**Excerpt from the Speech of Eugene V. Debs at Canton, Ohio, June 16, 1918**

When the newspapers reported that Kaiser Wilhelm and ex-President Theodore recognized each other at sight, were perfectly intimate with each other at the first touch, they made the admission that is fatal to the claim of Theodore Roosevelt, that he is the friend of the common people and the champion of democracy; they admitted that they were kith and kin; that they were very much alike; that their ideas and ideals were about the same. If Theodore Roosevelt is the great champion of democracy —the arch foe of autocracy, what business had he as the guest of honor of the Prussian Kaiser? . . . Rather queer, isn’t it? And yet, he is the patriot, and we are the traitors. I challenge you to find a Socialist anywhere on the face of the earth who was ever the guest of the Beast of Berlin, except as an inmate of his prison . . .

A little more history along the same line. I have a distinct recollection of it. It occurred fifteen years ago when Prince Henry came here. All of our plutocracy, all of the wealthy representatives living along Fifth Avenue—all, all of them—threw their palace doors wide open and received Prince Henry with open arms. But they were not satisfied with this; they got down and grovelled in the dust at his feet. Our plutocracy—women and men alike—vied with each other to lick the boots of Prince Henry, the brother and representative of the “Beast of Berlin.” And still our plutocracy, our Junkers[[1]](#footnote-1), would have us believe that all the Junkers are confined to Germany. It is precisely because we refuse to believe this that they brand us as disloyalists. They want our eyes focused on the Junkers in Berlin so that we will not see those within our own borders.

I hate, I loathe, I despise Junkers and junkerdom. I have no earthly use for the Junkers of Germany, and not one particle more use for the Junkers in the United States.

They tell us that we live in a great free republic; that our institutions are democratic; that we are a free and self-governing people. This is too much, even for a joke . . .

To whom do the Wall Street Junkers in our country marry their daughters? After they have wrung their countless millions from your sweat, your agony and your life’s blood, in a time of war as in a time of peace, they invest these untold millions in the purchase of titles of broken-down aristocrats, such as princes, dukes, counts and other parasites and no-accounts. Would they be satisfied to wed their daughters to honest workingmen? To real democrats? Oh, no! They scour the markets of Europe for vampires who are titled and nothing else. And they swap their millions for the titles, so that matrimony with them becomes literally a matter of money.

These are the gentry who are today wrapped up in the American flag, who shout their claim from the housetops that they are the only patriots, and who have their magnifying glasses in hand, scanning the country for evidence of disloyalty, eager to apply the brand of treason to the men who dare to even whisper their opposition to Junker rule in the United Sates. No wonder Sam Johnson declared that “patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.” He must have had this Wall Street gentry in mind, or at least their prototypes, for in every age it has been the tyrant, the oppressor and the exploiter who has wrapped himself in the cloak of patriotism, or religion, or both to deceive and overawe the people.

1. A *Junker* is a minor landed aristocrat in Prussia. The *Junkers* owned most of the productive land and held influential positions both in the military and civilian government of the German Empire. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)