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An Anarchist Joins the Communists

Erich Mühsam

September 1919

This article appeared with the following introduction when it appeared in 1920:

“Mühsam is one of the best-known militants and publicists of German anarchism. At present, he is, along with Tom Weinbull, imprisoned in Augsburg Prison. We have learned that both of them, along with other political prisoners, have decided to protest against the ill treatment they have suffered by a hunger strike. It is through acts of this kind that one can appreciate the benefits of the German “revolution.” Mühsam’s joining the Communist Party is similar to that of the Feundlers, the free Dutch partisans (representatives of the Christian revolutionary movement), who have also entered the communist movement. We are witnessing the same events everywhere: whatever the philosophical differences professed by the militants, revolutionary contingents are coming together to form a “united front” against the bourgeoisie and opportunism.

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“Mühsam published in the German Communist press a declaration explaining his joining the Communist Party. We reproduce it here.”

[Mühsam had already left the KPD by the time his article explaining his membership had appeared.]

It's already been twenty years that I've been spreading the principles of revolutionary anarchism. Well before the world war and the universal revolution I was active in the political domain fighting for the social revolution through direct action, for which Mikhail Bakunin was the great protagonist. My attacks on Marxism, of which Kautsky was the best-known interpreter, were above all directed against the proletariat's participation in parliamentary labor, against the opportunist attitude towards capitalist society, and against the principle of collaboration with the bourgeoisie that for several decades has characterized Social Democratic policy. My friends and I never ceased to denounce the danger that threatened the worker's movement, destined to become mired in the parliamentary swamp, in the pursuit of pay raises, in union or corporative bureaucratism. We refused to support the Social Democratic organizations and, persecuted by the authorities, scorned by the "workers' leaders" whose masks we tore off, we fought for emancipation from the yoke of the state, employing the weapons that the economic struggle places at the proletariat's disposal.

The experience of the revolution has made the scales fall from the eyes of the working class concerning the policies of Social Democracy, whose consequences have become particularly obvious over the course of the war, when the official leaders of Social Democracy adopted their new position as renegades. All the accomplishments of the Bolsheviks in Moscow and their revolutionary successes, unprecedented in world his-

tory, prove just how right were those who saw the sole salvation of the international proletariat in the seizing of legislative and executive power by the workers themselves. Lenin's theoretical and practical theses on the carrying out of the revolution and the communist tasks of the proletariat provided our activities with a new foundation by providing the struggle against capitalism with new forms. *His theoretical contributions constitute the front upon which the disciples of Marx – of a Marx liberated from Kautsky and Bernstein – and those of Bakunin can meet*, for there are henceforth no further obstacles to the unification of the entire revolutionary proletariat.

It is true that the communist anarchists have had to surrender on the most important point of disagreement between the two tendencies of socialism: *they have had to renounce Bakunin's negative attitude towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and surrendered to Marx's opinion on this point.*

Personally, since the beginning of the revolution, I understood that the dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary for the conquest of power, and it was in acting in conformity with these principles that I have carried out my propaganda activity.

The second disagreement, that which has to do with centralized or federalist organization, is no longer anything but a quibble over words thanks to the brilliant solution given by Lenin – the idea of Soviets. When the German Communist Party was organized I proposed a collaboration of pure camaraderie. It often happened that I spoke at party meetings, and even though I didn't work directly in the recruitment of members I certainly contributed to rallying several thousand workers in Munich and environs. As for joining myself, I could not resolve to do so, having until now never belonged to any party and not wanting to break with my anarchist past.

The course of the revolution, its momentary crushing by the leagued forces of militarism, capitalism, and social patriotism have now led me to another solution: from this day I am a member of the German Communist party.

The unity of the revolutionary proletariat is necessary and should not be delayed. The sole organization capable of bringing this about is the German Communist Party. I hope that those anarchist comrades who see in communism the foundation of a just social order will follow my example. *The destruction of the state in all its forms is as much our goal as it is that of Lenin.*

And so, none of us are abandoning our convictions. I hope that the comrades of the German Communist Party will not refuse to accept us among them. Long Live the World Revolution! Long Live the Third International!

Augsbach Fortress, September 1919.