

Document A: Eugene V. Debs Speech (Modified)

Eugene V. Debs was a founding member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), U.S. presidential candidate of the Socialist Party of America, and one of the most famous American socialists. This excerpt is from a speech he gave across the street from a jail, where he had just visited three socialists who were in prison for opposing the draft.

Comrades, friends and fellow-workers, . . . three of our most loyal comrades are paying the penalty for their devotion to the cause of the working class. They have come to realize, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world. . . .

Every one of the **aristocratic conspirators** and would- be murderers claims to be an **arch-patriot**; every one of them insists that the war is being waged to make the world safe for democracy. What humbug! What rot! What false **pretense**! These . . . tyrants, these red-handed robbers and murderers, [say they're] the "patriots," while the men who have the courage to stand face to face with them, speak the truth, and fight for their exploited victims—they are [called] the disloyalists and traitors. If this be true, I want to take my place side by side with the traitors in this fight. . . .

[He] who owns the earth and tells you that we are fighting this war to make the world safe for democracy—he who profiteers at the expense of the people who have been **slain** and mutilated by the thousands, under pretense of being the great American patriot . . . is in fact the archenemy of the people; it is he that you need to wipe from power. It is he who is a far greater menace to your liberty and your well-being than the . . . [Germans] on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Source: Socialist leader Eugene Debs delivered this speech in June 1918.

Vocabulary

aristocratic: upper-class

conspirators : criminals

arch-patriot: great patriot

pretense: attempt to make something that is not the case appear to be true

slain: killed in battle