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# Police and proletariat

Pierre Ramus

1920

In view of the police's attitude toward the Viennese proletariat, their use of armed force against its movement, we must recall two circumstances that are not insignificant in assessing the steps to be taken against the police. It seems to us that far too much attention has been paid to the fact that the Viennese police are subject to the authority of the Social Democratic Secretary of State for the Interior, Eldersch, and thus act under his responsibility and certainly with his consent, and furthermore, that the police themselves are represented in the Workers' Council.

These two factors must be keenly considered if one wants to understand what must be done to neutralize the police and make a repetition of their intervention against the working class impossible. All the more so since the disregard of these factors, which is common to both Social Democrats and "Communists," must lead to a renewed misleading of the proletariat, which will result in its renewed disappointment.

Let us recall, above all, that the writer of these lines was the one who most relentlessly opposed the admission of the police to the Workers' Council. He found support in this regard from neither the Social Democrats nor the "Communists"; the

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former actively supported, the latter passively supported, the admission of the police to the Workers' Council.

In light of today's facts, one must read the evidence presented by the Viennese "Arbeiterzeitung" at the time in order to fully appreciate the shameful deception that this paper perpetrated against the proletariat in the name of its party. In an article entitled "Policeman and Worker," the "Arbeiterzeitung" deceived its readers by telling them that the Workers' Council's rejection of the police could merely stem from a mistrust of the working class dating back to the past, but that it would diminish over time as the police transformed themselves into a so-called "People's Police"—a beautiful name! The "Arbeiterzeitung" had no objections to the work of the police as such. On the contrary, it writes: "The security guard is a proletarian; he undoubtedly performs very useful and necessary work by serving the legal order and strengthening legal security."

Today, workers are experiencing firsthand how true these lies from the "Arbeiterzeitung" are! Certainly, the policeman is also a proletarian, but ultimately, so is every lackey and informer. However, one is only a proletarian in the sense of the proletarian liberation struggle if one does not voluntarily take a position that defends capitalism, the state, and militarism. And the role of a security guard is not that of a member of society who performs useful work, but rather that of a positively unproductive, parasitic service; the service of the policeman consists in maintaining a legal order that is based on the exploiter's right to plunder the exploited, and is thus an unjust order.

We are by no means generalizing or unjust in our opinion. We know that among police officers and similar henchmen of the ruling power there are undoubtedly many individuals who only practice their trade because they are compelled to do so by economic constraints. But this does not change the fact: their activity consists exclusively in maintaining the existing disorder of power, which can only exist through them and their

kind. It is precisely those in the police who understand this who are the most respectable elements of the police, and they should strive to leave their profession as quickly as possible. Such men will never strive, as long as they are still in it, to introduce themselves into the labor movement—which they can serve in no way through their professional activities, but only by failing to practice them or by violating their regulations! In order to achieve this at all, it is best not to bring such police officers, who are honorable in our sense, into direct contact with the labor movement.

What position does the Social Democrats take in this regard, and what position do their “radicals,” the “Communists,” represent? This is best illustrated by the proposals they made on both sides in the Vienna District Workers’ Council. Not a single voice, even now, after the proletariat has experienced through its own bloody wounds that not only a priest always remains a priest, but a policeman always remains a policeman—not a single voice was heard there that would have represented our position: dissolution and elimination of the police as an institution!

Both parties squabble over trivialities while actually advocating the same false and popularly deluded position.

The “Communists” demand: “Transformation of the reactionary security forces, especially the police, into proletarian security troops. Consequently, the immediate removal of the highest police organs and their replacement by representatives of the workers under the control of the Vienna District Workers’ Council.”

The Social Democrats demand: “The reactionary police bureaucrats and police officers must be retired... All vacancies thus created must be filled with the most talented and capable security personnel.” “The security guard must be supplemented by a thousand, and the group of security agents (detectives!) by two hundred class-conscious workers.”

The essential unity of these two people-deceiving Marxist parties lies in these two demands of Social Democracy and “Communism.” Both demands aim for the same thing: not the abolition of the police, but rather its filling with party comrades and workers. What is deliberately concealed is that the very example of a Social Democratic State Secretary of the Interior clearly demonstrates how worthless it is for the working class to have conned even one of its most renowned leaders into a privileged, parasitic position. But it would be just as worthless for the proletariat, even if the current police officers—who are also proletarians!—were not to be able to do so. — would be replaced by others who, as soon as they become police officers, will and must act exactly like the former ones!

And the absurdity of wanting to grant the District Workers’ Council a controlling, pro-worker sphere of influence is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the District Workers’ Council has a compact Social Democratic supermajority, whose party leader, Eldersch, is currently the State Secretary of the Interior, and with whose acquiescence, at least, the police are taking action against the proletariat with naked sabers!

Nothing can prove more clearly why reaction is gradually gaining ground than the above. Instead of putting forward and advocating for truly principled demands that eliminate the foundations of the capitalist system, social democrats and “communists” do nothing but run around in circles, putting forward deceptive pseudo-demands, thereby narrowing and artificially stunting the intellectual horizons of our proletariat, constantly wasting its energy for action on goals that, even if achieved, would leave everything as it was.

If one wants to fulfill one’s duty as a revolutionary socialist and to the proletariat, which today needs true enlightenment above all else, one must tell it clearly and unambiguously: If workers no longer want to be attacked by the police with armed force, then no amount of “transformation” or “supplementation” of the police will suffice; such actions only amount

to job-hunting and nepotism, party pandering, and the pursuit of office, not revolutionary transformation. If the working class wants to free itself from the protectors of the existing capitalist order, then it must declare the police as an institution abolished, begin with total disarmament and integrate its former members into the ranks of the productive working groups, granting them and themselves the opportunity to begin a new, socially free and useful life!