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(EDITOR'S NOTE: We are herewith reprinting a portion of a somewhat larger article of the martyred comrade Erich Muehsam on the nature of worker's Soviet and our attitude towards it. This is done not only for the purpose of rehabilitating comrade Muehsam against the imputation of adhering to purely communist views made by a number of prominent leaders of the Communist Party. This imputation is quite in line with the general policy of the Communist Party: persecuting the living anarchists and exploiting for their own party purposes the martyrdom of those who have suffered for the cause of the working class. The reiteration of such a policy hardly needs special rebuttal. What is important in this connection is to point out the realistic approach of comrade Muehsam which, as the article proves, is not done at the price of derogating the idea of Soviet[1] itself. Therein lies the lesson of the system of ideas expressed in this article.)

[1] The term "Soviet" refers to the original meaning of the word: council of workers.

As far as the structure, general ideas and tasks of the soviet system are concerned, people have very hazy conceptions. Even among the libertarian workers' organizations we find the most contradictory opinions as to how soviets should be organized and worked. This general confusion has been increased by the introduction of the soviet idea into state laws and capitalistic methods of production of Germany.[2] When the workers demanded that they themselves supervise the shops and production methods, these requests were seemingly met by granting them the permission to form shop delegations and call them factory soviets. The field of action for these councils was quite circumscribed, but their rights were still more reduced by forcing the workers to adopt a parliamentary election system which stands in absolute contrast to the Soviet idea but which was used to keep these organizations under party control. Even where the revolution and the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" brought victory to the peasants and workers, the Soviets became a tool of state and party instead of being the decisive factor in public life and giving it a socialist turn. If, as it happens now and then, anarchists point their fingers at this fact to prove that the whole Soviet idea has nothing to do with liberty, they make the same mistake as those who deny the very idea of social law on the ground of the miscarriage of state made law. The falsification of an idea cannot prove that the idea itself is wrong.

Soviets are the vehicles of the socialist commonwealth and as such they are the representatives of all people who work for the common good. By means of the Soviets every one of the mass of workers is doing his share in social and public life. When exploitation shall have ceased, every one who does not put himself outside of society will be doing some social service in the Soviets. Only during the revolutionary transition period must all those against whom the revolution is fighting be kept out of the Soviets. As the

[2] This refers to post-revolutionary Germany governed by the Social Democratic Party.

first duty of the Soviets is to abolish capitalist exploitation and to realize the socialist commonwealth, people who do not want socialism cannot be drafted for the task of constructing it. During this period the special task of the Soviets will be to enforce the decisions of the proletarian class, to destroy counter-revolutionary movements, and to prevent the formation of new types of government that pretend to protect the revolution and talk about the power of the Soviets, the dictatorship of the proletariat, only to entrench themselves in power and to act as dictators.

The anarchists do well when they refrain as much as possible from using the expression "Proletarian Dictatorship" though a correct interpretation of the term Soviet could, without any reservations, hardly mean anything else but the checking of any resistance against the proletarian revolution by the proletariat. The forcible suppression of counter-revolutionary plots through armed struggles, revolutionary tribunals and any other way of enforcing security, is necessary as long as the conquered class possesses any power and may be able to attack the rights of the revolutionary workers. A revolutionary class dictatorship is indispensable during the fighting period, yet this dictatorship spells nothing but the revolution itself. However, no single revolutionary group, no party or outstanding selection of revolutionists must be allowed under any circumstances to govern and persecute socialist proletarians. Dictatorship of the proletariat is, to the Marxists, the dictatorship of a Marxist party executive whose power extends over that of the soviets and has the right to make laws, levy taxes, and represent the revolutionary forces any way they see fit–even to declare war and recognize treaties with foreign governments. This party clique is supposed to stay in power only until socialism has been spread everywhere. But since any centralized government denotes state power, with all preponderance of authority, special privileges and conspiracy against equality, such a dictatorship therefore paves the road for class suppressions, leads to new forms of exploitation and revives the evils that had been swept away with the revolution. So-

cialism can therefore never be attained under this form of so-called proletarian dictatorship, for the new power will never resign until a new revolution has turned the power over to the Soviets.

The Soviet system, if it is worked right, creates no bureaucracy, no special privileges, no all-powerful group. A task given to the Soviets by the people does not change in any way the relationship between those that give instructions and those who execute them. The Soviet organization has a federal character. It comprises all producing and consuming forces, from the narrow circle of mutual interests up to the extensive economic organizations. Every person has a place in the Soviets; but the sending of this or that delegate to render this or that service or to discuss this or that plan, to confer upon a question with out-of-town Soviet delegates, to carry through or supervise an undertaking which has been approved by the people, to hold an opinion or to examine somebody else's proposals–all this does not put the delegate above those whom he represents, nor does it release those who gave the order from their responsibility for the acts of the delegate. All tasks charged depend upon those that give them; whoever is given a certain task acts in an executive capacity for a certain body that assigns to him that part of the work for which he is deemed fit.[3] The extraordinary complexity of social life demands innumerable social services on a small as well as on a large scale, so that the division of social duties with its constant changes should embrace everyone's abilities and should place everyone under the supervision of the others. Such mutual responsibility guarantees the unity of society and personality which in turn, safeguards the equal rights of everybody and the mutual support in all common undertakings. Each delegate is sent with the understanding that he may be recalled at any moment during his time of service, each service is undertaken voluntarily and with the understanding that the delegate will resign if he is

[3]He Is a representative of a particular community to which he belongs and acts as such only in respect to a particular task with which he is charged.

not equal to his task or in case he thinks somebody else more fit to take care of the welfare of all concerned. Therefore, all elections that place great responsibilities on the shoulders of a single person for a definite time are only parliamentary ballyhoo having nothing to do with the Soviet organization of society, especially if those elections have been arranged from a party point of view and are influenced by those who stand outside of the workers immediately concerned with it.

An essential part of the organization work is the cooperation of the workers' and farmers' Soviets to safeguard the general supply and demand; both producers and consumers have to help in the organization of economic life. The Soviet idea must be popularized in the country, not through forceful methods emanating from the city, but through enlightenment and appeals so that the economically superior farmers will be prevented from conquering the Soviets for themselves after socialist equality has been attained. Wherever exploitation exists in any form, the Soviets must be a tool of the exploited and underprivileged. Therefore, as far as farmers' Soviets are concerned, they will have to represent above all the small farmer and farm laborers. While building the Soviet order the city workers will have to see to it that the federal character of the socialist organization is carefully preserved from the very beginning. If a Soviet state starts to centralize the Soviets–even in certain limited fields–the Soviets are misled toward their own suppression and destruction. A Soviet society, a Soviet republic–the word republic does not mean a type of state, but any self government of a commonwealth by the people–a Soviet organization can only be thought of as a federal structure, and can never be a state nor exist in a state.