
Robert Minor Misrepresented: Letter to the Editor of *The New Republic*.

by Robert Minor

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Sir:

Can I get *The New Republic* to correct a false impression which may be unimportant but which might, on the other hand, be very dangerous?

On the 9th of last December [1918], Nikolai Lenin gave me, as a journalist, a statement to the effect that his government was willing to re-assume responsibility for the debts of the old Russian regime. In response to one of my questions regarding another matter, Lenin remarked that the Entente and American governments were “not building a League of Nations, but a league of imperialists to strangle the nations.” I was mortally sure at that time, as I am now, that his chief reason for this caustic comment was the apparent fact that the Russian Republic was to be excluded from the League of Nations and that the latter’s first undertaking would be by warfare to force the Russian people to accept a different form of government.

Some weeks later I reached Germany and sold the Lenin interview to a New York newspa-

per through its Berlin correspondent.

The Allied and American governments had meanwhile extended the Prinkipo invitation.† When the Lenin interview appeared in print, it had been changed so as to appear to have been given at a much later date and to be Lenin’s answer to the Prinkipo invitation.

Now, whereas at a time when no move had been made to get in touch with Russia, Lenin said he considered the League a “league of imperialists to strangle the nations,” I am certain that he would not have made such a comment upon an invitation to parley. His answer, when it came, was an acceptance, as you know.

In the month I have been in Paris, I have made several efforts to straighten out the matter, but not a word of correction has succeeded in reaching America, so far as I know.

Robert Minor,
Paris, France.

†- On Jan. 24, 1919, the leading Allied powers issued a radio call to “all organized groups exercising or attempting to exercise power in any part of the former Russian territory” to attend a conference to be held at Prinkipo, a small island located in the sea of Marmara near Constantinople. This offer was accepted by the Soviet government in their reply of Feb. 4, 1919, in which it additionally stated that Soviet Russia did not refuse to recognize its financial obligations to foreign nationals, that it offered to guarantee payment of interest on loans through deliveries of raw materials, and that it was further willing to grant concessions to nationals of the Allied powers for the extraction of natural resources. The proposed Prinkipo conference broke down due to the refusal of the various White Russian governments to participate, bolstered by the covert opposition of the French. Plans for armed intervention against Soviet Russia by France and Britain were advanced instead. [E.H. Carr: *A History of Soviet Russia*, v. 3, pp. 110-111. Text of the Prinkipo call in *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1919: Russia*, pp. 30-31.]

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport.

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