

---

# An Answer from Debs.

by Theodore Debs

Published in *The Worker* [New York], v. 5, whole no. 237 (Aug. 26, 1922), pg. 2.

*The Worker* has received an answer from Eugene V. Debs to the questions addressed to him in its issue of Saturday, August 12, as a result of the protest sent by him to Nikolai Lenin on behalf of the Socialist Revolutionaries then on trial in Moscow. The answer is sent through Debs' brother, Theodore, and is as follows:

Terre Haute, Ind., August 9, 1922.

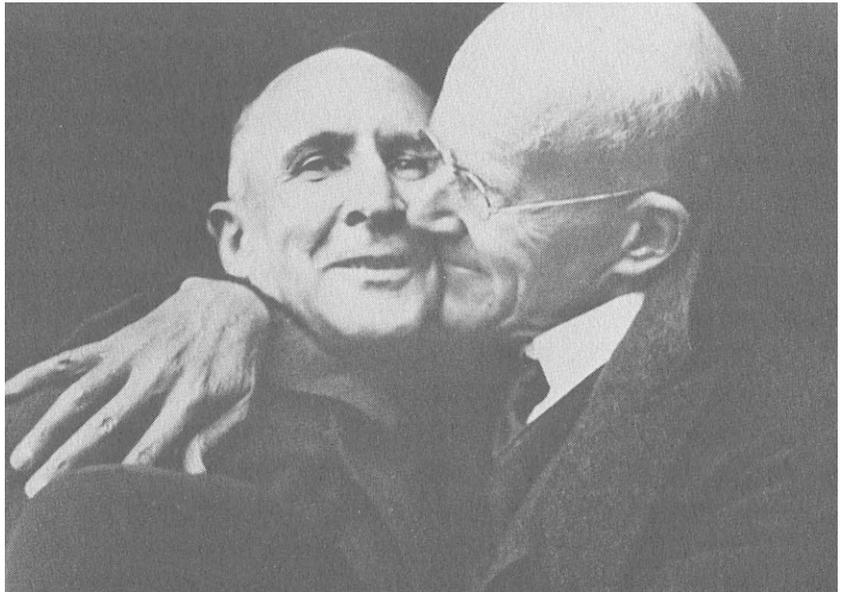
Dear Comrade Engdahl:—

Your letter to Gene of the 3rd ins. enclosing a copy of *The Worker* containing a marked article addressed to him duly reached him and been forwarded to me for attention. Gene is sick and undergoing treatment and in his condition and situation he is unable to give personal attention to matters of this kind but he directs me to make answer to you as follows: He has no statement to make. The cablegram to Moscow speaks for itself. It requires no explanation. It states his position and by that he stands. The attempt to make him appear the enemy of Lenin and the Soviet Government in face of the fact that from the hour that government was born he proclaimed himself its friend and has stood by it and defended and extolled Lenin and Trotsky in every word uttered and writ-

ten, is too false and silly to merit attention.

Your indictment of the Socialist Revolutionaries is complete but there is another side and you make no mention of it.

In the conflict between the Bolsheviki and the Socialist Revolutionaries the wild excesses were not confined to one side, as you would have it appear — the Socialist Revolutionaries were the victims as well as the perpetrators of outrages, and if they had been victorious and were now trying the Bolsheviki for high crimes in their courts with conviction as a foregone conclusion, Gene would protest against their execution as he does now against that of the Socialist Revolutionaries.



He does not believe in revenge, in capital punishment, in cold-blooded murder, and these brutal passions and atrocious crimes are all the more reprehensible in his eyes when committed

in the name of law and justice by Socialists who have for years been denouncing capitalism for these identical infamies.

If we believe in bloodthirsty revenge, in cruel reprisals and savage killings to satisfy our law and ethics, we are even lower than the capitalists and their mercenary hangmen, who at least make no pretense of such humane ideals as we profess and shamelessly betray the moment we succeed to power.

It will be insisted that the execution of the defendants in this case is a revolutionary necessity. Gene denies it!

He is convinced that the murder of these men would betray the weakness and fear of the Soviet Government and bring it into contempt all over the world among people who now give it their allegiance and support.

To be great enough, human enough, and generous enough to punish these men with their liberty instead of the hangman's halter would be the civilized method of dealing with them, thus setting up the higher ethical standard we profess and thereby commanding the confidence and respect of the whole world.

The Soviet Government has nothing more to fear from these defendants. Let it set them an example in Soviet morality and humanity and even the bitterest enemies of the Soviet Government will be to that extent disarmed and silenced.

Gene does not defend the acts of the Social-

ist Revolutionaries. He pleads for their lives as he would if they were the vilest criminals on earth, and if they had attempted to assassinate him instead of Lenin his attitude would be the same.

From the standpoint of mere policy, leaving out the question of human life, mercy instead of revenge at this time would be infinitely the wiser course of the Soviet Government; and as a loyal supporter of Lenin, Trotsky, and the Soviet Government he fervently hopes they will pursue that course.

Gene wishes me to say to you that personally he owes nothing to the Communists. When he was in that hell-hole at Atlanta, the Communists, with but few exceptions, ignored him and the rest of the political prisoners, and their papers, including the one you now edit, † were cold-bloodedly silent, not raising their voice nor lifting a finger to secure their release, and so far as they were concerned Gene would still be rotting, were he alive, in his dungeon in Atlanta.

You are at liberty to publish what is here said and if you do kindly send me a marked copy.

Gene wishes me to thank you sincerely for your message of personal kindness and to send you his cordial regards and best wishes, to which I take the liberty to add my own.

Yours fraternally,

Theodore Debs.

†- *The Worker* succeeded the Communist Party's legal organ, *The Toiler*, in January 1922, which in turn was a continuation of *The Ohio Socialist* [Cleveland].

*Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.*

*Photo: Theodore and Gene Debs at the time of the latter's release from prison, Dec. 1921.*

*Published by 1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR, 2006. • Free reproduction permitted.*