

---

# Letter to Winfield R. Gaylord in Milwaukee from Adolph Germer, Executive Secretary of the Socialist Party of America in Chicago, April 27, 1917.

Document used as evidence in the 1918 Germer trial, reprinted in Seymour Stedman et al.,  
*Brief for Plaintiffs in Error* (Cover title: *The Case of the Chicago Socialists*),  
[Chicago: Socialist Party of America, c. 1920], pp. 230-232.

Chicago, Ill., Apr. 27. 1917.

Winfield R. Gaylord,  
71-73 Cawker Bldg.  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

My dear Gaylord:

Your favor of the 26th inst. has just been received and I note with interest what you say. As per your request, I am today sending a copy of your letter to every member of the National Executive Committee.

It is perhaps my misfortune not to have been born in the United States, or perhaps yours to have been born here. That, however, should have little or no bearing on considering a fact.

Let me call your attention to the fact that it was agreed at the Convention [April 7-14, 1917] ([George] Goebel speaking for your side) and no one objecting to it, that we should immediately proceed to distribute the resolution on Militarism and War. It was understood that if the minority report is finally adopted by referendum, that it would be the official declaration of the party. Perhaps you were not in the hall when this understanding was arrived at, but I am quite sure the record will show it.

You call it treasonable matter. Treasonable

to whom? Surely it cannot be treasonable to the people of America to keep them from being shot by others with whom they have no difference. No matter where one is born he ought to be able not to assume an irrational view on this subject. If the Socialists of every nation would take the same view that you do, there would be no rumbling in the respective governments. The ruling class would have the full support of the Socialists.

You further say that we are making the party organization the tool of a foreign enemy government now at war with this country. Let me ask you my dear Gaylord, do you take the position of Stephen Decatur, "My country may it ever be right, but right or wrong my country"? Of course, if that is your position, then your protest is not in harmony with the international Socialist movement.

You speak of the autocratic government of Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey. How about the autocratic government of Serbia, Romania, Italy, Japan, and Belgium, and until very recently the despotism of Russia? Do you know of any degree of democracy existing in any of these countries? Do you know of the ruling class of those countries fighting for democracy and civilization? Why single out a few of the autocratic countries who happen to be allied on one side of this war? Besides, as one living in America, my greatest con-

cern is to establish a degree of democracy and liberty in the United States instead of meddling and taking sides in the European war. I can see no difference between the autocracy of Germany and the other empires and kingdoms. I hate them all and I hope that the people of the respective countries, before the war is over, or after the war, will manifest good sense and be courageous enough to connect over all the crowns of Europe.

You speak further of the propaganda we are carrying on to the advantage of the feudal government of a nation with which this nation is now at war. Isn't it a fact that so long as we are furnishing guns and ammunition and foodstuffs to the allies, that we are not only actively engaged in a propaganda to the advantage of those feudal governments, but are an active part of the war? Why close our eyes to facts? I hate the word "Kaiser" and "Sultan," but I also hate the word "King" and I further hate to be engaged in a propaganda that will actively strengthen one side or the other. After all, as our anti-war proclamation well says we are not conducting a war against the "Kaiser," but we will shoot the German people who are now struggling within our country to establish a degree of democracy.

One more point and then I am going to leave you. You call our attention to the fact that there were only 185 delegates out of a possible of 300 present. I must remind you that a national refer-

endum was pending when the convention was called, providing for a convention in September [1917] to be attended by 200 delegates instead of 300 as per constitution. The Emergency Convention was called on the same basis as the referendum provided for the September Convention. If you say that it was not a representative convention, then you must confess that you were not a representative delegate. Surely you wouldn't claim that you and a few who shared your views were the only representative delegates and all the others were not.

Let us forget for awhile that we were born in America or in Germany or England, or elsewhere, and let us try to remember that we now live in this country and let us try to solve the problems of the workers here at home. By doing so we might succeed in keeping this country out of international entanglements, even though it might interfere with the profits of Wall Street.

As stated in the outset, I am submitting your letter to the Executive Committee.

With all good wishes, I remain as ever,

Fraternally Yours,

*Adolph Germer,*  
Executive Secretary.

AG/HM.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2007. • Non-commercial reproduction permitted.*