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Review: Basic Bakunin

Anarcho

June 23, 2009

Bloody Brilliant! This pamphlet does a remarkable job in summarising the basic ideas of Bakunin, the founder of revolutionary anarchism. It covers his analysis of modern class society, the state, bourgeois democracy and Marxism. On every count, Bakunin has been vindicated.

This new edition also contains a new section on Bakunin's views on religion. Moreover, it gives a good account of his ideas on how to create an anarchist society and what that society could look like. Bakunin's ideas on revolutionary unionism and the role of the anarchist organisation are explained extremely well in a short space. It exposes Marxist claims that Bakunin rejected collective class struggle and organisation as the nonsense they are.

As an added bonus, the pamphlet explains what Bakunin meant by the phrase "invisible dictatorship." Rather than signify a desire for personal dictatorship (as Marxists claim) he simply used a bad expression to signify the way an anarchist group would work within the class struggle, by the natural influence of its members arguing the anarchist case within working class organisations.

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Of course it is not perfect. For example, the references to the Militant Tendency should have been revised in light of its split in the 1990s. It should have emphasised more that Bakunin's vision of revolution predicted key aspects of both the Paris Commune and the Russian Soviets. And it would have been nice for the pamphlet to explain why the Anarchist Federation rejects Bakunin's syndicalist ideas on unions. But these are minor points. The pamphlet is great and well worth a quid.

For those seeking to find out more about Bakunin, I would recommend "*Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*" by Brian Morris. In addition, Mark Leier's "**Bakunin: The Creative Passion**" is an excellent biography which discusses his ideas extremely well.

Basic Bakunin, new edition 2002, *Anarchist Federation*