

Anarchy

Erich Mühsam

1912

Anarchy means lack of rule. Anyone who cannot associate the term with any thought before reinterpreting it as unbridledness proves that he is equipped with the sensory nerves of a horse.

Anarchy is freedom from coercion, violence, enslavement, law, centralization, state. The anarchic society replaces these with: voluntariness, understanding, contract, convention, alliance, people.

But people demand rule because they have no self-control within themselves. They kiss the priests' robes and the princes' boots because they have no self-respect and must produce their sense of veneration externally. They cry for the police because they cannot protect themselves alone against the bestiality of their instincts. Where their coexistence requires joint decisions, they let themselves be represented (the German language is very sensitive) because they do not have the courage to trust their own decisions. The political life of civilized peoples is exhausted — to take up the horse comparison again — in the invention of ever more perfect reins, saddles, drawbars, curbs and whips. The only difference between the working man and the working horse is that he himself helps to invent and put on improved systems of fettering himself. But both are similar in their confidence in their strong iron shoes and in the prevention of their use by wearing blinkers.

Scientific purification has enlightened working people that the capitalist constitution robs them of the fruits of their labor. They are exploited and know it. They also know the path that leads to socialism: the transfer of the country, and therefore all the means of production, from the hands of the privileged to the ownership of the people. They have known the path for half a century, but to date they have not set foot on it. The means of changing conditions that are recognized as bad is always action. But the people of our time are lazy when it comes to action. In order not to have to do anything, they have put forward the theory that history develops according to materialistic necessities. Time functions automatically; but working people wait until the time is right. In the meantime they mend and clean their dishes, complain and vote. This interim occupation has become a habit for them, a need, the purpose of life. They have forgotten that they are waiting for something. Woe to those who remind them!...

Anarchy is the society of brotherly people whose economic union is called socialism. Brotherly people exist. Where they are together, anarchy lives; for they do not need a ruler. What they have to create is socialism. The action that leads to socialism is called work. Anyone who does not want to help to do socialist work in a brotherly community, anyone who wants to wait

and see how things develop without their doing anything, should at least mend and clean their dishes, complain and vote. But let him not call himself a socialist. Above all, let him not judge anarchy. For it is a matter of the heart, and he understands nothing about it.

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