

# ROOSEVELT AND GOMPERS ROW AT RUSSIAN MEETING

## Colonel's Denunciation Turns Welcome to Envoys Into a Quarrel Over Race Riots.

### CROWD CHEERS, THEN BOOS

## Sympathy First With One, Then the Other, as Economic Argument Waxes Hot.

### RUSSIA'S IDEA OF PEACE

## Bakhmetieff Tells of Progress New Government Is Making In the War.

Bitter denunciation of the race riots in East St. Louis by Theodore Roosevelt, an attempt to explain them through the economic opposition of labor to imported negro workers, by Samuel Gompers, and a more impassioned reply by Colonel Roosevelt led almost to a fist fight on the stage of Carnegie Hall last night and provoked wild and prolonged disorder in the audience.

The hall was packed with people who had come to a meeting arranged by the American Friends of Russian Freedom, the American Ambulance in Russia, and the Mayor's Committee for the reception of the Russian Commission to greet Boris A. Bakhmetieff, the new Russian Ambassador, and his fellow-Commissioners, but Russia absorbed only a minor part of the interest of the evening.

The central feature was the Colonel. He was cheered deafeningly for long minutes when he entered, introduced by Mayor Mitchel as "the foremost private citizen of our country," cheered again in his appeal to America to cast the beam of racial violence out of her own eye and in his attacks on German militarism; and then, when he bent over Mr. Gompers afterward and shook his fist in his face so closely that to people in the auditorium it must have appeared that he was striking him, he was hooted and hissed by a crowd which at times silenced him with boos and made the galleries ring with shouts of protest.

It was the final ceremony of a day of reception to the Russian Embassy, and Mayor Mitchel brought the crowd to quiet with a stern reminder that the meeting had gathered to greet the nation's guests and for no other purpose. Then Ambassador Bakhmetieff took up his speech, already prepared, and read it as if nothing had happened.

#### A Quarrel of Ideas.

It was not a mere quarrel between Roosevelt and Gompers, it was a division in the crowd—a crowd gathered together from all the friends of new Russia—Socialists and workmen who saw chiefly the economic provocation of the riot, and members of other classes who had more feeling of its horror. And the whole day's reception had been given by crowds just as mixed—at the Battery when the commissioners landed, at the City Hall, where they were welcomed by the city, and along the streets through which they drove.

Today there will be a luncheon at the Claremont given by the Mayor and a mass meeting of Socialist and Russian revolutionaries at Madison Square Garden at night to greet the revolutionary democracy of Russia. And persons who heard the frantic shouting of defiance back and forth between opposing groups in the galleries last night expressed fear lest the commission experience further signs of discord.

Colonel Roosevelt was the hero of the Carnegie Hall meeting the moment he came on the stage with the Mayor, the Russian Commissioners, and the local committee of reception.

There were cheers for the Mayor and the Ambassador, but they were drowned by the sudden outburst of applause for "Teddy." Carnegie Hall was full; thousands of people had been unable to gain admission; and of the thousands inside there did not seem to be one who was not shouting for him. The Russian Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Modest Altschuler, which had furnished a preliminary musical program, swung into the Russian revolutionary hymn as the commission entered, but people six rows away from them could not tell what they were playing. They went through to the end, and only then, when the Mayor and others on the stage heard the opening of "The Star-Spangled Banner" through the din was the crowd persuaded to stop shouting and join in the anthem.

When it had finished there were more shouts for the Colonel, a group of half a dozen sailors in a box and an old man jumping up and down in the second row being particularly prominent. After perhaps five minutes more the Mayor managed to still the crowd long enough to introduce the Colonel as the first speaker.

"We all love him," he said, "we all respect him, we all honor him, and there are many of us who would gladly follow his leadership on the field of battle." There were more wild cheers, finally subsiding after the Colonel had raised his hand, but breaking out once more when a sailor yelled: "What's the matter with Teddy?" and a voice from the floor called: "Nothing!" A woman cried down from the gallery: "Why can't he go?" and it was a long time before the crowd became quiet enough to let him begin.

Colonel Roosevelt had his prepared speech in his hand, but did not come to it at the outset.

#### "Stain on American Name."

"Before we speak of justice for others," he said, "it behooves us to do justice within our own household. Within the week there has been an appalling outbreak of savagery in a race riot at East St. Louis, a race riot for which, as far as we can see, there was no real provocation, and which, whether there was provocation or not, was waged with such an access of appalling brutality as to leave a stain on the American name. [Applause.]

"Now, friends, the longer I live the more I grow to abhor rhetoric that isn't based on facts, words that aren't translated into deeds. And when we applaud the birth of democracy in another people, the spirit which insists on treating each man on the basis of his

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rights as a man, refusing to deny to the humblest the rights that are his, when we present such a greeting to the representatives of a foreign nation it behooves us to express our deep condemnation of acts that give the lie to our words within our own country.

"It behooves us to say that it is impossible that there should be a justification for mob violence, for brutality and murder in this democracy. To ask—that isn't strong enough—to demand that the Government agencies shall use with ruthless severity every instrumentality to place the responsibility for this is our first duty.

"We must insist first of all upon the restoration of order, upon the reign of law, and then on the foundation of law and order we can build up the superstructure of justice.

"So much for this brief eulogy of my fellow-citizens," the Colonel finished with a grin, and then turned to his prepared speech. It was praise of free Russia, warning against "doctrinaire idealists and sinister extremists," and then a warning to America, a reminder that Russia had been fighting for three years before we got started, and that it was now our duty to fight as hard as we could. There was much in it that pleased the crowd—declarations that "if any man's conscience is so tender that it tells him not to fight for his country he'd better take it out and look at it"; recommendations of conscientious objectors for duty on mine sweepers, where they couldn't hurt anybody else, and a call to all men of military age to fight and leave ambulance, Red Cross, and Y. M. C. A. work to those physically unable to take their place in the firing line.

After a brief eulogy of the moral, mental, and physical excellences of the people ruled by the Czar, and an equally painted deprecation of the Government under which they were oppressed and repressed, Mr. Roosevelt said:

"Therefore, we hail you, men and women of the new Russia, with heartfelt rejoicing. Now at last we can wish all success to Russia without any misgiving or mental reservations. Now we feel that the mighty Slav Republic has blazed the trail of freedom and has won in legitimate fashion the right to stand in the forefront of the onward movement of mankind.

"All of us who love Russia are thankful beyond measure for the refusal of the Russian people to avenge past wrongs by the commission of present wrongs; we honor them for the steadfast turning away from that course of action which would stain the hands of liberty with blood. Therefore, we most earnestly hope that what Russia has by daring and courage achieved she will now preserve by cool-headed wisdom and moderation.

"And, oh, my friends, strive to secure liberty in the world at large, and therefore treat as traitors to Russia and to mankind all men who do not insist upon your exerting every particle of your great strength to secure complete victory over Germany and her allies and tools."

## Gompers Takes Up Riot.

Mr. Gompers, the next speaker, started by declaring his approval of "the general sentiments" of Colonel Roosevelt's speech.

"But," he said, "I want to explain a feature of the East St. Louis riots with which the general public is unacquainted. I join with you and with him and with all in expressing the detestation of any brutal conduct.

"But I can tell you—and I wish I had brought with me a copy of a telegram received today from Victor Hollander, Secretary of the Illinois Federation of Labor—I can tell you that not only labor men but a member of the Chamber of Commerce of East St. Louis warned the men engaged in luring negroes form the South that they were to be used in undermining the conditions of the laborer in East St. Louis.

"The luring of these colored men to East St. Louis is on a par with the behavior of the brutal, reactionary, and tyrannous forces that existed in Old Russia."

There was vigorous applause at this, not only from the galleries but from the floor, as far as any one could see, from the same people who had applauded Colonel Roosevelt.

"This is not a war against a political fault in one country alone," said Mr. Gompers. "It is a war for real democracy of the world. The poor devil working under debasing conditions in old Russia was no worse off than the man on whom there are imposed the same conditions in free America." [Applause.]

"The authors of the Declaration of Independence based that document on the right of the people to change the Government if it failed to respond to the needs of the people." [At this there was wild cheering from the galleries.]

"Not all the ideals in the heart and mind of the American people have been achieved; there is altogether too much injustice in free America." [Applause, mingled with hisses.] "But even with the faults that we know and the criticism that we believe to be justified we are yet conscious of the fact that there is a larger degree of freedom and justice in America than in any other country in the world."

Then he went on with declarations for firm support of the Government and our allies, denunciation of peace moves as coming from pro-German sources or neutrals too terrorized for free expression, and closed with an expression of the need for war against German militarism. Colonel Roosevelt, who had been fidgeting in his chair, where he sat with only Martin W. Littleton between him and Mr. Gompers, whispered to the Mayor, who announced: "Colonel Roosevelt wants to say another word." And there was another burst of cheers.

## Fist in Gompers's Face.

"I am not willing," said the Colonel, "that a meeting called to commemorate the birth of democracy and justice in Russia shall seem to have given any approval of or apology for the infamous brutalities that have been committed on negroes at East St. Louis. Justice with me is not a mere phrase or form of words. It is to be translated into living action. How can we praise the people of Russia for doing justice to the men within their boundaries if we in any way apologize for murder committed on the helpless?"

"In the past I have listened to the same form of excuse advanced in behalf of the Russian autocracy for pogroms of Jews. Not for a moment shall I acquiesce in any apology for the murder of women and children in our own country. I am a democrat of democrats. I will do anything for the laboring man except what is wrong."

He strode over to Mr. Gompers and shook his fist under the labor leader's nose.

"I don't care a snap of my finger," the Colonel shouted, "for any telegram from the head of the strongest labor union in Illinois. This took place in a Northern state, where the whites outrank the negroes twenty to one. And if in that State the white men can't protect their rights by their votes against an insignificant minority, and have to protect them by the murder of women and children, then the people of the State which sent Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency must bow their heads. We must have investigations—"

Mr. Gompers rose from his chair and broke in: "Investigations afterward, not before—"

"I'd put down the murderers first and investigate afterward," shouted the Colonel, amid a chorus of groans from the gallery. He shook his fist so close to Mr. Gompers's face that he seemed almost to graze it again and again, standing over him as he sat quiet, but burning red and waving his arms up and down. The crowd was howling wildly by this time, in the galleries and on the floor, and there was a burst of

boos that completely drowned the Colonel for a time.

"I will go to any extreme necessary to bring justice to the laboring man," he said, "to insure him his economic place, (a burst of groans and howls,) but when there is murder I'll put it down and I'll never surrender." This time the calls of disapproval were drowned by applause. "Oh, friends, we have gathered to greet the men and women of new Russia, a republic founded on the principles of justice to all, equity to all."

"On such an evening never will I sit motionless while directly or indirectly apology is made for the murder of the helpless!"

And then he took his seat, while the crowd raged at him or at Mr. Gompers, with groups downstairs howling at groups upstairs, women shrieking and waving their arms, sailors shouting at men in the boxes opposite or in the dress circle above. All over the house people were standing up, yelling outbursts which were quite indistinguishable in the general din; but as Mayor Mitchel rose and tried to quiet them the volume of sound rolled higher. Finally it paused for a moment and the Mayor said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have gathered here to greet the envoys of the Russian people." He was interrupted by more boos and shouts against Roosevelt, but finally obtained quiet and continued sharply: "And for no other purpose than to tender to them this reception and the congratulations of the people of New York." Then he introduced Ambassador Bakhmetieff, and the crowd which a moment before had been howling denunciations back and forth now rose unanimously and cheered the Russian envoy as if there had been no untoward incident at all.

## Defines Russia's Peace Idea.

The Ambassador defined "peace without annexation or indemnities" as "peace which shall not permit the seizure of the homes and fields of the neighbor; peace that excludes forcible conquest of alien lands and enslavement of peoples. Russia believes that a permanent peace can be enacted when all democracies will agree to hold to and follow certain precepts and embody them with all sincerity and without reserve."

He declared that the period of misunderstanding and confusion was largely over and that the achievements of Kerensky and Brusiloff at the head of a democratic army were the best answer to rumors of a separate peace. The illusion that the German people would liberate themselves and make peace, he said, was an illusion which had to be lived through.

"People hear about labor troubles," he said, "but do they know that the production of metal in April increased almost 100 per cent. over what it had been in February? People hear of disorder and anarchy in some localities in Siberia and the Far East, but do they recognize that the Siberian railway is taking out of Vladivostok from four to five times as much goods as it did before the revolution?"

"The outstanding feature of the present political situation is the formation of a national will, the crystallization after some time of vacillation of the majority of the nation around a national Government on the basis of a national program. It is a program which has rallied round the Provisional Government all of those to whom the liberties of Russia are dear and who want to establish Russia's freedom firm and everlasting. They know that if the opportunity of the new freedom were taken to pursue the class struggle it would mean ruin to Russia."

Mayor Mitchel, in opening the meeting, said that Professor Bakhmetieff and his colleagues were representatives not so much of the Government as of the people and spirit of Russia. He recounted incidents of the historic friendship of the two nations, and said: "We are not only allies and comrades, but brother democrats, federated not merely by justifiable self-interest, but by an ideal and an aspiration."

Before the hall was darkened for the pictures the guests left the stage and the hall by the rear exit. While they were departing the doors to the hall were kept closed.

Colonel Roosevelt was surrounded by his friends on the way to a waiting automobile. He was still shaking hands when the chauffeur started the car. "This is the greatest day of your life," said one enthusiastic admirer.

The Colonel, who had refused to talk to reporters, said to one man who asserted that the affair in East St. Louis was murder: "Murder is not justifiable, it is not debatable. I could take no other course but to speak out."

Mr. Gompers came down the steps to a waiting car with Mayor Mitchel. The Colonel's car had departed and so apparently had most of those who had pressed about him and shaken his hand. Mr. Gompers was still visibly agitated over his encounter with Roosevelt.

"Mr. Roosevelt," he said emphatically, "imagines himself the custodian of the morals of the world. He goes ahead without having all the facts. I warned him earlier that I knew more of the facts of the case than he did, but it did not stop him. He was not to be stopped. It was another chance for him to rush into the lime-light, and, of course, he took it."

Friends closed in about Mr. Gompers and one man spoke of the incident as a misunderstanding.

"There was no misunderstanding," said Mr. Gompers. "I wanted to set Mr. Roosevelt right. I certainly have more facts than he has. He assumed the holier-than-thou attitude."

There was no disturbance when the guests left the hall. Most of the audience remained to see the moving pictures, and the few who found their way around to the rear of the building could not get through the cordon of police to where the automobiles were waiting.