
Russianizing the United States

by Eugene V. Debs

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A treaty has recently been negotiated between the United States and Russia, and simply awaits the proclamation of the President to become the law in all matters agreed upon by the contracting parties. Treaties, it is known, are compacts concocted in secret. In the United States, where it is published to the world that the government is of the people and by and for the people, the people are not permitted to know anything more of the agreements contained in a treaty, until it becomes the law, than if they were Russian exiles working in a Siberian mine. Fortunately, however, according to the adage that, "murder will out," the people of the United States have managed to learn so much of the treaty, as to create the belief that it places the United States in a position of unqualified shame and humiliation before the whole civilized world.

It so happens that Russia is a despotism, the most cruel, brutal, inhuman, murderous, abominable and infamous upon the face of the earth, and the Emperor "of all the Russias," is the one bloodthirsty monster, who is responsible for all the banishments, murders and tortures inflicted upon Russians, because they dare hope for a change of government, because they ask for liberty, because they demand redress for wrongs, and no sooner is a whisper heard of discontent, than imprisonment, torture, death, or exile follows. As a result, certain brave Russians plot the death of the autocrat, or they seek to inaugurate rebellion, they plot to overthrow the government, in doing which they have the unqualified and enthusiastic approval of ninety-nine hundredths of the people of the United States.

Thousands of these Russian patriots are caught; some are murdered, others tortured, others imprisoned, while a ceaseless tide of others flow towards Siberia to linger out their miserable lives in

mines. Some of these patriots escape to the United States and publish to the world the truth regarding Russian despotism. The autocrat of Russia very much desires to put his paws on these patriots now under the jurisdiction of "Old Glory," and surpassing all belief, the United States senate votes that he may do so, and thus make the government of the United States *particeps criminis*¹ to every horror Russia inflicts from murder to exile in crushing out the spirit of liberty among her people. As we write, the treaty is in the hands of President Grover Cleveland: if he does not hold it for modification, so that Russian refugees who have sought asylum here are safe from autocratic atrocities, then Russian detectives will invade our shores and drag away any one whom it may be the Tsar's pleasure to murder, torture, imprison, or exile. In this connection, says the *Chicago Herald*:

We shall not become bloodhounds for any European despotism. We are not going to help despots, no matter who they are or what their past in regard to us, to track fugitives from the knout, the galley chain, the mine, or the penal colony across our free prairies or into the seclusion of the free cities of this Republic. The fundamental blunder in the text of the treaty is that it does not discriminate between political and other offenses. Until that discrimination shall be made, and until the power of testing each case arising under it is vested in our own courts, giving refugees, right of counsel, the treaty with Russia, no matter how satisfactory otherwise, will not be acceptable to the American people. We did not destroy fugitive slave laws on our own soil only to revive their principles for the accommodation of old world slavers or tyrants. In proposing such a clause as this to us, Russian diplomacy has audaciously asked the United States for a political accommodation that would be scornfully denied to her diplomats by England, as England has denied it for generations to all powers; an accommodation she has no right to expect except from the petty, half-savage, tribal, or satrapic communities her bayonets pin down or her gold corrupts in Eastern Europe and Asia. No political partnership with despots!

It is to be hoped that the *Herald* is right, but it all rests with President Cleveland; if he does not crush the infamous treaty then the United States from ocean to ocean becomes a hunting ground for such creatures as the autocrat of Russia may designate to entrap the victims of his wrath.

¹ *Partner in crime.*

Should the treaty go into effect, and a Russian official be seen dragging some victim of Russian hate away to the infernal regions under the control of the Tsar, it would not be surprising if it were found an exceedingly difficult task. Let it once be understood that the Senate of the United States aided by the President has placed such power in the hands of the Russian autocrats and by common consent they would become objects of ineffable scorn and ignominy.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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