those who are armed, and with it the division of the people into classes and, as a result, the expropriation of the totality by the so-called fortified minority, exploitation, capitalism. Administration separated from the whole, just as when the war chiefs of the past became independent as a nobility and forced the people to accept a condition of servitude, would soon become an end in itself. The expropriation of private capital in favor of the State would certainly conduct the product of labor by other paths, but it would not diminish the dependence of those who work on the exploitative powers. State administration, bureaucracy, and the governmental apparatus will grow ever more monstrously; and because all rule has the inclination to develop into an irreplaceable and indissoluble enduring power, it will control all activity with educational and violent methods to cause the well-being of authority to appear to be the true well-being of all. At the end of this road is the patrimony of the bureaucracy, which necessarily implies the attribution of exploitation to the benefit of a higher class, that is, the complete reestablishment of private capitalism with only different groups of owners and new ways of expression to deceive the masses."

These anarchist considerations have been combated by the Marxists of all schools. Recently, Leon Trotsky has arrived at identical results. The latter pointed out, in some articles critical of Soviet Russia, that in Soviet Russia surplus value—which in the countries of private capitalism is consumed by the capitalists—is absorbed by the bureaucracy. With this claim Trotsky has not just pronounced a fatal judgment on Russian State Capitalism, but has also dealt a serious blow to the Marxist doctrine of the conquest of the State by the proletariat and of the dictatorship of the proletariat, making some concessions to anarchist thought. But in Trotsky this point

was at my house. We pleaded with him to stay that night with us, but he refused, because he did not want to unnecessarily worry his companion. This scruple would prove to be his undoing.

He had the train ticket for his trip in his wallet and he proudly showed it to me, because he was going to a city where they speak German, since he confessed he could not live very long in an environment where German was not spoken. For him, as a creator, the language in which he wrote his works was an indispensable vital element. It was the night of the burning of the Reichstag. We knew nothing of the terrible crime that was being staged by the national socialists at that very moment, a crime against the German people and against all of civilization. Mühsam went home to his apartment with the intention of catching the morning train for Prague. But two hours before the train was scheduled to depart, he was dragged out of bed by the police, arrested and brought to the Berlin police prison.

During the first few weeks after his arrest, he was held at the police prison in Berlin and then in preventive detention at the prison in Spandau. There, the prisoners were under ordinary penal administration; the guards were still republicans, who did not make distinctions in the way they treated the prisoners, so that Mühsam and the other political prisoners were not treated any worse than the other detainees. But this changed when Mühsam and a number of his other comrades in captivity were transported to the Sonnenburg concentration camp, which had previously been a military prison and was now being used as a concentration camp.

Mühsam was immediately subjected to brutal mistreatment by the Hitlerian guards who escorted him to the concentration camp (they were specially selected storm troopers). One prisoner, who was also sent in the same transport to Sonnenburg with Mühsam, recounted that Mühsam had to make the journey from the train station at Sonnenburg to the camp, carrying his suitcase, on foot, and at the same pace as the soldiers. When he faltered, and tripped and fell—he was shortsighted and hard of hearing—he was beaten

in the Hitlerian press so that the hordes would be able to recognize him and assassinate him should the opportunity arise. He would be one of the victims of the famous "Night of the Long Knives", the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre that German national socialism was planning.

The incitement to murder Mühsam was carried to the most extreme lengths by the daily newspaper, *Der Angriff*, whose chief editor at the time was the current minister of propaganda, which claimed that Mühsam was responsible for the shootings of hostages during the revolutionary events in Munich in 1919. This false allegation, which was first published in December 1932 in the national socialist press, was refuted by Mühsam's companion, who sent a letter of clarification to the press in which she proved that Erich Mühsam had already been arrested on April 13, 1919 by the Bavarian government, whereas the hostages were not shot until April 25. Mühsam was therefore in prison when the hostages were shot, and could not, of course, be held responsible for that action. The national socialist press persisted, however, in contradiction of all the evidence, to incite its readers to murder Mühsam. The entire national socialist press network, as well as the SA and SS in the concentration camps, had been sent photographs of Mühsam, with the caption: "The murderer of hostages, Erich Mühsam".

Mühsam knew that the campaign of defamation and incitement to murder to which he was being subjected would lead to his assassination. When it became clear that the proletariat would offer no resistance at all to the seizure of power by the national socialists, and that there would be no struggle in which he could participate, Mühsam resolved to flee Germany in order to escape his pending assassination. He could obtain the necessary papers to leave Germany, but because he was so poor, as he was all his life, he first had to gather together the money he needed, money that would be indispensable to provide for his survival during the first few days of his journey. Finally, having made the necessary arrangements, he decided to flee to Prague. On the evening of his departure he

of view is not objective. If he were in Russia, if he had not been expelled by Stalin, he would not be saying these things today.

In his argument against power, which he condemns, Mühsam nonetheless acknowledges violence and coercion as revolutionary means of struggle. The differentiation between power, on the one hand, and violence on the other, seemed to him, as an anarchist, to be of unique importance.

Power is born from centralist and legislative authority from a state condition. It takes advantage of the authority that is prepared by psychological influence, by beliefs and faith at the cost of thought and judgment. Power and authority must be rejected for this reason: violence is the act of struggle, and is always a means for the achievement of an end; coercion is utilized in the struggle and is the means to ensure the achievement of the goal of the struggle. They must therefore be accepted. Power is a permanent state of violence and coercion for the suppression of the yearning for equality.

For the same reasons that Mühsam rejected temporal authority, he rejected spiritual authority as well. The oldest and most tested way to stimulate faith in authority is the swindle of extraterrestrial powers, whose orders man must obey, and before whose judgment he must answer. Just as he repudiated the State, he repudiated the Church. "God and State, with all their organs of expression: church, government, jurisprudence, militarism, police, bureaucracy, sultans, viziers, ministers, sovereigns, treasurers, customs officers, fakirs and capitalists are the most complete incarnations of centralist authority."

In opposition to his master Gustav Landauer, who wanted to establish the free society on the basis of the family, Mühsam presented the family as the seedbed of authority. He referred to that institution that guarantees the paternal right by the State and the Church. Gender relations constitute the original source of the life that must be freed from the intervention of third parties. When power intervenes in these relations, the conscience of man

becomes a home for internal privation. Rules are made for love; the clergy, the State, the Church, and all authorities are embedded into it; the sexual instinct was used as a sinful act for the stimulation of continuous torments of conscience for the purpose of revealing that its satisfaction was an impure deed where external authorities did not approve.

In the contemporary family man has the power of command; women and children are kept in a slavish dependence, and self-determination is defined as disobedience; the ways chosen by the individual are denounced as dangerous. The generator of children is granted in today's patriarchal family with attributes of central command. Surveillance over the woman and all her instinctive life and the same surveillance on the part of the woman over the man and his sexual conduct become a "moral duty"; the children are educated from the beginning in strict subordination and at the same time the impulse of imitation is instilled in them with the example of paternal omnipotence and the aspiration to acquire power for themselves. In the anarchist philosophy of Mühsam nothing that human beings do to obtain mutual pleasure is immoral; the intervention of a third party into their mutual agreement is always immoral.

The institution of the nuclear family produces a tribal pride that is a miniature version of the State. Every family thinks of itself as better than the neighboring family, and this brings in its wake the desire for self-aggrandizement. This hinders all federative community from the bottom up in the germinative social cell; the aspiration to the general equality of rights is obstructed by the stimulus to competition; the thought of hostile limitations, without which no central power is possible, is rooted in the soil of private interests, and the power of individuals. Thus, the family in its current authoritarian form fulfills its mission of implanting in the youth, with the sense of family, the sense of State at the same time, the will to power of the State itself, the animosity against other States,

precondition of victory. The order of freedom depends on the sincerity of all those who want to establish freedom. A new world does not arise from verbal declarations. The anarchists, who want to create a new world of freedom, of equality, of reciprocity, of justice, of truth and the association of all with all, have to clothe their declarations with their deeds. That is, they must lead their lives as they would want everyone to live in the Stateless society of communism."

And this is the most beautiful statue we can build to commemorate Erich Muhsam after his terrible suffering and his tragic death: since he provided the most sublime example of how to live a simple and upright life, but in a self-effacing way, in agreement with his doctrines. No matter what his enemies accused him of, they would never dare to impugn his integrity, and the frankness of his activity. Precisely for this reason, he can serve as the model for all of us who seek the new man, a man who unites the ideal and reality in himself and lives in agreement with his principles.

Erich Mühsam was that new man.

The Martyrdom of Erich Mühsam in the Third Reich

Long before the national socialists took power, the most well known representatives of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat had received publicly issued death threats. Erich Mühsam was one of those who were most at risk. He had served as neither a deputy nor as a minister in the Weimar Republic; but he was depicted as one of the most dangerous heretics and corrupters in Germany. Years before, Mühsam had stood alongside Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Gustav Landauer and the others who were assassinated in the revolution of 1918-1919, and the national socialists rued the fact that he was still alive. The national socialist storm troopers were incited against him. His photograph was reproduced

tried to elaborate a revolutionary tactic and the appropriate organization, not only to defend the revolutionary conquests, but also to safeguard the newly-arisen social forms created by the revolution from any deviations toward new forms of slavery.

We must not conclude our exposition of Mühsam's profession of faith in anarchism without highlighting one particularly important point: anarchist morality. He proclaimed the demand made by all anarchists to avoid, in every circumstance, the devious ways of conflict, slander, defamation, the crooked paths for the confusion of comrades and enemies, since this kind of 'method of struggle', introduced by political parties into the workers movement, but above all as a result of Lenin's well-known recommendations that have become habitual in the communist parties of every country, undermine the power of ideas, whose force lies in their purity. "The authoritarian Marxist parties attribute no value whatsoever to morality in the struggle. They dispatch general lines of behavior, from the top down, to their followers, by means of which they believe they can guarantee their discipline and obedience. Submission to these rules, which can change depending on the circumstances, they call proletarian discipline; all personal reflection before the initiation of a struggle by convictions, they condemn as bourgeois prejudice. With this kind of division between bourgeois and proletarian morality, one plays the most dangerous game. Equality and reciprocity can be defined as proletarian morality as opposed to bourgeois morality with its methods of enslavement. But if you tell the proletarians that, in their struggle against oppression and exploitation they are allowed to lie and slander, backstab and betray, on any occasion and even within their own struggles, and that these are class instruments, then there is no better demonstration that you are dealing here with the corrupting morality of the bourgeoisie, the same corrupt morality that made the revolution against the bourgeoisie necessary in the first place. Anarchists reject a morality that denies the original concepts of right and injustice, in favor of mutual tolerance, and truthfulness to all is the

the demand for conquest, oppression, and exploitation of peoples on the other side of the State frontiers, and nationalism.

In this way the State and nationalism take root in the authoritarian family, both of which are forms of coercive authoritarian society, which must be combated by anarchy because they are enemies of freedom. For Mühsam, freedom is the central concept of all anarchist thought and action. All revolutions are unleashed because the lack of freedom has become intolerable, and their rallying cries are always for freedom. But all revolutions have up until now failed or have gone astray from the path the revolutionaries wanted to follow because the demand for freedom was not satisfied. The freedom that the anarchists are fighting for is not identical to multiple little freedoms, but the unity of freedom, which embraces all the circumstances of life, of the order of things emancipated from all authority and of all hierarchy.

In his description of freedom Mühsam pauses to respond to the objection that most men do not enjoy the benefits of freedom because of their lack of independence and that this is why leaders are necessary. Concerning the problem of leadership, which is such an important issue today, Mühsam points out that the anarchists reject leadership that is endowed with a permanently assured power of command and efficacy, that is, all leadership in State rule, bureaucracy and party committees, all dictatorship and all oligarchic rule. "But we do not reject the usefulness of a director in a theater or a president of an assembly or a captain of a ship.... No one will lead the revolution of the future because he performed resolutely before it takes place. Each person must look out for himself in each new situation and thus earn the respect, the confidence and, if he merits it, the support of his comrades.... There are spokespersons, there are born leaders, that is, there are people who are followed because they most clearly express the will of all or devote themselves most resolutely to action. A leader is a person who stands out, not the person who makes laws or is trailed by an entourage.... There are leading personalities and missions that befit them that

no conscientious anarchist would be ashamed of acknowledging and would indeed be happy to do so. To develop the personality of a leader or a guide means to use individual powers in the service of comradery. This is different from the authoritarian personality, because the authoritarian raises himself above an obsequious mass and demands blind obedience, while the personality can only exist and function in connection with a community that receives its force from the abilities of each individual. In such a community the leader is not the person who wants to be a master lording it over slaves, but the person who, due to his gifts, knows how to stimulate his comrades who enjoy equal rights with him for the highest degree of voluntary and willing action. In the State and in centralist organizations there are chauffeurs and lackeys, but no guiding of spirits by the example of moral energy. Leadership for proper behavior in the struggle and in life presupposes egalitarian comradery and the free alliance of men."

In the second part of his pamphlet Mühsam addresses the way to the realization of anarchism. The communist anarchism he proclaims is revolutionary in its conception and its ends. The way to anarchy is primarily a path of revolutionary preparation in three ways: by means of proselytism and propaganda, by self-education and by struggle. Here Mühsam goes beyond his friend and mentor Landauer. While Landauer rejected the class struggle as "Marxist", Mühsam, with simple but conclusive logic, says: "The struggle against property rights must be carried out by those who have been prevented from owning anything; the struggle against exploitation and oppression by the exploited and the oppressed; the struggle against the rights of the master by the slaves and the disinherited.... The liberation of society from the State must therefore be carried out, principally, by the class whose repression by the capitalist system requires the State, whose docility is engendered by the authority of church and school, by the fomentation of national and racial vanities, by laws, punishments, taxes, unemployment, hunger, poverty, unhappiness, and by having been treated like chil-

"If the essence of the councils is understood as the concept of the living harmony of the personality and society, then anarchists can make the demand, 'All power to the councils', without any reservations. Maybe it would be better to never use the word, 'power'. But this demand has arisen precisely in the sense that all State Power must be annihilated, that all legislative and executive functions must be exercised by the revolution, that is, by the revolutionary class, by the proletariat and the peasantry, by their revolutionary institutions, the councils, which in turn embody the totality of those who work for a living.... But since the demand for the dictatorship of the proletariat has become the trademark of all State socialists, who have transformed it practically into the power of the rule of a party clique, and since the solution, 'All power to the councils' is only proclaimed by the authoritarian socialists, it is unnecessary to worry about one Power being overthrown by another in this case. It would, however, be advisable, in order to exclude any confusionist interpretation, for the anarchists to agree to the following compromise solution: All rights to the councils, or also: 'Everything to the councils', 'All for the councils,' or, which amounts to the same thing: 'Everything for everybody'."

In the pages above we have provided a condensed, although not comprehensive, exposition of the ideological and spiritual world of our comrade, Erich Mühsam. His ideas are not at all new for readers who are familiar with anarchist thought. What may be new, however, is only the consistent affirmation of the idea of the councils and the clarification of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which he rejected as the rule of a party or a clique, but which he accepted as violence in the revolution and as coercive measures to secure the revolutionary conquests. It should be noted, with regard to Mühsam's arguments, that the latter come from a time in which the defeated working class was lamenting its lost opportunities and was making an effort to understand its past mistakes. Mühsam based his arguments on Bakunin, but he also based them on the experiences of the Russian and German Revolutions, and he

State, but signifies any self-administration of a community by the people—or a Council economy, are only imaginable as federative institutions and can never take the form of a State or fit into the structure of a State institutional framework. The Council Republic is established from the bottom up. Its basic building blocks are the local urban and peasant councils. These may be informed, depending on their conditions and their needs, via sporadic or regularly scheduled popular assemblies, of the activities of the councils of their district or workplace, debate, criticize, broaden their perspectives and propose their own resolutions. They can elect committees for particular purposes, to deal with local problems, and they can delegate to particular people, under the close scrutiny of general auditors, the execution of mandated tasks. They will resolve issues related to public health, construction, traffic in city and village, educational and juridical affairs, the defense of common institutions, in short, they will arrange among themselves everything that can be naturally handled by the directly affected participants and local residents. For example: justice in the State cannot create any right, because it judges individual actions by the standards established by central authorities. Justice can only be served where the personality that has become socially culpable is judged by men who understand the psychological and local conditions of the case, without being bound by uniform prescriptions; where necessary, future harm is prevented for the general good.... In the period of the revolutionary transition the local councils and the congresses of councils will be forced, at first, to attribute to the most able individuals, those most gifted as speakers and as organizers for the convincing of those who are still vacillating, still in the rut of statist ways, those not accustomed to having confidence in themselves, with an entirely inoffensive autocratic role. This will be an issue that the anarchists will have to watch vigilantly to prevent the rise of any kind of authority, unilateral leadership, or abuse, and to make sure that the revolutionary spirit never forgets its mission, which is that of being the spirit of freedom."

dren and deprived of their dignity. To be liberated from the State is to be liberated from class slavery; the enslaved class must be the vehicle of the emancipatory struggle. The struggle for communist anarchism must therefore be fought during the period of revolutionary preparation as a class struggle."

Mühsam supported the anarchosyndicalist trade unions and proclaimed his opposition to the anarchist adversaries of anarchosyndicalism.

"The conduct of the class struggle in the trade unions themselves, as has been the practice of the anarchosyndicalist movement, is totally irrefutable from the libertarian socialist point of view, and he who joins associations for economic struggle with comrades with the same aspirations does not act in contradiction to anarchist principles; those who act contrary to anarchist principles are those who attack the trade or industrial organizations formed according to federative principles because they, for more or less plausible reasons, do not want to join them."

But at the same time the satirical poet defended the anarchists against the accusation that they rejected the political struggle. He defined politics as concern for public affairs. When the Marxists accuse the anarchists of being enemies of politics, it is a slander that is intended to discredit anarchism. The anarchist formula in the political struggle has always been: "Rejection of all politics whose goal is not directly the liberation of the working class." Anarchism does not exclude any method of struggle that gives the combatant the mission of personally intervening in a direct way. This is why the anarchist will always recommend strikes, passive resistance, sabotage, boycott and similar methods of class struggle. Mühsam, even though he never worked in a factory—which was also true of Pelloutier, Griffuelhes, Sorel and all the well-known syndicalists—was of the opinion that the workers' struggle for higher pay or shorter hours enhanced their sense of solidarity and their enthusiasm as well as their consciousness, and made them more combative. The

class struggle is a circumstance created by capitalism that the workers must assume and carry on conscientiously.

In our time it is important to establish the degree to which an individual's personality is devoted to the class struggle and the struggle of the masses. The Communist Party has opposed on every occasion all personal actions carried out by individual revolutionaries and has condemned them. The party proclaimed its condemnations of these personal actions during a period when the national socialists were constantly attacking, beating and assassinating well-known members of the workers movement. At that time it was of the utmost importance for German anarchists to take a position against the protests of the Moscow central committee and its German branch office against individual terror. Mühsam did so in his pamphlet. "Deeds of individual violence," he said, "are according to the Marxists to be repudiated, because they hinder the planned action of the masses in the revolutionary struggle and as a result provide the counterrevolutionary forces with the welcome pretext to strike back in revenge, so that the entire class has to pay for the crime of one individual. The basis for this condemnation of killings, arson, expropriations and other politically motivated actions is quite obvious. It does not derive from moral considerations, which only play a very subordinate role in Marxist thought; mass terror as a political means of struggle is expressly approved by these enemies of individual terror. It is the hostility of the authoritarian centralists to all individual deeds on the part of the personality that acts in accordance with his own reflections; they even forbid the sacrifice of one's life on behalf of one's revolutionary ideas, when the deed is not decided upon, ordered and sanctioned by authority."

The problem is therefore how the anarchists should conduct themselves within an organization, since they attribute such great value to actions and interventions on the part of individuals. The anarchist organization, or the organizations that the anarchists recommend for all of humanity, must be constructed upon respect

State, and with the State the sway of authority, and the particular position of the privileged, and the attack on equality, such a dictatorship is nothing but a new preparation for the road to an oppressor class, for a new kind of exploitation and for all the evils abolished by the revolution. Socialism will therefore never be achieved under this system, under this alleged proletarian dictatorship, and the new order will never abdicate until it is overthrown by a new revolution in favor of the councils. The council system is a creative force, without the employment of any bureaucracy, without serving the particular interests of individuals, without any kind of comprehensive power, and in this respect demonstrates its agreement with anarchist principles. All individuals are integrated into the council organization, and the dispatch of this or that delegate for the purpose of overseeing this or that service, for the debate on this or that plan, for the deliberation over a problem with representatives from other councils, for the implementation or inspection of a procedure that was considered to be or was determined to be necessary for the community, for acquiring information upon which to base a decision or for the examination of a project undertaken by another sector, does not confer upon the delegates any privilege compared to those who mandated them and in no way releases the delegates from their responsibilities as delegates…."

"Wherever exploitation exists in any form, the institutions of the councils must be exclusively the instruments of the exploited and the victims, that is, if they are peasant councils, they must respond first of all to the needs of the poor peasants, the day laborers and the village poor. The urban workers must pay particular attention, when constructing the society of the councils, that they are careful to observe the federalist character of the socialist organization from the very beginning. The Council State, which is claimed to be a centralist concentration of the councils of particular territories, is an abuse of the Council idea for the purpose of their annihilation and disenfranchisement. A society of Councils, a Council Republic—the word, 'Republic' by no means implies a form of

lution, call for a dictatorship of the proletariat in order to make themselves dictators."

Mühsam was entirely in favor of the demand, 'All power to the Councils', a demand rejected by many anarchists as Bolshevik. They perceived that the slogan, 'All power to the Councils' and the formula, 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat', were very closely related, and Mühsam recognized this as well. He was therefore compelled to address the issue of dictatorship, which for him, as one would expect from an anarchist, was all the more necessary insofar as many of his comrades rejected his views as non-anarchist. Here is what he said:

"Anarchists quite prudently try to use the expression, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as seldom as possible, even though, in the precise understanding of the concept of the councils, and without any biased preconceptions, it can hardly be understood as meaning anything but the crushing of the resistance against the proletarian revolution by the proletarian class. The violent repression of counterrevolutionary conspiracies by armed struggle, revolutionary tribunals and any other appropriate kind of security measures are necessary to the extent that the defeated class still possesses means of violence and the threat exists of attacks on the revolutionary rights of the working class. A revolutionary dictatorship of class against class is an inevitable stage of struggle, but this dictatorship is nothing but the revolution itself. However, no revolutionary individual, group, or party, or any faction of the revolution, must be attributed with the right to rule and persecute socialist proletarians, regardless of the pretext. The Marxists understand by 'dictatorship of the proletariat' the dictatorship of a central committee of the party, to which they also grant the power of rule over the councils, the right to legislate, the right to tax, and all kinds of representative functions on behalf of the revolution from declarations of war to treaties with foreign governments. This party clique was supposed to operate as a ruling power only until the complete establishment of socialism. But since all centralist government power implies the

for the freedom of the individual. There must be no central committee and no leadership clique endowed with supreme authority; the desire for command, personal ambition and careerism cannot arise in anarchist organizations, because they do not offer any secure careers; there is no opportunity for career advancement, and that is why people who are trying to rise to higher income brackets on the backs of the workers keep away from the anarchist movement. Nor can the anarchist organization work for its own profit; it must take part in all collective actions, it must help to inspire them, give them encouragement, influence all the movements in public life, inject the spirit of freedom into all the impulses of revolutionary sentiment. It is not of the greatest importance for anarchists to organize in ideological associations; the most important thing for them must be how to prepare for the economic transformation of society by the anarchists.

Anarchists have always been accused of operating on the petty bourgeois terrain of thought and of not rising to the level of the materialist dialectic. They are variously accused of being utopians, for they seek to improve men first of all and "to build by way of the expression of every temperament, with idealist bricks, the highest form of economy in socialism and communism". "Precisely the opposite is true," Mühsam said. In open defiance of all Marxist central authorities anarchism rejects all aspirations to unite the proletariat by any other means than on the basis of economic foundations.

Mühsam also argued against those anarchists who wanted to postpone everything until after the revolution. "Anarchists must try to create institutions in the present, plans for the federalist structure of the economy in the social order that is maturing for the revolution. Because the people's need for food during the revolutionary upheaval must be the concern of voluntarily associated men, the anarchists will have to set themselves the task of imagining the details of the economic organization of the future society and carrying out the preliminary work for the transformation of the capitalist into the socialist economy. The childish fancy, ac-

cording to which the possession of the factories by the workers and their simple continuing operation under the control of the workers will in itself signify the passage of the revolution into socialism, is as absurd as it is dangerous. The possession of the factories is certainly a magnificent means of struggle of direct intervention, but one that is suitable for the period before and during the period of overthrow of capitalism. After the revolution what is required is the complete transformation of the economy. The preparation for this transformation is the immediate practical affair of the libertarian revolutionaries. The anarchists should take advantage of this opportunity to investigate the possibilities of social reconstruction and to study how to provide healthy accommodations for all the workers, the elderly, the sick, the women and children; to study which bastions of State servitude, the palaces and the prisons, the courthouses and public buildings will prove useful for this purpose; to study which establishments of art and knowledge can be transformed into establishments of general instruction; which churches can be converted into meeting halls, community centers and schools for education against authority and the family, or into focal points of proselytism for freedom. The anarchists do not deliver their painstakingly calculated and detailed proposals to government departments, but to the responsible working class as a whole, which will examine them, improve them, oversee their execution by its own institutions, without ever forgetting for a moment the active community of all. These institutions will embody the impulsive social energy of the revolution, they will from the very moment of victory guarantee and safeguard the order of freedom, the economy and the administration of the community in the hands of the socialist working class social formations, they will create communist anarchy and will be the vehicles of the federation of the human and working class associations in the anarchist community. These institutions are the free workers and peasants Councils."

Mühsam was a champion of the Councils. It is the Council idea that is most characteristic of his idea of anarchism. Among the various anarchist tendencies there are still divergent views on the council system. Some are in favor of it; some are opposed. Mühsam was a passionate advocate of the free council system, which in his view had nothing to do with the soviet government such as it exists in Russia today. Some are in favor of it; others are opposed. Mühsam was even of the view that it is only in the council system that the revolution can preserve freedom. Here we must attend to Mühsam's own words, so that his point of view regarding this very important point can be clarified:

"Concerning the essence, the meaning and the tasks of the council system," Mühsam said, "the most ambiguous ideas coexist, and even in the libertarian working class associations there is toleration for the most contradictory interpretations, with regard to the question of whether and to what extent councils must be created and how they are to function…. Even where the workers and peasants emerged victorious from the revolution under the slogan of, 'All power to the Councils', the councils were transformed into servants of the State and the party and, instead of determining public activity and orienting it in a socialist spirit, they were reduced to mere tools of authority. When, as frequently occurs, the anarchists conclude from this state of affairs that the whole idea of the councils has demonstrated its anti-libertarian character, they commit the same intellectual error that is committed by a person who wants to deduce from the conduct of the State's justice system that social rights cannot exist. Such falsification of thought can never refute the idea of the councils."

"In times of revolution it is the special task of the councils to carry out the coercive measures of the proletarian class which are necessary to crush counter-revolutionary plots and to prevent new governmental institutions from arising which, apparently supporting council power in order to fortify their own power behind the councils, under the pretext of countering the threats to the revo-