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Gun control in the United States

Johann Most

1885

General military armament has now been introduced in a number of ways. However, this cannot be achieved everywhere at the same time; it is also not possible to fire at all, except in cases where there is a fire; as with many similar cases, there is no specific weapon for good luck, but rather for the supply of all available weapons. In other words, in the light of the situation, a uniform firearm is found in the field in question.

Perhaps the best thing would be if all the organised workers of the civilised world could be persuaded to acquire good rifles (of a pre-arranged system) and an adequate quantity of ammunition, to undergo military training and thus to be formally mobilised for the coming social war. But these are pious wishes.

In Europe, only Switzerland is in a position to proceed in this way undisturbed. We say “at most” because it can be safely foreseen that the bourgeois and bourgeois rulers there will rush to collect the right to arm the people as soon as they realise that the rifles are fired “by them”.

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The science of revolutionary warfare, 1885.

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In all other European countries, the acquisition of weapons, such as rifles, is made difficult by all sorts of laws and police regulations. And anyone who acquires them secretly exposes himself to the danger of being prosecuted for “preparation for high treason” in the event of a very probable denunciation. Only the most intelligent will be able to equip themselves with breech-loading rifles despite these obstacles; On the other hand, any possibility of “mass” military arming of the proletariat is denied.

Things are a little different in the United States at the moment. Everyone has the “constitutional” right and duty to arm himself as he sees fit, but for a long time now the legislators and governors of the United States have been doing everything they can to make it difficult for the people to arm themselves or to weaken their power. Thus, for example, carrying “concealed” weapons is “prohibited” in almost all countries. And as people usually carry revolvers or daggers in their pockets, so too. However, if someone were punished for this circumstance, if he carried such things “openly” on his belt, as before, then a legal remedy would soon be found against this practice; at least the exploiters would soon put the workers who paraded in this way out of work. So you can either carry daggers and revolvers with you illegally or you have to leave them in your room, where they will probably not always be at hand in the moment of danger.

And that’s not all! Barely several hundred of the Chicago comrades had organized themselves militarily when the Illinois legislature passed a law permitting military organizations or public outings only to those who considered themselves members of the militia and whose members were willing to take an oath of allegiance. Years of litigation in the highest federal courts against this completely unconstitutional law have so far been entirely fruitless.

In recent times, even in the American legislative bodies there has been a tendency to ban the best of weapons, “dy-

namite,” altogether, or to permit its use only for industrial and national defense purposes. In this way, the ruling gang is gradually closing in on the general arming of the people.

What do we mean by all this? That we should sit back and refrain from arming ourselves in America as well? Of course not! Rather, we are pointing the finger at the disarmers of the people. We see that things are developing in an extremely reactionary manner and we are convinced that the workers of America will no longer be able to arm themselves if they do not do so “soon.”

If they do not delay any longer and equip themselves in time with the best weapons they can get, then disarmament will be a good thing, because the armed proletariat simply will not accept it; but if indifference continues as it has been, then before they know it, it may be that the acquisition of arms will be as difficult for the people of America as it has long been in Europe; and then all the complaints and cries will be of no avail. They are simply defenseless and powerless before a horde of uniformed murderers armed to the teeth.