

Editorial: The Russian Treaty

The treaty with Russia, that is said to have been ratified by the Senate, is a master-piece of chicanery, and the leading spirit in the disgraceful affair is Secretary of State Foster.

The objectionable features of the treaty are its extradition clauses, which include political offences among extradictable crimes. Objection was raised to this very clause when Secretary Bayard was at the head of the State Department, and the treaty then proposed was pigeon-holed. Subsequently, however, Secretary Foster took up the matter anew and, as it seems, rushed it through in silence.

But the secret has again leaked out. In view of the formidable opposition that is being developed anew against the treaty, Secretary Foster attempts to justify his course by stating that the present terms of our treaty are exactly like those of the treaty between Russia and Belgium, and are as follows:

“An attempt against the life of the head of either government, or against that of any members of his family, when such attempt comprises the act of either murder or assassination or of poisoning, shall not be considered a political offence or an act connected with such an offence.”

Secretary Foster could not have more effectively placed upon himself the seal of infamy than by excusing himself with this argument.

Belgium and the United States at a par, indeed! That the Belgian crown, whose people is virtually disfranchised and, accordingly, thrown upon and assigned to physical force

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against the government as the only means of expressing their wishes, should sympathize with his precious brother of the Russian Knout, whose people are similarly situated, and that both these tyrants and relics of barbarism should try and screen each other, and deliver to each other, whatever subject should be impertinent enough to have an opinion of his own, and, if not allowed a civilized way of expressing his views, falls back upon the ways which his masters themselves employ,—that is not only natural, but is in the order of things. That, however, the United States, whose populations have free access to ballot box, who thus can express their opinions, and who can thus dispose of their governments in short order, that the United States should take a similar step is a blot upon our name; it is tantamount to our approval of the tyranny of Belgium and the greater tyranny of Russia. We have by such a treaty nothing to gain, as Belgium has; we have everything to lose, our honor.

This ignominy, this double ignominy is placed upon us by Secretary Foster. We are by this treaty made to condone the political slavery under which the Russian people groans; and we are to be degraded down to the level of Belgium so as to justify our conduct.

The excuse of Secretary Foster only enhances the enormity of his offending.

But there may be more behind this treaty than appears on the surface. Who knows but that it is one of the first open manifestations of the designs entertained against the American people by the class that the present and the incoming administrations represent! Who knows but that the argument: “Because Belgium has such a treaty with Russia, so should we,” is not intended as a preparatory pipe-laying and precedent for some subsequent reasoning to this effect: “Because we have such a treaty with Russia as Belgium has, therefore should we place ourselves upon the same level with Belgium, bring our civil and political rights down to the Belgian standard, and disfranchise our working people!”

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Every step of our ruling class for the last five years points in that direction.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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