

Two Letters from Adam Weishaupt, Founder of the Order of the Illuminati (1776)

Abstract

The order of the Illuminati was a secret society established in 1776 by the German scholar and professor Adam Weishaupt (1748–1830). The society aimed to improve mankind and thereby bring about the abolition of the rulership of men over men. Mainly active in the Electorate of Bavaria, the society was banned in 1784/85.

In these two letters, Weishaupt gives his confidant Franz Anton von Massenhausen instructions on how he and other members of the order should proceed in recruiting new members in order to quickly extend the reach of the society. Weishaupt also describes the characteristics that new members should possess, such as good manners and social skills. He adds that, whenever possible, recruits should be hard-working, skillful, powerful, and rich.

Source

Weishaupt to Massenhausen [Eichstätt], September 19, 1776

My dearest friend!

I presume that you have received my last letter. There are too many people in the house, so I cannot write as freely as I do at home. That is why my letters are more infrequent.

When we get together again, I will fill the bowl of my pretty pipe and make it up to you. Until then, I thank you for your efforts.

Every day, I think about and apply myself to our great “building project.” Continue working at your end, too, and send along some “building blocks.” Don’t let up on your efforts. Seek the company of younger people, observe them, and if you find one who is suitable, take hold of him. I, too, have found another one who is attractive and insightful. What you cannot accomplish yourself, do through others. Agathon, Danaus, and Schafesbury are given *modum imperii* to mingle with young people, observe them, have them recruit others, make suggestions, and then wait for orders. This must happen immediately. Using the form that was sent to him, Agathon should send a list of the young people that he encountered during his stay. *This is imperative.*

Assuming that your journey does not inhibit your efforts there, I see no reason why this should not succeed. Christ also sent his apostles out into the world, so why should I leave my Peter at home? *Ite et praedicate.*

The 9.4.13.19.8. (D-I-N-T-E in Illuminati code) may do well or not, but it will work. With the 8.17.9. (E-R-D) just beginning, *Fac ut venias onustus spoliis, non indecoro pulvere sordidus.*

I remain yours,

Spartacus [Adam Weishaupt’s Illuminati alias]

September 19, 1776

Weishaupt to Massenhausen [Eichstätt, c. Oct. 1776]

Spartacus Ajaci S.

If Winterhaltern is to become one of us, he will have to be refined quite a bit. In the first place, I do not care at all for the way he walks, his manners are crude and unpolished, and I have no idea how he thinks. Most of all, I would recommend that he change his uncouth nature. He must become a completely different person, and so far, he is not of much use to Carolino.

With Lucullus, I wish to *ad notam* that he also pays 3 fl. every week. *And if you have not yet found a room, I will take care of it for you.*

You all should go after cavaliers! I believe I can bring two on board who are also church canons. If my plan for the cathedral chapters succeeds, we will have made great strides. *Look for clever young people* and not such coarse fellows. Our people, especially the first ones, must be engaging, enterprising, intriguing, and capable. Once the recruits have had their eyes opened, they must see people they respect and who appear to be happy with their station in life. Seek out the *nobiles, potentes, divites, and doctos quaerite*. I don't know about Agathon; I have my doubts that we will keep him. He has a good head, but a corrupt and malicious heart, which is exactly what is most harmful to us. I believe he is a man who is difficult to tame, and his furtive and excessive sense of pride will not allow it. I hear him give but little praise, and he has made many enemies for himself through his surly and antisocial nature. As far as I can tell, he does not apply himself to our matters with any special zeal.

I cannot send instructions for Carolini because I do not have my papers with me. You can write *pro qualitate recipiendi* as you please, or you can just leave it out.

If you people in Munich accomplish as much as I do here, great strides will be made. Seeking affiliation; with connections to good people; this is a must, *inertes animae!* And have no regrets about your efforts. Sometimes one must play the servant in order to become the master one day. I have recruited a fellow who I prefer over ten others. And, just for you, I have already found another exceptional thinker, who you should take over from me during the school year. We need skillful, hard-working, wealthy, well-behaved, powerful people.

From Schleich, I'm keeping the following:

- 1) Porta Physiognomia coelstis.
- 2) Campanella de Monarchia, de sensu rerum.
- 3) [Bo]dinum de Republica.

You can invest in Fludd's book. *Est liber rarus*, and it is inexpensive. I wish to collect works about politics, and you should collect chemistry and physics. If only Guttmann's *Revelation [Offenbahrung]* etc. etc. were not so expensive. *Est liber valde rarus*. I'm pleased that Schleich found these rare books. Another thing: Collect all the reading material that you can get, whether as gifts or otherwise, especially poetry, novels, comedies, and other books that are currently popular. I also want to make a large contribution of my own books. I suspect that they could become a source of income for us, so I wish to continue gathering more of them. *Pro nostra Republica nihil est inutile*. You will soon see why I need you and keep in place what you collect.

Aude aliquid. Try making a worthwhile recruitment in Munich. Are you not known in noble households? And if not, does Danaus know anyone at all? You are aware, of course, that you only have to make an effort with the right cavalier, and eventually he will deliver up others to us.

Flectere si neque[o] superos, Acheronta move[b]o.

There are many good young people in Munich. In order to quickly create a thorough list, I should live there. *Actu*, that which people are not, they can still become. That is why we have set a time of two years, and you must also put up with Carolini. If you do well in this period, you will be appropriately promoted. Apart from that, let me go ahead and take care of things, and only write to me when you want to meet.

I wrote to you a while ago using the envelopes provided. If you did not receive my letter, in which there was also one for Danaus, it is due to the illegible writing of the address. So check with Hertel, or at the post office. That is the main reason why I don't want to use these envelopes.

Source: *Die Korrespondenz des Illuminatenordens. Band I: 1776-1781*. Edited by Reinhard Markner, Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, and Hermann Schüttler. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2005, pp. 4–5, 8–11.

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