

Bulletin of the

BAKVNIN LIBRARY



Number 1

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The Bakunin Library is a project to translate the major works of Bakunin into English. Print volumes will be released by Corvus Editions and PM Press. Updates and digital texts are available at:

bakuninlibrary.org

What is the Bakunin Library?

Progress Report: January 2014

While I've been posting plenty of draft translations to the blog, it's been some time since I've been able to say much about the progress of the *Bakunin Library* project. The publisher and I spent quite a bit of last year negotiating the shape of the *Bakunin Reader* and the subsequent volumes, and there has been a lot of mostly useful back and forth in the process. But progress has not always been without a hitch, and as we entered December of last year I found myself at the beginning of another look through Bakunin's works, trying to outline a slightly different *Reader*, to kick off a slightly reimagined *Bakunin Library*. I'm getting to the end of that process now, and am quite happy with the results. In the end, I think the project will have benefited enormously from the extra consideration.

It has been an interesting journey, attempting to put the edition together. It is clear that there is quite a bit of interest in more Bakunin in English, but it isn't always clear just where the interest is focused. We've had to use our best judgment to a large extent in anticipating what sorts of collections, and in what order, are likely to prove most useful to our readership. The most difficult problem, of course, is that we are having to plan and discover simultaneously. Not only has most of Bakunin's work not been available in English, but existing translations have themselves generally been shaped by the complexities of Bakunin's work. Whether they have been drawn from larger—and in some cases, much, *much* larger works—or whether they have been edited to suit other needs, the existing translations have generally presented some of Bakunin, but seldom given a very complete picture.

It has been interesting promoting the project on social media sites, and learning from others what they think about Bakunin's style, his interests, his politics, etc. It appears to me that for many readers the appeal of Bakunin lies as much in the simplicity of Guy Aldred's paraphrases, or Sam Dolgoff's tendency to smooth Bakunin's prose, or the artful selection made by various editors from his sprawling manuscripts, as it does in Bakunin's own eloquence. Virtually all of those who have edited and translated Bakunin in the past have done tremendous services for those interested in his work, including those who have compiled, or are now engaged in compiling, collections and editions in languages other than English. If it weren't for the very scholarly editions of some and the very *usable* translations of others, I

wouldn't feel nearly as comfortable pursuing the approach that we have settled on, of attempting to present Bakunin the anarchist in a largely anarchist critical framework, as a sort of extension of the work done by James Guillaume in the 19th century. Dolgoff's translation choices occasionally baffle me, and Aldred's translations sometimes stretched the term to the breaking point, but I feel very fortunate to have had those pioneers in front of me, preparing the ground for a somewhat different, sometimes more difficult, but also often more interesting Bakunin.

This is a grassroots, labor-of-love project, just like that of most of our predecessors, including Aldred, Dolgoff, Guillaume, Max Nettlau, Benjamin Tucker and Sarah E. Holmes. We'll just be able to take things a few steps farther, in part thanks to the lessons learned from those who came before, both in terms of the scope of the project and by presenting translation that I hope more directly capture Bakunin's voice.

The first of those steps will be the *Bakunin Reader*. I'm near finalizing the contents, which will almost certainly include:

- "The Story of My Life" [*All titles are tentative.*]
- "Hamlet"
- "Plan for a revolutionary association" (c. 1866)
- "Speech of the citizen Bakunin to a public assembly of foreign socialists"
- "A Few Words to My Young Brothers in Russia"
- "Report of the Commission on the Question of Inheritance"
- "The Death Penalty in Russia"
- "The Swiss Police"
- "Science and the Vital Question of the Revolution"
- "Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis"
- "Pan-Slavism"
- "Bourgeois Oligarchy"
- "Is Nechayev a Political Criminal or Not?"
- and a short "Memoir" written shortly before Bakunin's death

There are all sorts of bibliographical complexities involved, which we'll document where there is likely to be any confusion. For example, the "Letters to a Frenchman" is not the text partially translated in Dolgoff's collection, but another text on roughly the same topic. As the manuscript is finalized, I also hope to make space for these additional texts:

- "The Principle of the State"
- "Where to Go and What to Do?"

- "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State"
- "The Policy of the International"
- "Integral Education"

But there is a delicate balance to be struck in this initial volume between including as many of Bakunin's concerns as possible and avoiding unnecessary repetition. Everything on the list will eventually appear in the *Bakunin Library*, but it is possible that not all will be included, or included in their entirety, in the *Reader*.

August Update

All the translations have been prepared in rough-draft form and work is progressing steadily to complete the manuscripts of the *Bakunin Reader* and *The Principles and Organization of the International Revolutionary Society* (the source of the revolutionary and national catechisms.) A small, but timely donation has allowed me to pull together some needed resources for the next phase. Through the rest of 2014 and probably most of 2015, it will be necessary to work simultaneously on two or three volumes, so that Bakunin's massive masterwork, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*, which will probably require a couple of years' worth of work, can appear in a timely manner.

We're in the early stages of a long work, but things are coming together pretty nicely.

— Shawn P. Wilbur, editor

Undated fragment on pan-Slavism and anarchism

...and which has consequently rendered impossible at present the constitution of a centralist, bureaucratic and military Slavic State... In the end that fine Slavic brotherhood, which could no longer exist from the moment that the Slavs, sacrificing Abel to Cain, received the latter, as their elder brother, into their midst... in a word all the precious elements that the Slavs have guarded, in the midst of the terrible vicissitudes that they have experienced for centuries, which, rendered fertile by a new spirit—that of great justice, great liberty and universal fraternity—could well become one day those of a new and great civilization.

There is one other point that profoundly separates me from our pan-Slavists. They are still partisans of unity, always preferring discipline, the yoke of authority, majestic and monotonous uniformity and public order, to liberty. As for me, I am an anarchist; I am a partisan of the life from below against all laws imposed in an authoritarian and doctrinaire manner from on high and I always and everywhere prefer liberty to order...





My dear Grand Papa.

I congratulate you on your big day. I wish you great joy, and to pass this day very happily. I promised you to always do better and better, and I make my best efforts to keep my word, and another time I will do better still. This great party is so uncommon, but for that reason very diverting. My sisters and brothers are very contents with this party, and congratulate you on your big day, and wish you much joy. My sisters have made you some presents, but, me, I have nothing to give you at present, and I wrote you a letter. Do not be mad if it is badly done because I have done all I could to make it good. I can't describe to you how much I love you, I love you very much and I will love you always. It is a pleasure for me to go to Bakovkino and to stay with you on the day of your party. My sisters also delighted to go to Bakovkino and stay with you the day of your party. Everyone is festive, everyone is happy with your party. Everyone is glad.

Your respectful grandson

Mikhail Bakunin

Prémoukino, June 29, 1824.

[Early August, 1848]

To Citizen George Herwegh.
Paris. [Rue St. Augustins] 40
9 [r. sur Cirque]

To George

My dear friend, since the letter that I have written from Cologne, which I do not know if you have received, I have no longer written a single word. Many things have changed since then, but not our friendship, not the confidence that we have in one another, nor the thoughts that are essential to us, the aspirations that are essential to us. I am convinced that from the first hour of our reunion we will understand each other as well as completely as before. My faith, my religion are still more confirmed in the face of all the troubles and all the abjections, in the heart of which I have lived for some months. And far from losing all hope, I see, on the contrary, without the least illusion, how our world, the world approaches destruction.

I could tell you many things about Slavism, which would make you rejoice, but as I am occupied with the writing of a booklet on the subject, I do not wish to weary you or me; you will soon read a printed text that I have written. Germany offers at present a most interesting and singular spectacle; it is not a war of phantoms, but a war of shadows that take themselves for reality, yet experiencing at each moment their immeasurable weakness and showing it involuntarily. The official reaction and the official revolution compete in vanity and stupidity, showing in broad daylight all the empty phrases, debonair and weighty with philosophico-religious, politico-poetic content, that have so long haunted German heads. No, truly, we have often said it and repeated it, you and me, that this was the end for the bourgeoisie and the old civilization. We could believe truly what we said. But never, never would we have thought to be correct in this manner and to such an extent. The reaction, I mean by that the reaction in the broadest sense of the term, is one thought that age has made stupid. But the revolution represents more an instinct than a thought, and it acts, it propagates itself like an instinct and it is as an instinct that it delivers its first fights. That is why the philosophers, the literary men and politicians, all those who have a little system in their pocket all prepared and who want to constrain that bottomless ocean within some limits and in a predetermined show themselves to be so foolish and powerless; they are deprived of that instinct and fear to plunge into the waves of that ocean. But the revolution is there, dear friend, it is everywhere, it acts and ferments, I have felt and found it everywhere and I do not fear the reaction. Well, Georges, grant me now that Proudhon, for whom you've always had an aversion, is now the only one in Paris, the only one in the political

world of letters, who still understands something of it. He has given proof of his great courage; in this era stamped with evil and hypocrisy his speech was a real act, full of nobility. If he came to power and his negative doctrinarism became positive, we would in all probability be forced to combat him, for he also has, in fact, a little system in the background, but for the time being he is with us and, in any case, you should well admit that he has given proof of a great courage, worthy of admiration. Besides, I concern myself very little with the parliamentary debates, the era of parliamentary life, of constituent and national assemblies, etc. is over, and whoever will pose the question honestly, must admit that they no longer feel any interest or, or at least, only a limited and irrational interest for these outdated forms. I believe neither in constitutions, nor in laws. Even the best of constitutions would not satisfy me. it is something else that we need: effervescence and life, a new world without laws and therefore free. But the negotiations at Vienne interest me, however, for they allow us to understand in what state this empire remains, so long unknown. The shipwreck of Austria is for us, Slavs, but also for all the party of the revolution, an important question. Will France and Italy intervene or not? That does not scare me. The bourgeois clearly foresee that a war in Italy could transform itself into a general war, bringing with it the great revolution. Ruge is here; thus far at Frankfort he is recognized as one of the best, not to say the best. I still have not encountered him.

Farewell, my dear friend. I must go.

M. B.

Madame, I hope that you have not yet completely forgotten and that you will force Georgesto respond to me. What are you doing in Paris? Will you stay this winter? In any cases we will not fail, I hope, to meet againsoon, and then we have much to tell each other.

Your devoted,

M. B.

Letter to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

Köthen, December 12, 1848

Citizen,

I do not know if you will remember me; as for me, in my long peregrinations across Germany and in the Slavic countries, I have often thought of you. You are not one of those that one forgets. I don't know how to express to you the feeling of joy that I felt when I saw you, after the fatal days of June, mount to the podium to defend the interests and rights of those noble and unfortunate workers of Paris, whom all, all except you, had abandoned. The address that you delivered then was more than a speech, it was an act. You dared to tell the truth to the bourgeois gathered in your national assembly, in a moment when everyone had become a hypocrite; they have insulted you, they have tried to mock you, but that laughter was forced and the bourgeois have trembled despite themselves. – The German bourgeoisie is almost worse than the French bourgeoisie; the one is frankly cynical, while the other is sentimental, with pretensions of honesty in its cowardice and selfishness. Both are worthless and both should be sent to the devil. – The revolution is not finished in Germany; we have had the end of the bourgeois revolution, in the springtime according to all appearances we would have the beginning of the popular revolution. – The people of the countryside, who are more revolutionary in Germany than they are in France because they are still subject to feudal rights and because they have a powerful hatred against all the employees, – the people of the countryside are already agitated, amuse themselves by burning the chateaux and taking the lords. On the other hand, the bankruptcy advances with a speed that is terrifying (for the bourgeois, it is understood) – it will engulf everything; bankruptcy of states and bankruptcy of individuals. Imagine that the upkeep of the army alone costs 2 millions crowns in Prussia today, plus 7 millions francs per week. – Commerce does not go at all, and the good bourgeois of Berlin are all astonished that the bayonets having restored order and public tranquility, have not restored credit. – And you know that bankruptcy is the guillotine for the bourgeoisie. – I send you my manifesto to the Slavs, but unfortunately I can only send it to you in German, the original French still not being printed; someone will translate it for you. – You will see that we pursue a very simple idea: the destruction of the great states. It is my private conviction that the great states and despotism are inseparable. – You have many admirers and partisans in Germany; – I have found here some true men, not a great number, doubtless, but those at least are good. Nothing is as difficult now as it is to be true; it is the century of hypocrisy and hypocrites: aristocratic hypocrites,

liberal hypocrites, democratic hypocrites, hypocrites everywhere, and very few men who have the courage to admit to themselves the ultimate consequences of their own ideas. – The revolution is immense, the events gigantic, but the men are infinitely small. That is the character of our times. – The bearer of this letter is one of my best friends, a democrat from Berlin, a very sincere, very honest, well-educated German, who could give you the most interesting and most detailed information about his country. – As for me, I remain here another month, after which I go to Paris to remain there one or two months, in order to return anew to my Slavs. – I have been expelled from the Prussian states at the repeated demand of the Russian government and I have taken refuge at Köthen from where I can easily maintain my relations with the Russians, the Poles and other Slavs.

Answer me with a few words if you have the time; this is my address:

Monsieur Charles

Köthen – Principality of Anhalt

And on the inside envelope: for Mr. Jules.

Farewell – take care of yourself and may the revolution be with you.

M. Bakunin

Two Speeches to the Congress of the IWA at Basle



[*L'Égalité*, September 18, October 1, 1869, Geneva]

I.

Between the collectivists who think that after having voted for collective property, it becomes useless to vote for the abolition of the right of inheritance, and the collectivists who, like us, think that it is useful and even necessary to vote for it, there is only a simple difference in point of view.

They place themselves fully in the future, and taking collective property as their point of departure, find that there is no more place to speak of the right of inheritance.

We, on the contrary, begin from the present, we find ourselves under the regime of triumphant individual property, and marching towards collective property, we encounter an obstacle: the right of inheritance.

We think that we must overthrow it, abolish it.

The report of the General Council says that the legal fact never being anything but the consequence of economic facts, it is sufficient to transform the latter to destroy the former.

It is incontestable that everything that we call legal or political right has never been anything in history by the expression or product of a *fait accompli*. But it is also incontestable that after having been an effect of acts or facts previously carried out, the right becomes in its turn the cause of subsequent facts, becomes itself a very real, very powerful fact, that must be overthrown if we want to arrive at a different order of things than the one that exists.

So the right of inheritance, after having been the natural consequence of the violent appropriation of natural and social wealth, later becomes the basis of the political State and legal family, which guarantee and sanction individual property.

So we must vote to abolish the right of inheritance.

One after speaks to us of practice. Well, it is in the name of practice that I urge you to vote the abolition of the right of inheritance.

It has been said today that the transformation of individual property into collective property will encounter serious obstacles among the peasants, small proprietors of land.

And, in fact, if after having proclaimed the social liquidation, we attempted to dispossess by decree these millions of small farmers, we would necessarily cast them into the reaction, and to subject them to the revolution, we would have to use force against them, that is to say reaction.

So it is necessary to leave them as possessors in fact of those parcels of which they are today the proprietors. But if you do not abolish the right of inheritance, what will happen?

They will transmit these parcels to their children, with the sanction of the State, by title of property.

You will preserve, you will perpetuate the individual property of which you have voted for the necessary abolition, and its transformation into collective property.

If, on the contrary, at the same time that you make the social liquidation, you proclaim the political and legal liquidation of the State, if you abolish the right of inheritance, what will remain to the peasants?

Nothing but possession in fact, and that possession, deprived of all legal sanction, no longer being sheltered under the powerful protection of the State, will easily let itself be transformed under the pressure of events and revolutionary forces.

II.

The absence of the representative of agriculture is not a reason to contest at the Congress the right to decide the question of property. The Congress is only a minority, but there has been in every era a minority that represents the interests of all of humanity. In 89, the bourgeois minority represented the interests of France and the world; it led to the coming of the bourgeoisie. A protest was heard in the name of the proletariat, that of Baboeuf; we are his heirs, our little minority will soon be a majority.

Contrary to what has been said, it is the collectivity that is the basis for the individual; it is society that makes the man; isolated, he would not even manage to learn, speak and think. Let no one cite the men of genius and their discoveries, Arago, Galileo, etc.; they would have invented nothing without the labor of previous generations; there is someone who has a greater mind than Voltaire, and it is everyone. The greatest genius, if he lived from the age of five on a deserted island, would produce nothing; the individual is nothing without the collectivity. Individual property has only been, and is only the exploitation of collective labor; we can only destroy that exploitation by establishing collective property.

[...]

I vote for collectivity, in particular of the soil, and in general of all the social wealth in the sense of the social liquidation.

I mean by the social liquidation the expropriation *by right* of all the existing proprietors, by the *abolition of the political and legal State*, which is the sanction and sole guarantee of existing property and of everything that is called political right; and the expropriation in *fact*, everywhere and as much as possible, by the force of events and things themselves.

As for the later organization, consider that all productive labor is necessarily a collective labor, and that the labor that we improperly call individual is still a collective labor, since it only becomes possible thanks to the collective labor of past and present generations.

I conclude in favor of the *solidarization of the communes* proposed by the majority of the commission, that much more willingly as that solidarization implies the organization from the bottom up, while the plan of the minority speaks to us of the State.

I am a resolute antagonist of the State and of every bourgeois state policy.

I demand the destruction of all the national and territorial States and, on their ruins, the founding of the international State of the workers.

[Working translation by Shawn P. Wilbur]

Letter from Bakunin to Albert Richard, March 12, 1870
March 12, 1870, Geneva

Dear friend and brother,

Circumstances beyond my control prevent me from coming to take part in your great Assembly of March 13. But I would not want to let it pass without expressing my thoughts and wishes to my brothers in France.

If I could attend that impressive gathering, here is what I would say to the French workers, with all the *barbaric* frankness that characterizes the Russian socialist democrats.

Workers, no longer count on anyone but yourselves. Do not demoralize and paralyze your rising power in foolish alliances with bourgeois radicalism. The bourgeoisie no longer has anything to give you. Politically and morally, it is dead, and of all its historical magnificence, it has only preserved a single power, that of a wealth founded on the exploitation of your labor. Formerly, it was great, it was bold, it was powerful in thought and will. It had a world to overturn and a new world to create, the world of modern civilization.

It overturned the feudal world with the strength of your arms, and it has built its new world on your shoulders. It naturally hopes that you will never cease to serve as caryatids for that world. It wants its preservation, and you want, you must want its overthrow and destruction. What does it have in common with you?

Will you push naïveté to the point of believing that the bourgeoisie would ever consent to willingly strip itself of that which constitutes its prosperity, its liberty and its very existence, as a class economically separated from the economically enslaved mass of the proletariat? Doubtless not. You know that no dominant class has ever done justice against itself, that it has always been necessary to help it. Wasn't that famous night of August 4, for which we have granted too much honor to the French nobility, the inevitable consequence of the general uprising of the peasants who burned the parchments of the nobility, and with those parchments the castles?

You know very well that rather than concede to you the conditions of a serious economic equality, the only conditions you could accept, they will push themselves back a thousand times under the protection of a parliamentary lie, and if necessary under that of a new military dictatorship.

So then what could you expect from bourgeois republicanism? What would you gain by allying yourself with it? Nothing – and you would lose everything, for you could not ally yourself with it without abandoning the holy cause, the only great cause today: that of the complete emancipation of the proletariat.

It is time for you to proclaim a complete rupture. Your salvation is only at this price.

Does this mean that you should reject all individuals born and raised in the bourgeois class, but who, convinced of the justice of your cause, come to you to serve and to help you triumph? Not at all. Receive them as friends, as equals, as brothers, provided that their will is sincere and that they have given you both theoretical and practical guarantees of the sincerity of their convictions. In theory, they should proclaim loudly and without any hesitation all the principles, conditions and consequences of a serious social and economic equality for all individuals. In practice, they must have firmly and permanently severed their relationship of interest, feeling and vanity with the bourgeois world, which is condemned to die.

You bear within you today all the elements of the power that must renew the world. But the elements of the power are still not the power. To constitute a real force, they must be organized; and in order for that organization to be consistent in its basis and purpose, it must receive within it no foreign elements. So you must hold back everything that belongs to civilization, to the legal, political and social organization of the bourgeoisie. Even when bourgeois politics is red as blood and burning like hot iron, if it does not accept as its direct and immediate aim the destruction of legal property and the political State – the two forts on which all bourgeois domination rests – its triumph could only be fatal to the cause of the proletariat.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie, which has come to the last degree of intellectual and moral impotence, is today incapable of making a revolution by itself. The people alone want it, and have the power to do it. So what is desired by this advance party of the bourgeoisie, represented by the liberals or exclusively political democrats? It wants to seize the direction of the popular movement to once again turn it to his advantage – or as they say themselves, to save the bases of what they call civilization, the very foundations of bourgeois domination.

Do the workers want to play the roles of dupes one more time? No. But in order not to be dupes what should they do? Abstain from all participation in bourgeois radicalism and organize outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The basis of that organization is entirely given: It is the workshops and the federation of the workshops; the creation of funds for resistance, instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie, and their federation not just nationally, but internationally. The creation of *chambres de travail* as in Belgium.

And when the hour of the revolution sounds, the liquidation of the State and of bourgeois society, including all legal relations. Anarchy, that is to say the true, the open popular revolution: legal and political

anarchy, and economic organization, from top to bottom and from the circumference to the center, of the triumphant world of the workers.

And in order to save the revolution, to lead it to a good end, even in the midst of that anarchy, the action of a collective, invisible dictatorship, not invested with any power, but [with something] that much more effective and powerful – the natural action of all the energetic and sincere socialist revolutionaries, spread over the surface of the country, of all the countries, but powerfully united by a common thought and will.

That, my dear friend, is, in my opinion, the only program which by its bold application will lead not to new deceptions, but to the final triumph of the proletariat.

M. Bakunin



THE DEATH PENALTY IN RUSSIA

To the editors of the Rappel.

Gentlemen,

In the issue of January 29 of your estimable paper, I have found a very amusing letter from my compatriot, Prince Wiasemsky, in which he has been so tiresome as to note the ignorance of M. J. Simon and some other signatories of the bill on the abolition of the death penalty, and which ends by declaring to you that the death penalty no longer exists in Russia, having been abolished by the Empress Catherine II.

That news appears to have dismayed you. Frightened about the obvious inferiority that would result from it for your country, you have first sought a consolation in the idea that “if Russia does not have the death penalty, it has Siberia and the whip.” Then, reflecting on “the beating” which flourished in Cayenne, you have cried in despair:

“Alas! Will imperial France be reduced to envying Russia!”—(You should have added “Imperial,” it seems to me.)

Do not worry, gentlemen, and chase away the blush that threatens to invade your brow. Despite the incontestable progress that you have made, since June 1848, in the art of repression and bloody suppressions, you have not reached the height of our ankles, and we will continue to dominate you by the unqualified majesty of our absolute scorn for the dignity, rights and lives of men. And since the mere thought that the death penalty could have been abolished in Russia while it continues to work in France desolates you, I hasten to calm you, by assuring you that not only the simple death penalty, but varied, complicated, and refined forms, preceded by tortures, have never ceased to provoke among us the respect of authority and love of public order. In this regard, as in so many others, we surpass all the countries of Europe, not excepting even Turkey.

Gentlemen, we hang;

We shoot,

We kill with the knout;—now we no longer call it the knout, but the lash, which is more gentle;

We kill by the gauntlet in military executions,

Or with the simple rod;

We stifle and poison in secret in our prisons;

And when we find it necessary, we precede the final execution by the *question ordinaire* and *extraordinaire* [forms of torture]; we employ the traditional torture, developed and perfected by the application of all the discoveries of modern science.

It is only the Chinese who surpass us in the art, eminently political, of tormenting and eliminating men.

So, you ask, would the prince Wiasemski...say the opposite of the truth?

Alas! I am sorry for the prince, but I must admit he has misled you. But wait, there is an excuse for him. It is perfectly true that the death penalty, and torture as well, was legally abolished in Russia, even before Catherine II, by the Empress Elizabeth, the mother of the unfortunate Peter III, whom Catherine his wife had murdered by his guards. Becoming the great Empress by these means, Catherine II, wishing to receive the applause of civilized Europe, wrote in her own hand a sort of introduction to Russian laws, known as the title of *the ukase of Catherine II*, and modeled on the ideas, then in great vogue, of Beccaria and Montesquieu. Issuing directly from the pen of the sovereign, this introduction should necessarily have the force of law, and serve as basis for all subsequent legislature. You will find there the abolition of the death penalty, the abolition of torture, and also this beautiful maxim: "that it is better to let ten guilty escape than to strike one innocent."

So is Prince Wiasemski correct? Not at all. He is not right even from a legal point of view. Prince Wiasemski, who speaks with so much assurance and with this crushing disdain of the ignorance of Mr. Jules Simon, should not be ignorant of the fact that Emperor Nicolas, whose legislative power was every bit as unlimited and legitimate as that Catherine II, reestablished the death penalty in our legal codes. And what is more distinctive is that he reestablished it precisely for political crimes. Thus, Mr. Jules Simon is a thousand times right, and it is on the Russian prince that the sin of ignorance again falls, doubled by presumptuousness.

So much for the legal right. But does a legal right exist in Russia? On paper, yes; but, in reality, no. And that is another thing that Prince Wiasemski must not, cannot be ignorant of. In three lines of verse, now famous, our poet Pushkin has expressed, almost forty years ago, the very essence of what these gentlemen so pompously call the Russian laws:

There is no law in Russia!

The law is nailed to a post,

And that post wears a crown.

Perhaps that could be true in the time of Pushkin, under the despotic reign of Emperor Nicolas; but today, under the beneficent and liberating scepter of czar Alexandre II, *the most liberal man, surely, in all of Russia*, as the *Presse* (January 25) assures us, today it cannot be thus.

It has not ceased to be true for a single day, from the foundation of the Muscovite Empire to the moment when I write this letter, gentlemen. Today it is more true than ever, and it will only cease to be

true the day when popular revolution will have swept away the whole establishment of the State.

In imperial Russia, there has never been but one truth, constant and sovereign: it is the lie, it is official hypocrisy, a hypocrisy which has never failed to adopt the appearances most in conformity with the dominant ideas in contemporary Europe. We have sought the primitive man, the ape-man. Why haven't we looked in the court at Saint-Petersburg? Specimens abound there.

Our laws, all the humane principles we have officially proclaimed, our so-called rights, are nothing but an eternal masquerade, under which is hidden an official reality as well, but a bestial one. That masquerade fools no one, and it does not even trouble itself to fool anyone in Russia, but it is a great aid to the peaceful triumphs of imperial diplomacy in Europe.

Do you know, gentlemen, the meaning of the verb *enguirlander* [literally *to cover in garlands*], created at Saint-Petersburg? I'll wager you do not. Allow me to explain it to you.

An important foreigner came to Saint-Petersburg. He wanted to study Russia. But you can well understand that, if he had looked at it too closely, he could have discovered things that certainly would not do great honor to the imperial government. To avoid that danger, the court made a signal. This signal is an order, understood in an instant by that titled bunch of lackeys which is called the Russian aristocracy. The princes, the counts, the German barons,—and there are a crowd of them among our official patriots,—ministers, generals, high functionaries of every hue, capitalists and monopolists of all sorts, their wives, their daughters and sisters, all surround the foreigner, weary him with invitations, smile at him, smother him with caresses, spread before him his feelings of control, and plunge him up to the ears in the imperial lie.

That is called *covering one in garlands*.

Well, gentlemen, the prince Wiasemski wishes to cover you in garlands.

If you would publish this letter in your paper, and if the disgruntled Russian prince returns to the charge, you will allow me, I hope, to respond.—It is in the interest of revolutionary Russia that the socialist democrats of Europe know it as it is.

Accept, gentlemen, the expression of my warm sympathy,

M. Bakounine

Geneva, February 7, 1870.

[Poster, Lyon, September, 27 1870]

French Republic
REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION
OF THE
COMMUNES

The disastrous situation in which the Country finds itself; the impotence of the official powers and the indifference of the privileged classes have put the French nation on the edge of the abyss.

If the People organized in a revolutionary manner do not make haste to act, their future is lost, the Revolution is lost, all is lost. Inspired by the immensity of the danger, and considering that the People's desperate action can not be delayed for a single moment, the delegates of the Federated Committees for the Salvation of France, gathered in the Central Committee, propose the immediate adoption of the following resolutions:

Article 1. – The administrative and governmental machine of the State, having become powerless, is abolished.

The people of France return to full possession of themselves.

Article 2. – All the criminal and civil courts are suspended and replaced by the justice of the people.

Art. 3. – The payment of taxes and mortgages is suspended. Taxation is replaced by the contributions of the federated communes, levied on the wealthy classes, proportional to the needs of the salvation of France.

Art. 4. – The State, being deposed, can no longer intervene in the payment of private debts.

Art. 5. – All the existing municipal organizations are quashed and replaced in all the federated communes by some Committees for the Salvation of France, which will exercise all the powers under the direct control of the People.

Art. 6. – Each committee from each Departmental center will send two delegates to form the Revolutionary Convention for the Salvation of France.

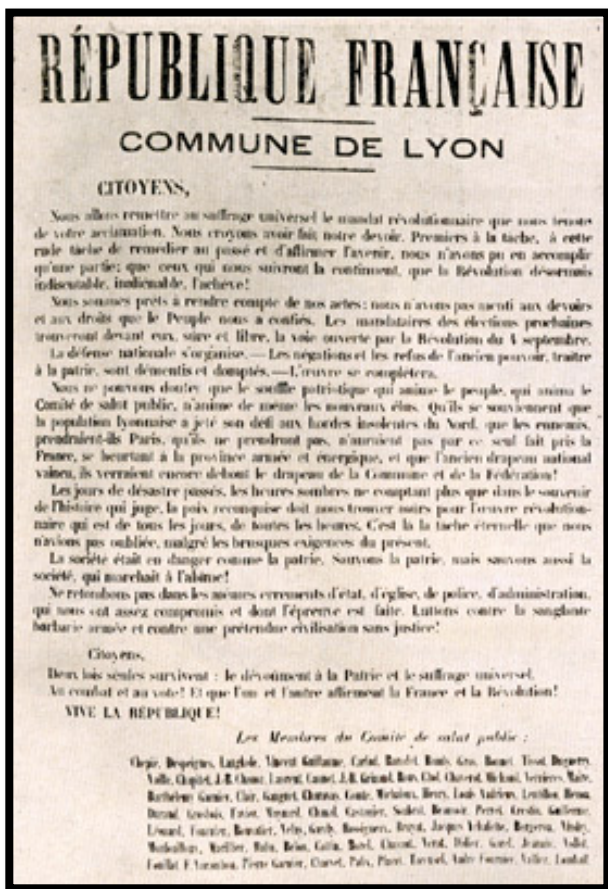
Art. 7. – This Convention will immediately gather at the Town Hall of Lyon, as the second city of France and the closest to contribute energetically to the defense of the country.

This Convention, supported by the entire People, will save France.

To arms!!!

E.-B. SAIGNES, RIVIERE, DEVILLE, RAJON (de Tarare), François FAVRE, Louis PALIX, B. PLACET, BLANC (G.), Ch. BEAUVOIR, Albert RICHARD, J. BISCHOFF, DOUBLE, H. BOURRON, M. BAKOUNINE, PARRATON, A. GUILLERMET, COIGNET aîné, P.-J. PULLIAT,

LATOUR, GUILLO, SAVIGNY, J. GERMAIN, F. CHARVET, A. BASTELICA (de Marseille), DUPIN (de St.-Etienne), Narcisse BARRET. Lyon, Association typographique, – Regard, rue de la Barre, 12



Michael Bakunin.



by Max Nettlau

Most centenarians, even when born much later and still among us, are but dried-up relics of a remote past; whilst some few, though gone long since, remain full of life, and rather make us feel ourselves how little life and energy there is in most of us. These men, in advance of their age, prepared new ways for coming generations, who are often but too slow to follow them up. Prophets and dreamers, thinkers and rebels they are called, and of those who, in the strife for freedom and social happiness for all, united the best qualities of these four descriptions, Michael Bakunin is by far the best known. In recalling his memory, we will not forget the many less known thinkers and rebels, very many of whom from the "thirties" to the early "seventies" of last century had, by personal contact, their share in forming this or that part of his personality. None of them, however, had the great gift of uniting into one current of revolt all the many elements of revolutionary thought, and that burning desire to bring about collective revolutionary action which constitute Bakunin's most fascinating characteristics. Courageous and heroic rebels always existed, but their aims were too often very Darrow; they had not

overcome political, religious, and social prejudices. Again, the most perfect “systems” were worked out theoretically; but these generous thinkers lacked the spirit to resort to action for their realization, and their methods were tame, meek, and mild. Fourier waited for years for a millionaire to turn up who would hand him the money to construct the first Phalanstery. The Saint-Simonians had their eyes on kings or sons of kings who might be persuaded to realise their aims “from above.” Marx was content to “prove” that the decay of Capitalism and the advent of the working classes to power will happen automatically.

Among the best known Socialists, Robert Owen and Proudhon, Blanqui and Bakunin, tried to realise their ideas by corresponding action. Blanqui’s splendid “No God, No Master,” is, however, counteracted by the authoritarian and narrow political and nationalist character of his practical action. Both Owen and Proudhon represent, as to the means of action, the method of *free experimentation*, which is, in my opinion, the only one which holds good aside of the method of *individual and collective revolt* advocated by Bakunin and many others. Circumstances—the weakness of small minorities in face of the brute force of traditional authority, and the indifference of the great mass of the population—have as yet no chance to either method to show its best, and, the ways of progress being manifold, neither of them may ever render the other quite superfluous. These experimental Socialists and Anarchists, then, are neither superior nor inferior, but simply different, dissimilar from Bakunin, the fiercest representative of the idea of real revolutionary action.

His economics are not original; he accepted willingly Marx’s dissection of the capitalist system; nor did he dwell in particular on the future methods of distribution, declaring only the necessity for each to receive the full produce of his labour. But to him exploitation and oppression were not merely economic and political grievances which fairer ways of distribution and apparent participation in political power (democracy) would abolish; he saw clearer than almost all Socialists before him the close connection of all forms of *authority*, religious, political, social, and their embodiment, *the State*, with economic exploitation and submission. Hence, *Anarchism*—which need not be defined here—was to him the necessary basis, the essential factor of all real Socialism. In this he differs fundamentally from ever so many Socialists who glide over this immense problem by some verbal juggle between “Government” and “administration,” “the State” and “society,” or the like, because a real desire for freedom is not yet awakened in them. This desire and its consequence, the determination to revolt to realise freedom, exists in every being; I should say that it exists in some form and to some degree in the smallest particle that composes matter, but ages of priest- and State-

craft have almost smothered it, and ages of alleged democracy, of triumphant Social Democracy even, are not likely to kindle it again.

Here Bakunin's Socialism sets in with full strength mental, personal, and social freedom to him are inseparable—*Atheism, Anarchism, Socialism* an organic unit. His Atheism is not that of the ordinary Freethinker, who may be an authoritarian and an anti-Socialist; nor is his Socialism that of the ordinary Socialist, who may be, and very often is, an authoritarian and a Christian; nor would his Anarchism ever deviate into the eccentricities of Tolstoi and Tucker. But each of the three ideas penetrates the other two and constitutes with them a living realisation of freedom, just as all our intellectual, political, and social prejudices and evils descend from one common source—authority. Whoever reads "God and the State," the best known of Bakunin's many written expositions of these ideas, may discover that when the scales of religion fall from his eyes, at the same moment also the State will appear to him in its horrid hideousness, and anti-Statist Socialism will be the only way out. The thoroughness of Bakunin's Socialism propaganda is, to my impression, unique.

From these remarks it may be gathered that I dissent from certain recent efforts to revindicate Bakunin almost exclusively as a Syndicalist. He was, at the time of the International, greatly interested in seeing the scattered masses of the workers combining into trade societies or sections of the International. Solidarity in the economic struggle was to be the only basis of working-class organisation. He expressed the opinion that these organisations would spontaneously evolve into federated Socialist bodies, the natural basis of future society. This automatic evolution has been rightly contested by our Swiss comrade Bertoni. But did Bakunin really mean it when he sketched it out in his writings of elementary public propaganda? We must not forget that Bakunin—and here we touch one of his shortcomings—seeing the backward dispositions of the great masses in his time, did not think it possible to propagate the whole of his ideas directly among the people. By insisting on purely economic organisation, he wished to protect the masses against the greedy politician who, under the cloak of Socialism, farms and exploits their electoral "power" in our age of progress!

He also wished to prevent their falling under the leadership of sectarian Socialism of any kind. He did not wish them, however, to fall into the hands and under the thumbs of Labour leaders, whom he knew, to satiety, in Geneva, and whom he stigmatised in his *Egalité* articles of 1869. His idea was that among the organised masses interested in economic warfare thoroughgoing revolutionists, Anarchists, should exercise an invisible yet carefully concerted activity, co-ordinating the workers' forces and making them strike a

common blow, nationally and internationally, at the right moment. The secret character of this inner circle, *Fraternité* and *Alliance*, was to be a safeguard against ambition and leadership. This method may have been derived from the secret societies of past times; Bakunin improved it as best he could in the direction of freedom, but could not, of course, remove the evils resulting from every infringement of freedom, however small and well-intentioned it may be in the beginning. This problem offers wide possibilities, from dictatorship and "democratic" leadership to Bakunin's invisible, preconcerted initiative, to free and open initiative, and to entire spontaneity and individual freedom. To imitate Bakunin in our days in this respect would not mean progress, but repeating a mistake of the past.

In criticising this secret preconcerted direction of movements, considered worse than useless in our time, we ought not to overlook that the then existing reason for making such arrangements has also nearly gone. To Bakunin, who participated in the movements of 1848-49, in the Polish insurrection in the early "sixties," in secret Italian movements, and who, like so many, foresaw the fall of the French Empire and a revolution in Paris, which might have happened under better auspices than the Commune of 1871—to him, then, an international Socialist '88 or '48, a real social revolution, was a tangible thing which might really happen before his eyes, and which he did his best to really bring about by secretly influencing and co-ordinating local mass movements. We in our sober days have so often been told that all this is impossible, that revolutions are hopeless and obsolete, that, with few exceptions, no effort is ever made, and the necessity of replacing semi-authoritarian proceedings like that of Bakunin by the free play of individual initiative or other improved methods, never seems to arise.

Bakunin's best plans failed from various reasons, one of which was the smallness of the means which the movements, then in their infancy, offered to him in every respect. Since all these possibilities are a matter of the past, let me dwell for a moment on the thought of what Bakunin would have done had he lived during the First of May movements of the early "nineties" or during the Continental general strike efforts of the ten years next following. With the tenth part of the materials these movements contained, which exploded some here, some there. Like fireworks, in splendid isolation, Bakunin would have attacked international Capitalism and the State everywhere in a way never yet heard of. And movements which really create new methods of successful struggle against a strong Government, like the Suffragette and the Ulster movements, would never have let him stand aside in cool disdain, because their narrow purpose was not his own. I fancy he would never have rested day and night until he had

raised the social revolutionary movement to the level of similar or greater efficiency To think of this makes one feel alive; to see the dreary reality of our wise age lulls one to sleep again. I am the last one to overlook the many Anarchists who sacrificed themselves by deeds of valour—the last also to urge others to do what I am not doing myself: I merely state the fact that with Bakunin a great part of faith in the revolution died, that the hope and confidence which emanated from his large personality were never restored, and that the infinite possibilities of the last twenty-five years found many excellent comrades who did their best, but none upon whose shoulders the mantle of Bakunin has fallen.

What, then, was and is Bakunin's influence?

It is wonderful to think how he arose in the International at the right moment to prevent the influence of Marx, always predominant in the Northern countries, from becoming general. Without him, dull, political, electioneering Marxism would have fallen like mildew also on the South of Europe. We need but think how Cafiero, later on the boldest Italian Anarchist, first returned to Naples as the trusted friend and admirer of Marx; how Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law, was the chosen apostle of Marxism for Spain, etc. To oppose the deep-laid schemes of Marx, a man of Bakunin's experience and initiative was really needed; by him alone the young movements of Italy and Spain, those of the South of France and of French-speaking Switzerland, and a part of the Russian movement, were welded together, learnt to practise international solidarity, and to prepare international action. This alone created a lasting basis for the coming Anarchist movement, whilst everywhere else the other Socialist movements, described as Utopian and unscientific, had to give way to Marxism, proclaimed as the only scientific doctrine! Persecutions after revolutionary attempts often reduced these free territories of Anarchism to a minimum; but when Italy, Spain, and France were silenced, some corner in Switzerland where Bakunin's seed had fallen always remained, and in this way, thanks to the solid work of Bakunin and his comrades, mainly from 1868 to 1874, Anarchy, was always able to face her enemies and to revive.

The immediate influence of Bakunin was reduced after he had retired from the movement in 1874, when certain friends left him; bad health—he died in June, 1876—prevented him continuing his work with fresh elements gathered round him. Soon after his death a period of theoretical elaboration began, when the methods of distribution were examined and *Communist* Anarchism in its present form was shaped. In those years also, after the failure of many collective revolts, the struggle became more bitter, and individual action, propaganda by deed was resorted to, a proceeding which made preconcerted

secret arrangements in Bakunin's manner useless. In this way, both his economic ideas, *Collectivist Anarchism*, and his favourite method of action alluded to, became so to speak obsolete, and were neglected.

Add to this that from about 1879 and 1880 Anarchism could be openly propagated on a large scale in France (mainly in Paris and in the Lyons region). This great extension of the propaganda gave so much new work, a new spirit entered the groups, soon arts and science were permeated with Anarchism—Elisée Reclus' wonderful influence was at work. In Bakunin's stormy days there was no time for this, through no fault of his. In short, Anarchism in France and in many other countries was in its vigorous *youth*, a period when the tendency to look ahead is greatest, and the past is neglected like a cradle of infancy. For this reason, and because very little information on Bakunin was accessible to the Anarchists of the "eighties," Bakunin's influence in those years remained small. I ought to have mentioned that certain opinions of Bakunin's gained much ground in the Russian revolutionary movement of the "seventies" and later, but cannot dwell further on this.

In 1882, Reclus and Cafiero published the choicest extract from the many manuscripts left by Bakunin: "Dieu et Etat!" (God and the State), a pamphlet which B. R. Tucker fortunately translated into English (1883 or 1884). This or its English reprint circulated in England when no other English Anarchist pamphlet existed, and its radical Anarchist freethought or thoroughly freethinking Anarchism certainly left lasting marks on the early Anarchist propagandists, and will continue to do so. Of course, the same applies to translations in many countries.

About 1896, a considerable part of Bakunin's correspondence was published, preceded and followed by many extracts from his unpublished manuscripts, a part of which is now before us in the six volumes of the Paris edition of his works. It became possible, with the help of these and many other sources, to examine his life in detail, and in particular to give, proofs in hand, the story of the great struggle in the International, and to scatter the calumnies and lies heaped up by the Marxist writers and the bourgeois authors who followed them.

All this brought about a revival in the interest for Bakunin; but is there not a deeper cause for such a revival? When Bakunin was gone, his friends felt perhaps rather relieved, for the strain he put on their activity was sometimes too great for them. We in our times, or some of us, at least, are perhaps in the opposite situation: there is no strain at all put on us, and we might wish for somebody to rouse us. Thus we look back at any rate with pathetic sympathy on the heroic age of Anarchism, from Bakunin's times to the early "nineties" in France. Many things have happened since then also—I need but recall Ferrer's

name; but, in my opinion at least, a complacent admiration of Syndicalism has too often replaced every thought of Anarchist action. I say again: it is preposterous to think that Bakunin would have been a Syndicalist and nothing else—but *what he would have tried to make of Syndicalism*, how he would have tried to group these and many other materials of revolt and to lead them to action, this my imagination cannot sketch out, but I feel that things would have gone otherwise, and the capitalists would sleep less quietly. I am no admirer of personalities, and have many faults to find with Bakunin also on other grounds, but this I feel, that where he was rebellion grew round him, whilst to-day, with such splendid material, rebellion is nowhere. South Africa, Colorado, are ever so hopeful events, but think what a Bakunin would have made of them—and then we can measure the value of this man in the struggle for freedom.

Freedom, June 1914



From

The Imperial Bastard

By Louise Michel

Among Louise Michel's novels, one of the most interesting is a massive work, *Le Bâtard Impérial*, co-written with Jean Winter and published in 1883. One of the major plot-lines of the novel involves Yvan, who has been an executioner in Russian prisoners, and who, through a plot twist that involves mistaken identities and one of Michel's favorite plot devices, the topsy-turvy logic of the legal and prison systems, ends up on the run. At one point, he is close to being dragged down and eaten by rats, while trying to manage his escape through the sewers. And then a familiar figure appears:

The final victory, with a cadaver for prize, would remain inevitably with the rats.

Suddenly the cover of the sewer lifted, a human head appeared at the edge of the opening and shouted to Yvan:

— Hold on, I am with you!

At the same time the unknown discharged two pistols in the sewer whose vaults repeated the detonations with an appalling din.

Dazzled and blinded by the light, panicked by the noise, the rats, except for some brave sorts, let go, and plunged into the refuse.

It was time!

Yvan felt himself failing, his blood flowing from a hundred wounds.

The struggle had become unequal.

— Give me your hand, said the stranger Yvan.

— Here it is, said the executioner.

— Come on, you are saved!

— I wouldn't hope.

— Wretch! Don't you know that the sewers are inaccessible at this moment?

— I was there quite against my will.

— You just escaped from the underground prisons of the Kremlin.

— Not at all.

— Well, if you do not want to admit, it does not matter. Besides, I do not ask you for your secrets and only ask you to believe that I am not the Moscow police.

— So much the better.

— You see that you are one of the prisoners of the castle.

— I don't understand.

— You are the fifth that have escaped in a month.
— Despite the rats?
— Despite the rats.
— It is not possible.
— But if, if, with much courage for example.
— Get me out of here, my head is spinning.
— Poor wretch, you faint! cried the unknown. Yvan responded with a deep sigh.

— Well, he added, we will understand each other better soon. For the moment it is enough to have saved a man.

And seizing Yvan's wrist with a herculean strength, he pulled him from the ladder and deposited him on the ground.

Some rats, surprised to see themselves brought into the light outside, let themselves fall back into the muck. The others, the starving hung tight.

Arriving in daylight, Yvan fell on his knees and rolled in a heap on the pavement.

He no longer had a human face.

His face covered in blood and mud, cut by the cruel bites, was unrecognizable, one of his eyes, pierced, formed a great black cavity under his left eyebrow and his torn and punctured ears hung in shreds on his shoulders dripping with blood.

Some rats still gnawed away at that human creature. The stranger grasped them and crushed them one after another.

Yvan had just paid cruelly for the murder of the innocent Paula and the theft of little Paul Vladimir.

And without the stranger he would be dead like the general.

That stranger was named Bakunin. Tall, robust, with a splendid, that young man presented the Russian type in all its purity and all its force.

He did not know what to do with regard to Yvan.

The giant lay on the ground like an inert mass, defeated by a brutal force similar to that which had struck down another helpless creature, poor Paula.

The rats had been as cowardly towards Yvan as his accomplices had been towards Paula.

Bakunin contemplated him with a questioning look.

— He did not come from the prisons of the castle, he said to himself, so he is with the Sophia!

This is perhaps one of our most relentless enemies. I have a good mind to give him to the rats.

Yvan uttered a cry of pain.

Bakunin, absorbed by his thoughts, continued his monologue aloud without paying any attention to him.

Michael BAKOUNINE - le Danton Moderne
fondateur du Nihilisme et Apôtre de l'anarchie



Pour vaincre les Ennemis du prolétariat il nous faut détruire, encore détruire et toujours détruire.
Car ! l'esprit **destructeur** est en même temps
l'esprit **constructeur**.

Чтобы побѣдить врага пролетариата, надо разрушать и
еще разрушать всегда и навсегда.
Духъ разрушительный есть духъ созидательный

MICHAEL BAKUNIN.

(A Biographical Sketch.)

Bakunin is in London! Bakunin, buried in dungeons, lost in Eastern Siberia, re-appears in the midst of us, full of life and energy. *Redivivus et ultor*, we might say, with Pougatscheff, were not Bakunin and ourselves, too much occupied to waste time in thoughts of vengeance. Bakunin returns more hopeful than ever, with redoubled love for the Russian people. He is invigorated by the sharp, but healthy, air of Siberia.

Is it that spring approaches? Old friends return to us from beyond the Pacific Ocean. How many images, how many shadows, rise from the dead with Bakunin. We observe, with closer attention, what passes in the East of Europe, on the shores of the Danube. We seem once more to hear the crack of a mosaic empire that is falling, we hear the murmur of the waves of the Slavonic world, and see dismembered Poland re-unite around Warsaw, and extend—forgetting the past—a fraternal hand to the Russian people, free, also, from the yoke of absolutism.

The dreams of 1848! Yes, dreams, but give only two or three such years, and the dreams of 1848 will be realised from the Straits of Messina to the Vistula, the Volga, and the Ural. The year 1848 is not dead, it has only changed its place.

The activity of Bakunin—previous to the fortress of Koanigstein—was philosophical and abstract in Moscow, revolutionary in general and socialist in Europe; henceforth we hope it will be Slavo-Russian. We will speak of this at length, on a future occasion; at present, we touch briefly the details of his past career.

Bakunin left Russia in 1841. In 1845 he was involved in the trial of the Swiss socialists. Blunclh pointed him out to the Russian government, and he was ordered to return immediately. He did not return; the Senate deprived him of his rank as an officer, and his rights of nobility; he then went to Paris.

It was there Bakunin pronounced his celebrated speech to the Poles, on the 29th November, 1847—the anniversary of the insurrection at “Warsaw. For the first time, a Russian was seen to offer a hand of brotherhood to the Poles, and renounce publicly the government of Petersburg. The speech, had an immense effect. Guizot expelled Bakunin from Paris; but he had scarcely reached Brussels, when Paris expelled Guizot and Louis Philippe from France. Bakunin returned to Paris, and passionately threw himself into the new political life which then began. The Lamartine and Marast

government beheld, with evil eye, the men who accepted the republic in earnest, and was glad to be rid of them in any manner, provided they did not remain in France. It was a relief when Bakunin prepared to depart. But a new era had commenced,—a Slavo-Polish Congress had assembled at Breslau. There Bakunin was active; and even more so afterwards at the Congress of Prague, where, indeed, he was not the only Russian. He wrote his social Slavonic programme, which the checks have not yet forgotten; he acted with the Slavonians until Windisehgraetz dispersed the Congress with Austrian cannon. Quitting Prague, Bakunin made an attempt, in opposition to Palack, to unite the Slavonian democrats with the Hungarians, who sought their independence, and with the German revolutionists. Into this union many Poles entered, and the Hungarians sent Count Teleki. Bakunin, wishing to confirm this union by example, took the command at the defence of Dresden, and acquired a glory which even his enemies have not denied. He retired, after the taking of Dresden by the Prussians. At Themnites he was seized by treachery, with two of his companions, and from that time commences his long martyrdom.

Bakunin was condemned to death by the Saxon tribunals—a sentence commuted by the King to that of perpetual imprisonment. In May, 1850, he was sent, chained, to Prague. The Austrian government desired to extort from him the secrets of the Slavonian movement; he refused to answer. He was left for a year at Gratz, and the question was not renewed. In May, 1851, terrified by the report of a design to liberate Bakunin, the government transferred him to Olmutz, where he passed *six months chained to the wall*. Afterwards, Austria delivered him to Russia. It was said, that on the frontier the fetters should be removed from his hands and feet. Nicholas was not so delicate; the Austrian chains were taken off, as imperial property; but they were replaced by native irons, of twice the weight. Bakunin passed three long years in the fortress of Alexis, and he left in 1854 for Schlussembourg. Nicholas feared that Sir Charles Napier might set him free.

Alexander re ascended the throne; he published several unsatisfactory, half amnesties—of Bakunin, not the word. His Majesty deigned even to efface his name from the list. Bakunin's mother petitioned the Emperor, who replied with affability, "As long as your son lives, Madame, he will never be free." In 1857, Bakunin was sent to Eastern Siberia.

In 1860, a fresh attempt was made to obtain for Bakunin permission to return to Russia. His Majesty again refused, assigning as the motive for his severity, a letter written by Bakunin, in 1851, and adding, "I see in him no sign of remorse." However, the emperor

granted him the right of entering the service as an *employee* in the Chancery, of the 4th order—a particular class of copyists,—Bakunin could not profit by this imperial grace of the 4th order. After eight years' imprisonment, and four years' exile, he had to look forward still to a long series of dreary years in Siberia.

A new flame was kindled throughout Russia; Austria vanquished and in retreat, the Italian flag unfurled at Milan, Bakunin tells us with what eagerness he followed, at Irkutsk, the movements of Garibaldi, as the peninsula grew brighter and brighter in the light of liberty, to remain, at 47 years of age, and with his pulse in full vigour, a tame and distant spectator of events, was impossible; he had expiated long enough his faith in the possibility of a union with the German democrats. He determined to escape from Siberia. Under pretext of a commercial affair he reached the Amour, and an American clipper conveyed him to Japan, undoubtedly the first political refugee who had ever there sought shelter. Thence he arrived at San Francisco, crossed the Isthmus of Panama, and came to New York. On December 26th he landed at Liverpool, and on the 27th was with us in London.

For the present, let us conclude with the strong hope that the Emperor's prediction that the peasants shall have "no other liberty than that which they possess," may be put to the proof as speedily as the prediction concerning the liberty of Bakunin.—From A RUSSIAN CORRESPONDENT.

The Working Man. II, 23 (March 1, 1862) 65-67.



COLLECTIVISM

Adhémar Schwitzguébel

First article.

Socialism first presented itself to the laboring classes in the form of different systems, each having its more or less numerous adepts, and each presenting itself as the infallible Gospel which must save society.

These different socialist systems, hatched in the offices of speculative thinkers, have been succeeded by a much more popular socialism, which has been embodied in the International Workingmen's Association.

When we study the different socialist authors, we perceive straightaway that fantasy plays a considerable role in their writings; while the history of the International offers us, on the contrary, the spectacle, not of a preconceived theory, but of a great economic act being produced outside of all sectarian influence: it is the proletariat itself coming to consciousness of its situation, of its needs, and of the future towards which it is driven by unavoidable necessity.

From the preceding, should we conclude that we should attach no importance to the work of those valiant socialist schools that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, breached the walls of the old social edifice, and so prepared the organization of the proletariat and its advent? Far from it; we owe all these tireless strugglers, for the most part dead in the struggle, a profound gratitude; they are those who prepared the way; and, in marching more united and more firmly towards the realization of the common aim, it is just that we guard the memories of those who guided our first steps.

*

* *

The fundamental point of the question is the manner of envisioning *property*. Everyone understands it, the adversaries of the emancipation of the laborers as well as their partisans. Property is the bottom of the debate.

That important question has been dealt with in the different Congresses of the International, and the principle of *collective property* emerged, as a historical and economic necessity, from discussions in the last general Congress held in September 1869 at Basel. Before that Congress, the International had only been weakly attacked; but from that era, there was an outburst of attacks such that history presents no example of an association that has had so much hatred raised against it.

For us, to the extent that these attacks came from the bourgeoisie, they are perfectly comprehensible; the International having attacked the very basis of the bourgeois power, it was natural that all those who share in that power revolted, passionately, against the audacious naysayer of the privileges of the bourgeoisie. But the ignorance, the economic enslavement of the people also create in the International, in the very heart of the proletariat, numerous enemies, whom it is our duty to illuminate and, if possible, to pull from the midst of our great international organization.

*
* *

It is precisely the collectivist principle that serves as the basis of the attacks directed against the International, and it is by adulterating this principle, by distorting its application, that they have succeeded in raising so many enemies against it.

Collectivism would be, according to the different categories of adversaries: 1) the destruction of individual liberty; 2) the realization of an equality paralyzing all individual effort; 3) a division of wealth, and, as a result, the gradual destruction, without profit to anyone, of the capital accumulated up to this day; or finally, 4) a social system not resting on any scientific data, and consequently a utopia.

Let us respond briefly to these various reproaches.

*
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1) Individual liberty has no worse enemies today than those who pretend to defend it. Faced with the social movement that is always intensifying, the bourgeoisie cries loudly against the harm that socialism would do to individual liberty, and appoints itself the passionate protector of liberty. But as words are not always the expression of the fact that they are supposed to represent, there is room to investigate.

It is an axiom accepted by everyone that each must have the liberty to enjoy the fruits of their labor; and that axiom is certainly for the bourgeois the most essential part of what they call individual liberty: they use and abuse it such that this liberty is no longer a right of each human being, but only the privilege of those who, by skill, ruse, fraud, or accident of birth, are able to monopolize all human pleasures. In fact, by observing what occurs in society, we note that far from respecting the right of each individual to dispose of the fruits of their labor, the bourgeoisie tends to accumulate, for its own profit, the greatest sum drawn from the products of the labor of the people; what it calls individual liberty, so it is for it only the absolute liberty to exploit, without pity or mercy, the working people.

With regard to that entirely bourgeois liberty, we can deduce from the collectivist principle the true liberty of which each human being would have the full enjoyment. What constitutes the basis of individual liberty is the guarantee of existence, which has its source in labor; in order that individuals be free, the instruments of labor must be guaranteed to each worker; now, it is primarily the mission of collective property, while individual property only leads to the concentration of the instruments of labor in a small number of hands, on which the disinherited are from then on completely dependent.

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2) The reproach that collectivism is only the realization of an equality paralyzing every individual effort has no more basis than the one according to which it would be the destruction of individual liberty. In this reproach, as in the previous one, there is, on the part of the bourgeois, a dreadful confusion of words. What they call "individual effort" is only the power that a few privileged individuals have to exercise of all their aptitudes and individual abilities, but especially to skillfully exploit the many.

The goal of collectivism is to put an end to all these privileges, by giving to *each*, first by a rational education, then by putting at their disposal all the necessary elements, the possibility of exercising all their aptitudes and abilities. That equality of the point of departure, then of the conditions, will permit all the individual strengths to be exerted; it is true that rivalry will no longer produce these monsters of ambition who, arriving at the summit, devour all the other individualities; on the contrary, each individuality being limited by the development given to all individuals, competition will no longer be a bloody gamble in which the weakest perish, but a salutary game where each produces what they capable of, without harm to others.

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3) The accusation leveled against the International of tending to a division of wealth is certainly the most absurd. It proves first of all the absolute stupidity of the bourgeoisie: how do they not perceive that accusing a society of wanting to *divide*, because it proclaims the principle of *collective property* is to level a contradictory accusation? In fact, if the International wanted to make a division it is obvious that it would maintain the principle of individual property by widening it; while, if it declares in favor of collective property, it declares itself by this the enemy of the division of the land, and of the instruments of labor.

In the *Almanach pour 1871*, we have shown who the true "*partageux*" were; we do not have to return to the question; the same

vampires still exist, and the wealth created by collective labor continues to swell the pockets of the capitalists and their henchmen, while the people always suffer the same miseries.

If the International accepts as the basis of the social organ the collective property in land and the instruments of labor, so that they are guaranteed to each laborer, it still recognizes the absolute liberty of individuals and groups to organize as they see fit, it will immediately be up to them to determine the manner of the division of the fruits of collective labor in each association. Thus, far from tending to authoritarian communism, collectivism perfectly assures to individuals, and to groups, the right to the product of travail.

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4) It remains for us to examine the last reproach addressed to collectivism, that of having no scientific basis, of being a utopia.

Before affirming the principle of collective property, the International, by means of its Congresses, analyzed the different principles by which philosophy, jurisprudence, and political economy have sought to justify individual property. after than rigorous analysis, only one principle remained standing, it is that individual property had been a social necessity, since it had been the foundation of the social order until our times. But does that social order still exist?

In order to respond to that question, if was necessary to examine contemporary economic facts. Everywhere we noted a great and great concentration, in the hands of a minority, of all capitals¹ in general. That powerful concentration is itself a transformation of property: it is no longer the modest field that, by social necessity, is the personal property of the small cultivator; it is no longer the workshop that, by social necessity, is the personal property of the industrial worker. The financial companies have transformed our economic world, and the great agricultural and industrial exploitations gradually invade and annihilate the little home place of the peasant and the worker-owner; we are at the realization of collective property *in favor of some few*; and, whether we wish it or not, we march towards this dilemma: either collective realized in favor of all, or the world as the exclusive property of a few great financial lords.

We cannot, in these few pages, enter into the details that would allow us to support this brief analysis with facts; we think that it is enough to give a glimpse, to those who are ignorant of it, of the scientific side of collectivism, and we recommend, to those who want

¹ By the term "capitals" the author also means property in land, as one can see.

to account, by figures, of the movement that carries us toward large-scale property, the reading of the *Manifeste aux paysans* announced on the cover of the past year's almanac.²

What becomes more difficult to establish is the practical realization of collectivism. And, without the risk of falling into preconceived and utopian systems, into fantasy, we cannot give absolute rules.

The realization of the collectivist principle depends completely on the march of the revolutionary events that our society is called to endure. If the principle of the State is not swept away in the tempest, we will have an authoritarian communism; if it is the Commune that triumphs, it will be in the commune that the collectivist idea will first be realized. Now, if we study the aspirations of the class that the logic of deeds summons to the helm of the social Revolution, we can deduce from it that the principle of the free Commune and the free federation of communes will be, in the end, the political principle of the proletariat.

After having had to suffer absolute individualism for centuries, we would not have to fear seeing the triumph of the opposite extreme: authoritarian communism.

Source: The *Almanach du Peuple* for 1872 and the *Almanach du Peuple* pour 1873.



² This *Manifesto*, written in German by Joh. Ph. Becker, and translated into French by James Guillaume, had appeared as a brochure at Genève, in the beginning of 1870, under this title: "*Manifeste aux travailleurs des campagnes*, published by the Comité de propagande des sections allemandes de l'Association internationale des travailleurs."

To the Memory of Michael Bakunin.

To write about Bakunin in hundred words is like attempting to drain the ocean by means of a bucket. Bakunin's personality and life were so rich, so vast and so embracing that one is at a loss to know what phase to touch upon to do justice to the memory of this wonderful man.

Much as his theories helped to clarify my own thoughts, it was yet the flaming spirit of the man which was so compelling to me. For Bakunin was the volcano in the revolutionary movement whose flames shot up to the very sky and illumined the European horizon, ~~xxx~~ and pointing the way towards social and economic emancipation, ~~as no one before and since him~~. And it was this glowing spirit which shone through many dark hours in my own struggle and helped me to hold high the ideals for which Bakunin lived, worked, and died.

Emma Goldman

The more I study Bakunin, the more I realise his great revolutionary clarity and depth of social understanding. I believe Bakunin is not sufficiently appreciated even in our own ranks. He is generally considered a great revolutionist, an exceptional rebel whose spirit was aflame with the love of liberty and eager for action. That was indeed characteristic of Bakunin, but that was by no means the whole of the man.

In Bakunin there was a rare combination of a philosophic mind with a revolutionary intuition that enabled him to judge conditions and situations correctly and fundamentally, and which was supported by a whole-souled purpose and unbending will. In rereading Bakunin, particularly his speeches and letters about the International, Mazzini, Federalism, etc., I am anew filled with wonder at the exceptional clarity with which he saw the danger of Statism, in whatever form, and how prophetically he visualised that the only road of Social Revolution lay along the lines of federalism, as against every authoritarian principle.

It may justly be said that the whole life of Bakunin and his numerous and intense activities were one great struggle of the spirit of individual liberty within social well-being as against the reactionism of centralisation and governmentalism. It is this spirit, so thoroughly personified in Bakunin, that holds the hope of the future. It is this spirit that fills the martyred idealists of Bolshevik Russia, as it did in the days of Romanov Russia. And in the light of recent history, particularly as the lesson of the Russian Revolution, every sincere revolutionist must realise more concretely than ever before the eternal verity of the spirit of Bakunin's teachings.

Paris
May, 1926

Alexander Berkman