

My Soviet Passport

JUNE 29, 2018

STRUGGLESSESSIONS

We are posting this poem by the celebrated revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky to celebrate the art of class struggle. This poem was written in 1929, it is vivid and energetic and a good example of proletarian art and culture. We encourage our readers to suggest poems or submit their own work.

I'd tear
like a wolf
at bureaucracy.

For mandates
my respect's but the slightest.
To the devil himself
I'd chuck without mercy
every red-taped paper.
But this ...
Down the long front
of coupés and cabins
File the officials
politely.
They gather up passports
and I give in
My own vermilion booklet.
For one kind of passport –
smiling lips part
For others –
an attitude scornful.
They take
with respect, for instance,
the passport
From a sleeping-car
English Lionel.
The good fellows eyes
almost slip like pips
when,
bowing as low as men can,
they take,
as if they were taking a tip,
the passport
from an American.
At the Polish,
they dolefully blink and wheeze
in dumb
police elephantism –

where are they from,
and what are these
geographical novelties?
And without a turn
of their cabbage heads,
their feelings
hidden in lower regions,
they take without blinking,
the passports from Swedes
and various
old Norwegians.

Then sudden
as if their mouths were
quake
those gentlemen almost
whine

Those very official gentlemen
take
that red-skinned passport
of mine.

Take-
like a bomb
take – like a hedgehog,
like a razor
double-edge stropped,
take –
like a rattlesnake huge and long
with at least
20 fangs
poison-tipped.

The porter's eyes
give a significant flick
(I'll carry your baggage
for nix,

mon ami...)

The gendarmes enquiringly
look at the tec,
the tec, –
at the gendarmerie.

With what delight
that gendarme caste
would have me
strung-up and whipped raw
because I hold
in my hands
hammered-fast
sickle-clasped
my red Soviet passport.

I'd tear
like a wolf
at bureaucracy.
For mandates
my respect's but the slightest.

To the devil himself
I'd chuck
without mercy
every red-taped paper,

But this ...
I pull out
of my wide trouser-pockets
duplicate
of a priceless cargo.

You now:
read this
and envy,
I'm a citizen
of the Soviet Socialist Union!

Poem by Mayakovsky, 1929

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