

# **Bakunin's idea of revolution & revolutionary organisation**

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The Russian revolutionary liberal Alexander Herzen, who was a close friend of Micheal Bakunin, told a story of how when Bakunin was travelling from Paris to Prague he came across a revolt of German peasants *“making an uproar around the castle, not knowing what to do. Bakunin got out of his conveyance, and, without wasting any time to find out what the dispute was about, formed the peasants into ranks and instructed them so skilfully that by the time he resumed his seat to continue his journey, the castle was burning on all four sides”*.<sup>1</sup>

Bakunin was the giant of the revolutionary movement in Europe from 1848 to his death in 1876. At 6’4” and 240lbs he was a literal giant as well as the demon that stalked the bourgeois imagination. Yet although he is often cited as the father of the anarchist movement, today his ideas of revolutionary organisation are poorly understood by anarchists and Marxists. Instead he is most remembered for his role in countering the authoritarian aspects of Marxism in the 1<sup>st</sup> International.

There are several good reasons why Bakunin is not remembered for his positive ideas. The years Marx spent in the British Library perfecting *Das Kapital* were spent by Bakunin in a series of prisons, chained to walls, and losing his teeth through scurvy. Not the best environment for research or writing! And in any case as he admitted in 1870 *“I am neither a scientist, nor a philosopher nor even a professional writer. I have written very little in my life time, and have only ever done so in self-defence”*.<sup>2</sup> In fact he wrote thousands of letters but relatively few articles or pamphlets. Many of those available today are drafts of unpublished works.

Also he never claimed any consistency to his life’s writings or activity. Even in 1871, when he and Marx were fighting over the future of the First International, he could write *“As far as learning was concerned, Marx was [in 1844], and still is, incomparably more advanced than I. I knew nothing at that time of political economy, I had not yet rid myself of my metaphysical observations ... He called me a sentimental idealist and he was right;...”*<sup>3</sup>

Many Marxists came to see Marx as a sort of prophet whose writings comprise a perfect materialist ‘revelation’ that can be used to answer all of today’s questions. This may be a foolish approach but it’s true to say that Marx’s life’s writings are more consistent than Bakunin’s are. The writings of the young Bakunin have quite different politics to his writings at the end of his life.

## Bakunin’s early life

Bakunin followed a similar path of development to many of the other revolutionaries from a bourgeois background of that generation. Like Marx and Engels this included involvement with the left Hegalians. In 1844 he was a member of Marx’s Democratic Federation in Paris where he also met and was influenced by Proudhon. When the 1848 revolutions (which centred on the demand for bourgeois parliaments and home rule) erupted, he served in the Workers’ National Guard in Paris. When that rising was defeated he headed to Germany in March as the revolutions there started, hoping to encourage a Polish revolt.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *To the Finland Station*, Edmund Wilson, Fontana 1960, p271

<sup>2</sup> Bakunin in *Who am I*, p126, *No Gods, No Masters Vol 1*, taken from *La Commune de Paris et la notion de l’Etat* 1870, *Oeuvres* IV, p249ff

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p14

Bakunin's political ideology at the time was fairly unformed but is usually described as 'Pan Slavist'. Many commentators since have had problems putting this in any sensible context. Anarchists have tended to see it as irrelevant, while Marxists have generally concentrated on attacking Bakunin for the anti-German (Prussian) aspect to it.

His writings and activity in this period bear more than a passing resemblance to what has been called left republicanism in Ireland. The idea that the 'national struggle' can be an impetus towards the abolition of class rule even as it achieves national independence is also found in many Marxist writings, including those of Connolly and Trotsky. His anti-German rants are echoed much later in the anti – US diatribes of Marxist South American revolutionaries who, sometimes identified the enemy as the 'blue eyed blondes of the north'.

1848 also saw Bakunin participate in the Slav congress in Prague and publish 'An appeal to the Slavs'. This appeal had many things in common with later left republican statements, for instance the call for revolutionary Slavic unity against the German, Turkish and Magyars occupations "*while we stretched our fraternal hands out to the German people, to democratic Germany*". He sought to make socialism an inevitable part of the national liberation struggle writing; "*Everybody has come to the realisation that liberty was merely a lie where the great majority of the population is reduced to a miserable existence, where, deprived of education, of liberty and of bread, it is fated to serve as an underprop for the powerful and the rich.*" The appeal ends with "*The social question thus appears to be first and foremost the question of the complete overturn of society.*"<sup>4</sup>

## Years in jail

Bakunin moved to Dresden where he met and befriended the composer Richard Wagner. There, in May 1849, a constitutional crisis led to another rising. With Wagner he joined the insurrection and became a revolutionary officer. Marx gives a summary of events in a letter to the *New York Daily Tribune* (October 2, 1852) on 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany' "*In Dresden, the battle in the streets went on for four days. The shopkeepers of Dresden, organised into 'community guards' not only refused to fight, but many of them supported the troops against the insurrectionists. Almost all of the rebels were workers from the surrounding factories. In the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin they found a capable and cool headed leader*".

Bakunin was arrested after the rebellion was put down. His luck had run out. He was already wanted by the Russians, the Czar having confiscated all his property and removed all his rights in 1844. He spent 13 months in jail in Dresden under sentence of death. One night he was led out, he presumed to be executed, but instead he was handed over to the Austrians. They jailed him in Prague for nine months before moving him to the Olmutz fortress where he was chained to the wall for two months. They condemned him to hang for high treason. Instead he was handed to the Russians where he was jailed in the Peter-Paul Fortress. Here he lost his teeth from scurvy and came close to losing his mind.

He spent nearly ten years in the various prisons until he was exiled to Siberia in 1857. There, once he had recovered his health, he fled via Japan to the US and then to London at the end of 1861. His incredible escape from Siberia (Japan had only just opened up to the west in 1853) only added to the mystification that surrounded Bakunin.

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<sup>4</sup> Appeal to the Slavs (1848), in Bakunin on Anarchism, Sam Dolgoff, black Rose Books, 1972, p63-68

In prison he had remained a pan Slavist and was clearly not yet an anarchist. The Czar, like later generations of Russian rulers, had a fondness for extracting confessions from his victims. Bakunin used his as a chance to outline his program which included the idea that what Russia needed was “*a strong dictatorial power*” to raise the standard of living and education. While some have correctly pointed out that what is said in such a confession should be taken with a pinch of salt, even as late as 1862 Bakunin “*thought the Tsar was capable of really working with the people, and the people capable of imposing its will on the Tsar through a National Assembly*”.<sup>5</sup>

However alongside and contrary to this he was clearly developing his thoughts in a libertarian direction. In 1862 Herzen’s journal ‘The Bell’ published his open letter with the title “To my Russian, Polish and other Slav friends”. The section addressed to university students reads “*Go to the people. This is your field, your life, your science. Learn from the people how best to serve their cause! Remember, friends, that educated youth must be neither the teacher, the paternalistic benefactor, nor the dictatorial leader of the people, but only the midwife for the self-liberation, inspiring them to increase their power by acting together and co-ordinating their efforts*”.<sup>6</sup> In that period the denial of education to the working class in most countries made it inevitable that the vast bulk of revolutionary writers would come from the bourgeois. Leaving that aside, Bakunin suggests a relationship between the ‘revolutionary intellectual’ and the people that anarchists would still hold with today.

He finally came to reject pan Slavism after the 1863 Polish insurrection when he saw that the Polish nationalists were more interested in Ukrainian land than the support of the Ukrainian Slavs and that they were more afraid of peasant insurrection than the Czar. He visited Marx in London on his return. Marx invited him to join the 1<sup>st</sup> International and wrote to Engels (Nov 4, 1864) saying “*On the whole he is one of the few people whom I find not to have retrogressed after 16 years, but to have developed further*”<sup>7</sup>.

Bakunin had not yet seen the value of the 1<sup>st</sup> International (which was then in an embryonic form as a combination of British trade unions and French followers of Proudhon or Blanqui). He went to Italy where he worked on an international project of revolutionary organisation. According to Daniel Guerin “*The few members of the brotherhood were ... former disciples of the republican Giuseppe Mazzini, from whom they acquired their taste for and familiarity with secret societies*”.<sup>8</sup> Brian Morris includes Polish and Russian exiles in this list.<sup>9</sup>

Bakunin comes in for a lot of criticism from modern day revolutionaries over his advocacy of secret societies in this period. Such criticisms though are looking back from the comparative safety of 20<sup>th</sup> century western Europe or the US where mass unions are a fact and revolutionaries are comparatively free to hold meetings and publish papers. In Bakunin’s time such activity was almost always illegal and liable to get the author sentenced to years in prison, if not death. Marx and Engels had published the ‘Communist Manifesto’ from one such secret society, the League of the Just, and had continued in another up to the founding of the International despite the fact they were in the relative safety of liberal England.

The group around Bakunin had worked in similar secret societies for years, there were no legal revolutionary organisations in Poland or Russia in this period. In Italy and France these

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<sup>5</sup> Brian Morris, Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom, 1993, p26

<sup>6</sup> Sam Dolgoff, ed, Bakunin on Anarchy, New York, 1973, p388

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Brian Morris, Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom, 1993, p29

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Guerin in No Gods No Master Vol 1, p 132

<sup>9</sup> Brian Morris, Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom, 1993, p30

societies, often based on the Freemasons, were also the norm. It is thus hardly surprising that they concluded that “*an association with a revolutionary purpose must necessarily take the form of a secret society*”<sup>10</sup>

They drew up sets of rules for such groupings, the first under the title Revolutionary Society/Brotherhood in 1865. Arthur Lehning, editor of the Archives Bakunin points out that such programs and statues mirror Bakunin’s evolving thoughts, rather than “*the operation of an organization*”.<sup>11</sup> They were intended to be a blueprint of an ‘ideal’ organisation rather than a description of an already fully formed one.

The first of these documents, while clearly on the path to libertarian organisation, is firmly rooted in Bakunin’s pre anarchist phase. It combines ideas of libertarian organisation with the contradictory aim of setting up a parliament; “*For the governance of common affairs, a government and provincial assembly or parliament will of necessity be formed*”<sup>12</sup>

It also reduces the question of revolution to an organisational one. The assumption is that everywhere the people are ready to rise and that all that is needed is for a relatively small number of revolutionaries to co-ordinate this rising. This an idea also common in 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxism either in the Trotskyist idea of the ‘crisis of leadership’ or the Gueverist revolutionary foci.

If this program cannot be considered any sort of final blueprint this does not mean that it is irrelevant. The kind of new society they advocated was a radical advance in the Europe of the 1860’s and remains surprisingly relevant. The selection in the box gives the flavour of how they saw post-revolutionary society.

### **The Program of the Brotherhood (1865)**

*“the advent of liberty is incompatible with the existence of States.*

...

*..the free human society may arise at last, no longer organised ... from the top down... but rather starting from the free individual and the free association and autonomous commune, from the bottom up*

...

*... women, different from man but not inferior to him, intelligent, hardworking and free as he is, should be declared his equal in all political and social rights ...religious and civil marriage should be replaced by free marriage, and that the upkeep, education and training of all children should be a matter for everyone, a charge upon society ... children belonging neither to society nor to their parents but rather to their future liberty*

..

*the revolution ... can ... be effected only by the people*

...

*the revolution ... cannot succeed unless, sweeping, like a worldwide conflagration .. it encompasses the whole of Europe for a start and then the world*

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<sup>10</sup> Bakunin in The Program of the Brotherhood (1865) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p138

<sup>11</sup> No Gods No Master Vol 1, p 132

<sup>12</sup> Bakunin in The Program of the Brotherhood (1865) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p142

...

*the social revolution .. will not ... put up its sword before it has destroyed every state ... across the whole civilised world*"<sup>13</sup>

Bakunin next attempted to introduce a revolutionary socialist program into the League of Peace and Freedom. This was founded at a conference in Geneva in August of 1867 attended by 6,000 people, "*all friends of free democracy*". Bakunin is described rising to speak at the conference; "*the cry passed from mouth to mouth: 'Bakunin!' Garibaldi, who was in the chair, stood up, advanced a few steps and embraced him. This solemn meeting of two old and tried warriors of the revolution produced an astonishing impression ... Everyone rose and there was a prolonged and enthusiastic clapping of hands*"<sup>14</sup>.

Some people date Bakunin's advocacy of anarchism from this point, not least because as part of his speech he denounced nationalism — a break with his previous pan-Slavism. Others date it from the following congress of Berne in 1868. In any case it is from this period onward that Bakunin becomes centrally involved in the building of mass revolutionary organisations, including that of the 1<sup>st</sup> International.

It is from this point that he starts to advocate methods of organisation consistent with anarchism. His last major work, written in 1873, outlines the following program for the revolutionary youth in Russia.

*"...they must go the people, because today — and this is true everywhere, but especially in Russia — outside of the people, outside of the multi-million-strong labouring masses, there is neither life, nor cause, nor future"*<sup>15</sup>

*"The chief defect which to this day paralyses and makes impossible a universal popular insurrection in Russia is the self-containment of the communes, the isolation and separateness of the local peasant worlds. At all costs we must shatter that isolation and introduce the vital current of revolutionary thought, will, and deed to those separate worlds. We must link together the best peasants of all the villages, districts, and, if possible, regions, the progressive individuals, the natural revolutionaries of the Russian peasant world, and, where possible, creating the same vital link between the factory worker and the peasantry.*

*...We must convince these progressive individuals — and through them, if not all the people then at least a sizeable segment of them, the most energetic segment — that the people as a whole ... share one common misfortune and therefore one common cause. We must convince them that an invincible force lives in the people, which nothing, and no one can withstand, and that if it has not yet liberated the people it is because it is powerful only when it is concentrated and acts simultaneously, everywhere, jointly in concert, and until now it has not done so. In order to concentrate that force, the villages, districts and regions must be linked and organised according to a common plan and with the single objective of universal liberation of the people. To create in our people a feeling*

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<sup>13</sup> Bakunin in *The Program of the Brotherhood* (1865) as published in *God and the State, No Gods, No Masters* Vol 1, p133 — 137

<sup>14</sup> Report from a Russian positivist quoted in Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p34

<sup>15</sup> Bakunin, *Statism and anarchism*, Appendix A (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p212

*and consciousness of real unity, some sort of popular newspaper must be established ... which would immediately spread information to every corner of Russia, to every region, district and village, about any peasant or factory uprising that breaks out in one locality or another, and also about the significant revolutionary movements produced by the proletariat of western Europe.*

*.. the Russian people will acknowledge our educated youth as their own only when they encounter them in their own lives, in their own misfortunes, in their own cause, in their own desperate rebellion. The youth must be present from now on not as witnesses but as active participants, in the forefront of all popular disturbances and uprisings, great and small ... Acting in accordance with a rigorously conceived and fixed plan, and subjecting all their activity to the strictest discipline in order to create that unanimity without which there can be no victory.”<sup>16</sup>*

This one quotation refutes the most common misrepresentations of Bakunin’s model of organisation. It does confirm one common criticism of Bakunin, that he did not confine his revolutionary subject to the industrial working class, but looked as much, if not more so, to the artisans and the peasants. However while this criticism might make some sense in modern Europe or North America today, in the 1870’s any revolution which only mobilised the urban workers would have been doomed to defeat. At that time urban workers were a tiny minority of society.

For instance in advocating a similar strategy for revolutionaries in Italy Bakunin estimates that *“...Italy has a huge proletariat... It consists of two or three million urban factory workers and small artisans, and some 20 million landless peasants.”<sup>17</sup>* Bakunin, unlike Marx, saw that the peasants could be actively won over to the side of the revolution, and, because of the numbers involved there could be no libertarian revolution in that period without the peasants.

But Bakunin did not, as is often claimed, dismiss the industrial workers. In fact, in advance of Marx and in anticipation of the factory committee movement of the Russian revolution, he insisted that *“The co-operative associations already have proven that workers are quite capable of administering industrial enterprises, that it can be done by workers elected from their midst and who receive the same wage.”<sup>18</sup>* He was however critical of a certain layer of the British, German and Swiss working class who he believed had become a labour aristocracy that could be hostile to the interests of the proletariat as a whole.

Bakunin’s view of how revolutionaries should organise is often criticised for appearing to advocate a secret dictatorship over the people. The documents on revolutionary organisation he produced in 1867 (above) and in 1868 do indeed contain an odd contradiction, captured by the quotation below.

*“That association starts from the basis that revolutions are never made by individuals, nor even by secret societies. They are, so to speak, self-made, produced by the logic of things, by the trend of events and actions... All that a well organised society can do is, first, to play midwife to the revolution by spreading among the masses ideas appropriate to the masses’ instincts, and to organise, not the Revolution’s army — for the people at all times must be the army — but a sort of revolutionary general staff made up of*

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<sup>16</sup> Bakunin, Statism and anarchism, Appendix A (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p215

<sup>17</sup> Bakunin, Statism and anarchism (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p6

<sup>18</sup> The capitalist system, struggle.ws



*committed, energetic and intelligent individuals who are above all else true friends of the people and not presumptions braggarts, with a capacity for acting as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the people's instinct*

*The numbers of such individuals, then, need not be huge. A hundred tightly and seriously allied revolutionaries will suffice for the whole of Europe. Two or three hundred revolutionaries will be enough to organise the largest of countries”<sup>19</sup>*

This contradiction is emphasised in the last couple of lines where Bakunin seems to be suggesting that on the one hand two or three hundred revolutionaries are required in the larger countries but on the other only 100 (a smaller figure) are required for Europe (a larger area.).

This ‘contradiction’ appears again and again in Bakunin’s writings, for instance in 1870 he was to write

*“Thus the sole aim of a secret society must be, not the creation of an artificial power outside the people, but the rousing, uniting and organising of the spontaneous power of the people; therefore, the only possible, the only real revolutionary army is ... the organisation should only be the staff of this army, an organiser of the people’s power, not its own... A revolutionary idea is revolutionary, vital, real and true only because it expresses and only as far as it represents popular instincts which are the result of history. To strive to foist on the people your own thoughts-foreign to its instinct-implies a wish to make it subservient to a new state... The organisation must accept in all sincerity the idea that it is a servant and a helper, but never a commander of the people, never under any pretext its manager, not even under the pretext of the people’s welfare.*

*The organisation is faced with an enormous task: not only to prepare the success of the people’s revolution through propaganda and the unification of popular power; not only to destroy totally, by the power of this revolution, the whole existing economic, social and political order; but, in addition ... to make impossible after the popular victory the establishment of any state power over the people-even the most revolutionary, even your power-because any power, whatever it called itself, would inevitably subject the people to old slavery in a new form...*

*We are bitter foes of all official power, even if it were ultra-revolutionary power. We are enemies of all publicly acknowledged dictatorship; we are social-revolutionary anarchists. But you will ask, if we are anarchists, by what right do we wish to and by what method can we influence the people? Rejecting any power, by what power or rather by what force shall we direct the people’s revolution? An invisible force-recognised by no one, imposed by no one-through which the collective dictatorship of our organisation will be all the mightier, the more it remains invisible and unacknowledged, the more it remains without any official legality and significance.*

*Imagine... a secret organisation which has scattered its members in small groups over the whole territory of the Empire but is nevertheless firmly united: inspired by a common ideal... an organisation which acts everywhere according to a common plan. These small groups, unknown by anybody as such, have no officially recognised power but they are*

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<sup>19</sup> Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p156

*strong in their ideal, which expresses the very essence of the people's instincts, desires and demands...*

*This dictatorship is free from all self-interest, vanity and ambition for it is anonymous, invisible and does not give advantage or honour or official recognition of power to a member of the group or to the groups themselves. It does not threaten the liberty of the people because it is free from all official character..."<sup>20</sup>*

On the one hand Bakunin recognised that *"The future social organisation should be carried out from the bottom up"*<sup>21</sup> On the other hand the possibility for the creation of this new society would not come about due to a spontaneous revolution but would require an international organisation of revolutionaries which would be *"centralised by the idea and by the sameness of a program"*<sup>22</sup>

As we have seen Bakunin had some considerable experience of insurrection. He was also of course, like Marx, a disciple of Hegel and hence the dialectical method by which two apparently contradictory things would interact to create a new situation/idea that was an advance on both. At this stage in his writing Bakunin was advocating a way of overcoming the contradiction between the goal of a libertarian society and the organisational methods needed to overthrow an authoritarian one. Other and later revolutionaries faced with this contradiction have tended to either argue for a strongly centralised party that would aim for state power or to pretend that serious organisational methods were not necessary. Bakunin was attempting to go beyond these two opposing ideas to find a new solution that satisfied reality.

Bakunin's views on revolutionary organisation can be presented as a sort of wedding cake with separate but informally connected tiers of revolutionaries. At the top were the '100', the general staff whose role it would be to establish and maintain the informal links between countries. They would allow some judgement of when the time was ripe for revolutionary insurrection on the one hand and on the other a means of trying to co-ordinate this insurrection. This was to be a secret (because of the danger of arrest) and (after 1868) an informal set of contacts who would attempt to influence the course of events through the power of their ideas.

Beneath this was to be a second, much larger and more open organisation. This was the Alliance and its role was primarily to introduce revolutionary ideas into the mass organisations of the proletariat, in particular through the building of regional sections of the international.

After 1868 he would come to see the base of this 'cake' as the International. The base was to be the creation of organs of working class struggle that would favour direct action and reject political (i.e. electoral) activity. The Alliance would act within the international to push these politics to the fore. This was necessary because, he wrote, the mass of the workers — being illiterate and working long hours just to survive — would not be won to socialism through abstract ideas alone. Rather Bakunin wrote

*"It follows then that in order to touch the heart and gain the confidence, the assent, the adhesion, and the co-operation of the illiterate legions of the proletariat — and the vast majority of proletarians unfortunately still belong in this category — it is necessary to begin to speak to those workers not of the general sufferings of the international*

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<sup>20</sup> Bakunin to Nechayev on the role of secret revolutionary societies, June 2, 1870, struggle.ws

<sup>21</sup> The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State (1871), flag.blackened.net

<sup>22</sup> Bakunin in The Program of the Brotherhood (1865) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p139

*proletariat as a whole but of their particular, daily, altogether private misfortunes. It is necessary to speak to them of their own trade and the conditions of their work in the specific locality where they live; of the harsh conditions and long hours of their daily work, of the small pay, the meanness of their employer, the high cost of living, and how impossible it is for them properly to support and bring up a family.*"<sup>23</sup>

This was the work that Bakunin came to see as necessary in the preparation of the revolution. But he did not see the higher tiers commanding the lower, quite the opposite he also insisted that "the peoples' revolution ... will arrange its revolutionary organisation from the bottom up and from the periphery to the centre, in keeping with the principle of liberty".<sup>24</sup>

*"As regards organisation of the Commune, there will be a federation of standing barricades and a Revolutionary Communal Council will operate on the basis of one or two delegates from each barricade, one per street or per district, these deputies being invested with binding mandates and accountable and revocable at all times."*<sup>25</sup>

*An appeal will be issued to all provinces, communes and associations inviting them to follow the example set by the capital, to reorganise along revolutionary lines for a start and to then delegate deputies to an agreed place of assembly (all of these deputies invested with binding mandates and accountable and subject to recall), in order to found the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces in furtherance of the same principles and to organise a revolutionary force with the capability of defeating the reaction. Not official revolutionary commissars in any sort of sashes, but rather revolutionary propagandists are to be dispatched into all the provinces and communes and particularly among the peasants who cannot be revolutionised by principles, nor by the decrees of any dictatorship, but only by the act of revolution itself, that is to say, by the consequences that will inevitably ensure in every commune from complete cessation of the legal and official existence of the state".*<sup>26</sup>

This is not simply a historical question. It is true that in western countries revolutionaries are in general free to sell papers and hold meetings in a manner they were generally not in Bakunin's time. Yet this liberalism from the state is largely a result of the fact that most revolutionary organisation is not seen as a serious threat. Where revolutionaries of one form or another have been seen to be a threat, from the black panthers, to the Irish civil rights movement, to 1970s Italy, the gloves have come off and the full array of state oppression, including infiltration and provocation have been deployed against them. At the moment the relatively trivial threat of the black Blocs on the globalisation demonstrations is seeing an increasing array of state oppression being deployed, including now a fatal shooting. Bakunin's writings provide us with one starting point for looking at the apparent contradiction between wanting to create a libertarian society and needing to overthrow a powerful and authoritarian state to do so.

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<sup>23</sup> Founding of the Workers International, flag.blackened.net

<sup>24</sup> Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p155

<sup>25</sup> Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p155

<sup>26</sup> Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p156

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