
Letter to Robert Minor in Paris from Max Eastman in New York City, June 2, 1919

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June 2, 1919.

Robert Minor
Hotel des Etas Unis
Rue d'Antin
Paris, France.

Dear Bob:

I sent you a cable urging you to send me the articles about Germany immediately. When I sent it I thought that I was going to publish the article with some of our own comments on it. After further reflection, however, I decided that it would be a terrible misfortune to the movement in this country, either as you view it or as I view it, to have this article or your letter published now. And so I am neither going to publish it in *The Liberator*, nor send it elsewhere unless I receive a direct mandate from you.

It is impossible to go into the whole situation in a letter, but I can say this much: I notice that you still believe in the class struggle, and I can assure you that many a capitalist editor would pay a big price for this article as ammunition to be used against labor in that struggle. For me that is enough and I hope it will be enough for you. I want to add that I have reached this decision only after consulting not only Floyd [Dell], but John Reed and Arturo Giovannitti — the latter still an uncompromising syndicalist and more opposed to political Socialism than ever. They all agree with

me that while the facts in your article so far as they are uninterpreted by you are valuable and ought to be known, and while the article itself is an extremely brilliant piece of journalism, your point of view which you force upon the reader with extraordinary vigor is fundamentally counterrevolutionary. The bourgeois ideology of freedom carried to an absolute, constitutes the revolution for you — as also for [Lincoln] Steffens. The revolution is an economic change, and ought to ignore bourgeois ideology altogether in order to give to the working class, through a process of state formation and state decay which is quite clearly conceived by Lenin and by all the rest of the revolutionists, a real freedom in the end.

This sounds hasty and didactic but only because it is an attempt to sum up in a very brief and highly abstract form the many conclusions about you and Steffens, and about your article, upon which all of us four very different people are absolutely agreed. I hope to God you won't insist upon its being published.

Perhaps in view of this great difference in our opinions you won't feel like sending us the German story. I still hope you will, however, for I have an idea that your account of a revolution in the state which the German revolution has reached when you were there could inspire the workers in their struggle in this country instead of supplying ammunition to the capitalists.

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About your stuff in the *World*, I did feel sure that some of those sentences could not have been yours, even if you had gone crazy. I remember particularly picking out that sentence about Chicherin's "insolence" and saying, "Bob never could have written that." You will understand, however, that I was not thinking of you so much as I was thinking of the effect of those stories on the movement in this country in what I wrote. The article by Mr. X. I did not see before it was published as I was in the West at the time. And although I suggested its being written I think if I had seen it when it was written I should not have published it. I enclose another article about you which I made out of paragraphs from your letters given to me by Vera Zaliasnik when I spoke in San Francisco. I do not know what you will feel like doing in the light of all this, but my advice to you is to let the whole matter of the *World* interview stop just where it is until you get back and

find out at first hand what the conditions are in this country. In your perfectly unmixed devotion to the truth as you see it over there, you naturally do not realize as we do the very different meaning which much of what you say acquires over here. I wish you would wait. And if you do send other stories I wish you would tell me definitely whether I can have the privilege of cutting them in any respect in view of the situation here. I need not tell you that we are all very sad about the point of view you are taking in the international revolution which is in progress. It seems to us impractical and sentimental when it is of the utmost importance if it ever was in history, to be practical and scientific.

We may seem a little top lofty in thinking we understand you so well, but we love you as ever and wish you would come back home.

Max Eastman.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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