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# **The United Front: Shall We Have Solidarity Or Be Slaughtered?**

**by Eugene V. Debs**

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The radical elements of the American working class must either accommodate their tactical differences and unite in a solid phalanx against capitalism or they will surely be further divided and ultimately devoured by their enemies.

It was inevitable that the advent of revolutionary change in Russia should affect the Socialist parties of the whole world, but it is likewise true that each nation has its own psychology and its own peculiar problems that are foreign to the workers of other countries.

It does not follow that because Russia seemed to be able to take the shortest cut to revolutionary change every capitalist or imperialist country in the world is able to accept their identical formula and pattern after it. The workers of a certain country must of necessity adapt themselves to the methods and manners of that country, and out of their own national psychology build toward an international purpose.

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If every man, woman, and child in Russia were suddenly deposited in the United States, and every American should some morning awake and find himself in Russia, and the Russians in America and the Americans in Russia were told to adapt themselves to their strange environments and use the tools and the machinery of the displaced workers of the others' country, we know that nothing could come of the experiment but chaos, and that in a little while Americans would begin to come back to their native land, while the Russians would abandon our industrial cities for their own farms and vineyards.

As it would be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, for the physical transplantation to take place between Russians and Americans, so it seems to me to be equally difficult, if not impossible,

for Americans to suddenly assume the state of political and social mind that has engaged the working classes of Russia since the overthrow of the Tsar. American workmen think as Americans, not as Russians, or Japanese, or Germans — indeed, American workers do not even think as English workers, and this is proven by the fact that in each of these countries there are labor unions, guilds, and political parties, each distinct from similar organizations in other lands and each adapted to the industrial and political management of the country wherein they function.

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This does not mean that I am criticizing the Russian workers for the manner in which they accomplished their revolution. I would be the last to aim a dart at them, and all that I am trying to point out is what seems to me to be an obvious truism: That the Russian way may not be the American way; and the German Socialists may feel that they are entitled to work out their own revolutionary principles along the lines of the German working class psychology.

We can give the Russian revolution and the Soviet government every possible support, morally, spiritually, and financially, without surrendering our own identity as American Socialists and workers who have social and industrial problems peculiar to our national life and with which the average Russian in Russia is wholly unfamiliar.

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Internationalism does not mean to mean that any one country shall arrogate to itself the right to impose its nationalism upon all other countries, thus making them international. There is an international ideal that must be upheld, and that ideal embraces freedom for all mankind, regardless of race, sex, creed, or color. But it remains for the workers in each nation to achieve their revolutionary aims through their own efforts, and not by accepting without question or scrutiny the program of the one country which first saw liberty through the light of its people.

Russia could no more invoke its revolutionary methods and manners upon American workers with any degree of success than a single American family could force their peculiar traditions and mannerisms

upon their neighbors. Any attempt so to do would only result in an open conflict which might possibly be aired in police court.

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I have gone into this subject from this angle because to me it is patent that by far the largest element of disagreement within our own ranks found source in the revolutionary inspiration furnished by the Russian revolution. Americans should not ignore the fact that this is America — and I cannot too often stress that geographical fact.

There is absolutely no certainty that the American workers would meet with success should they decide to abandon their own program of militant industrial and political unionism for that of Moscow; but there is a degree of certainty in the belief that they would get no hearing from the masses of American people. We cannot talk Russian temperament and psychology to American workers and voters and expect them to grasp its virtues in a twinkling, if at all. Nor would Russians lend a sympathetic ear to any American protagonist of political or industrial change if he sought to convert the Russian to the American plan.

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The workers in the United States must come together some time if they would be saved from the jaws of the capitalist shark. Their unions now are flung apart about as far as they well can be and still be called unions, and in a political sense, the workers were never weaker than they are at this very moment.

The time was never better than right now for unity between the factions of the industrial and political movement of this country. Divided, the workers will gain nothing. United, the world and all its treasures are theirs.

Let us cease bickering and quarreling, do the work that is necessary and within reach of our hand, and walk arm in arm toward Socialism.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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