Bakunin's Stop-over in Japan

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1. The Road to Yokohama

In 1847[1] in the midst of a famine that was wasting much of Europe, Bakunin suddenly felt the need for a *peasant* revolution, as expounded in his 'Appeal to the Slavs'. What sparked his attention was the sight of peasants ransacking the castles of their seigneurs and burning the land registers and other official documents that reified their subjection. His speech at the anniversary that year of the 1830 Polish Uprising, in which fie condemned the Russian government as the enemy of the Polish as well as the Russian people and called for a pan-Slav federation, brought the audience to a white-hot fervour and widely reported. The Russian government, enraged and nervous, demanded his expulsion from France, but in February, with the outbreak of the 1848 revolution, Bakunin was back in Paris.

Finally persuaded to leave Paris by a loan of two thousand francs from the Provisional Government, Bakunin headed east, and by the end of March was in Germany. That May, news of a widespread uprising which had broken out in Prague was brought to a pan-Slav conference then under way in the city. Of all the delegates, Bakunin was alone in deciding to seek out the action rather than flee to his home. When the revolt was put down at the end of May, he managed with some difficulty to his way to Breslau, from where he was expelled first to Berlin, then to Cöthen. In March 1849 he moved to Dresden, where he made the acquaintance of the composer Richard Wagner. In May of that year the Dresden Insurrection broke out.

Bakunin, in company with Wagner, hurried to the public hall where the Provisional Government had set up its HQ. While internal wrangling took place concerning the leadership of the insurrectionary army, a strong force of Prussian troops drew near, and by the sixth of May defeatism had heavily infected the revolutionary authorities. While most of the leadership miraculously disappeared Bakunin remained and fought the Prussian troops alongside the workers of Dresden, he was captured finally while trying to escape, but thirteen years later he would have an almost-impossibly coincidental reunion with one of his co-fighters.

After thirteen months' confinement, Bakunin received the death sentence from the Government of Saxony. Since the governments of Russia and Austria were also after his head, it was commuted to life, and in June 1850 he was handed over to Austria. At the end of another eleven months he received a further death sentence, but this too was commuted to life imprisonment. At last, in May 1851, came that which Bakunin had feared most of all, the delivery of his person to the Russian authorities. Three years in the underground dungeons of the notorious Fortress of St Peter and St Paul were followed by another four in the castle of Schlüsselberg.

Even Bakunin's robust disposition gave way under this treatment, and after eight years of torment his vitality had sunk to the point where he even requested his brother to bring him poison. In February 1857, after his mother's pleas to Tsar Alexander II were finally heeded, Bakunin was allowed to go into permanent exile in the western Siberian city of Tomsk. A year later he married the daughter of a Polish merchant, Antonia Kwiatkowski.

[1] Section three is a partial and amended translation (with personal comments added) of Henmi Kichizô's article '*Nihon ni Tachiyotta Bûkunin*', to which have been appended extracts from Wakayama Ken-ji's '*Bakûnin to Hakodate, Yokohama, Kanagawa*'. It should be said here that the former, though officially credited to Henmi, is actually the work of Mukai Kou, Osaka libertarian poet and esperantist who, after hearing the bones of the story from the ailing Henmi, filled it out and wrote it up himself. Both these articles are based on earlier ones by Kubô Jô and Itabashi Tomoyuki, which will be incorporated into the second edition of this pamphlet.

In August of 1858 Bakunin received a visit from General Count Nicholas Muraviev, his second cousin. Muraviev had also been Governor of Eastern Siberia for the past ten years. He was Popular with the Tsar both for having manipulated the weak Chinese government into conceding territory to Russia, and for having opened an important trade outlet by establishing the port of Nikolaevsk at the mouth of the Amur River. He was also a liberal, and enjoyed patronizing the political exiles in Siberia (so long as they behaved themselves). Bakunin, as his relative was a particular favourite, and he had already tried unsuccessfully to secure his release from exile. In the following spring, with Muraviev's help, Bakunin was given a job with the Amur Development Agency at an annual salary of two thousand roubles. As a result he and Antonia were able to move to Irkutsk in the eastern province. A plan was already slowly taking shape in Bakunin's mind.

That summer Muraviev visited Japan as the plenipotentiary of the Tsar, instructed to open diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries. According to Japanese records of the occasion

> "In July of the sixth year of the reign period Ansei of the Emperor Kômei, seven Russian warships appeared suddenly off Kanagawa (on Edo Bay). When a foreign affairs official of the shogunate attempted to discover their business he was informed, 'I am Grand Plenipotentiary Count Nicholas Muraviev, Governor of the Eastern Province and a noble of Imperial Russia. As such I do not deign to treat with minor officials. Let a high-ranking official formally present himself.'
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> "The shogunate then dispatched two second-level officials, Endô Tajimanokami and Sakai Ukyônosuke, who were treated to a banquet on board ship. At the end of it the Joint Ratification of the Japan-Russia Treaty was announced. This followed upon those of the first (1854) and fifth (1858) years of Ansei, when the harbours of Shimoda, Hakodate and Yokohama were opened to shipping."

Having heard from Muraviev of the opening of the Japanese ports and of the frequent calls paid there by American ships (apparently two calls a week on average following the signing of a commercial treaty in 1858). Bakunin had begun gradually to construct a plan of escape. To escape west through Russia was nigh-impossible, but eastwards… A hitherto inconceivable route began to take shape: to Europe via Japan and America which, if pulled off, would be the longest escape on record! Although Muraviev had been disgraced for his liberal views earlier that year, his successor, as luck would have it, was also distantly related to Bakunin and was relatively indulgent. On June 5 1861, after announcing his departure to Antonia, Bakunin left Irkutsk under cover of company business. He was ostensibly employed by a Siberian merchant to make a trip to the mouth of the Amur, and had received an advance of a thousand roubles. It was a complicated journey, involving first an overland trip to the Amur to find a ship, but after transferring to the river he reached Nikolaevsk on July 2.

Fifteen days later he was safely aboard the Russian warship 'Strelok bound for Kastri, from where he was supposed to return overland to Irkutsk. Quite by chance, however, the 'Strelok' , while passing through the Mamiya Straits separating the mainland from Sakhalin Island, happened to take in tow an American sailing ship the 'Vickery', At the final Russian port of call, Olga, Bakunin managed a smooth transfer by persuading the American captain to take him on board,

and by August[2] had achieved his primary objective: the port of Hakodate in the northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido.[3]

Just as Bakunin was about to leave Hakodate there was a dramatic moment. On board the ship, whose captain had promised him, a passage to Yokohama, he war taken for an aristocrat and invited to join a banquet being prepared for a "special guest", The "special guest", when he appeared, turned out to be none other than the Russian consul stationed in the city! It was like a cliff-hanger scene from a Marx Brothers movie, absurdly dangerous. Here was Bakunin fiery anarchist revolutionary and avowed enemy of the Tsar, purportedly in Siberian exile, actually sitting in an American boat in Japan!

Bakunin took the situation in hand. He engaged the consul in conversation without waiting to be challenged explained that he was given permission to go sightseeing, and assured him that he would be returning to Irkutsk via Shanghai and Peking. "Then you won't be returning with us?" said the consul (for at that very moment a Russian naval squadron was moored nearby and preparing to set sail for Nikolaevsk). No, for I've just arrived and there are still many things I want to see here", replied Bakunin, and the matter was closed. By the time the banquet was over he and the conSul were the best of friends, and the next morning he sailed, beneath an American flag, under the very noses of officers of the Russian Imperial Navy! It must have been one of the closest shaves of his life (and, had it been ten years later, would probably have ended quite differently; the introduction of the telegraph to Asia in 1871 would have made it a simple thing for the consul to check on the truth of his story).[4] As it was he was away and-free, and must have regarded it as a good omen. By late August he was in Yokohama.

2. The Yokohama Hotel

Bakunin, as soon as he set foot on Japanese soil (he was not allowed to land at Hakodate), must have put up at the sprawling 'Yokohama Hotel' (also known as the Hotel Hufnagel after its original proprietor, a Dutchman), for this was then the only lodging-house in Japan catering for foreigners. His name, however, is not to be found alongside those of his fellow-boarders; the closest to a positive identification is the claim made by Henmi Kichizo to have found a note left by one of them that "a big man, in flight from Russian exile, was also resident" (others have denied the existence of such an entry).

When you think about it, Bakunin, so jumpy as to be startled by the sighing of the wind, was hardly likely to stay under his own name, concerned as he must have been to leave no trace of his passing. An examinntion of the hotel registers of the time, however, reveals another name, and a totally unexpected one at that: Wilhelm Heine, the artist who had fought alongside Bakunin in the final days of the Dresden Insurrection!

[2] Dates of Bakunin's movements at this time differ according to the source. It has not always been possible to verify which are correct, and usually only rough dates have been given.

[3] There are several conflicting theories concerning Bakunin's escape route from Siberia. The one related here is that given by Masters (*Bakunin: The Father of Anarchism*), which follows the one in E.H. Carr's *Bakunin*.

[4] There is some confusion as to whether this meeting took place in Hakodate or in Yokohama, Masters, following Carr's account, locates it in Yokohama, though most Japanese sources give Hakodate. Herzen's 'Bakunin and the Polish Question' is unclear but seems to suggest Hakodate (Yokohama is not mentioned at all in this account). In any case, a moment's thought suggests that the port could only have been Hakodate. Had the ship in which the encounter with the consul took place been bound for America instead of southern Japan, Bakunin's story would hardly have held water.

Heine, after eluding arrest at Dresden, had fled to New York and then to Central America, where he travelled extensively. Returning to New York in 1852, he was signed on as official artist to the Perry Expedition. While in Japan Heine visited the capital, Edo, several times though it was officially closed to foreigners - and recorded the events and customs of the time with a vivid brush. His four hundred sketches and paintings add colour to Perry's Official 'Narrative of the Expedition of the American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan'. published in 1856, By this time Heine seems to have been forgiven for his youthful escapade at Dresden, for in 1859 he returned to Germany and was immediately invited to join a Prussian expedition to Asia, again as official artist. (This was the expedition led by the aristocrat Eulenberg, whose description of the Yokohama Hotel appears below.)

On its way back to Germany from Japan, the Eulenberg Expedition spent some time in China-where, after its mission was completed, Heine decided to part company and make his own way back to America. The first stage of his journey took him from Tientsin to Yokohama, and thus occurred the almost-impossible chance meeting with his old comrade-in-arms Bakunin.[5]

The emotion and disbelief which must have beset the pair as they bumped into each other in a small foreign hotel in Japan after more than ten years' separation can be imagined. It must have seemed like a dream. The backslappings, the embraces, interrupted only when one of them peered into the other's face to make sure it was real… One an exiled revolutionary whose long confinement chained to the walls of reeking, dripping underground dungeons had become a legend; the other an impassioned adventurer who had burned his European boats and gone to live in the New World. Who could ever have grown bored at the stories these two had to tell?

[5] Heine is rather an elusive character, but we took trouble to investigate him since his writings, if there were any, seemed to offer leads for new information on Bakunin. So far we have discovered the following information. After escaping from Dresden Heine went first to New York, then to Central America where he travelled for several years. The record of this expedition was published in 1853 as the *Wanderbilder aus Centralamerika*. Soon after that he returned to New York, where he was selected from among several score of applicants for the post of official artist to the Perry expedition. After arriving in Japan he made several visits to Edo, possible only because of his position on Perry's staff, since Edo was officially closed to foreigners. His sketches of the city as it was before the foreigners arrived in force are thus a unique record. When he returned to New York in 1855 he published several mementoes: a collection of prints entitled *Graphic Scenes of the Japan Expedition*; 400 sketches which were included in Perry's official report; and his memoirs, *Reiss um die Welt nach Japan* (Leipzig, 1856). The memoirs apparently proved an enormous success, and were immediately translated into both French and Dutch. Two years later Heine published a German translation of the report of the Rodgers Expedition sent by the US government to te Japan, China and Okhotsk Seas, under the title *Die Expedition in dir Seen von China, Japan und Okhotsk* (Leipzig, 1858-9). in which he also urged the Prussian government to send more expeditions to Asia before the Americans became established there. In 1859 he returned to Germany, where he published *Japan und Seine Bewohner* (Leipzig, 1860). While in Berlin he received an invitation to join a projected Prussian expedition as official artist once again, and was simultaneously given a premium to send back reports for a Cologne newspaper. This expedition, the Eulenberg one mentioned in the text, went on from Japan to Tientsin, and here Heine left to return to America alone; it was while he was waiting in Yokohama for the connection to San Francisco that the historic meeting with Bakunin took place. Once back in America he took part in the Civil War on the Union side and was made an officer. In 1864 he published his major work, a voluminous book on travel in the Orient, *Eine Weltreise um die nordliche Hemisphare in Verbindung mit der Ostasiatischen Expedition in den Jahren 1860 und 1861* (Leipzig, two volumes), After the war ended Heine was named US consul in Paris and Liverpool concurrently, but after the establishment of the Hohenzollern Empire in Germany in 1871 returned to Dresden where he wrote his last book about Japan, *Japan, Beitrage zur Kenntnis des Landes und Seiner Bewohner* (Berlin, 1873-80). The reason for going into such detail about Heine's life is not for the sake of promoting archaeological research, but in the hope that comrades who can read German - unfortunately, none of us can - be able to look into these sources for information about Bakunin. We hope that you will let us know if you have any luck.

The hotel at which they stayed crops up from time to time in foreigners' memoirs of Japan, as well as in histories of Japan's hotel industry, and we can get a little of its flavour from the account of the Prussian traveller Eulenberg who had stayed there the previous year:

> "(It had) a big garden, faced on three sides by wooden single- storied buildings. On one side was the dining room, which joined onto the bar and billiards room, while on the opposite side were situated the living and sleeping quarters. Behind them, facing the main buildings, was a barn. The whole place was hastily put together, the architecture half Japanese-style, half Western-style. The kitchen and cellar were excellent, and the host extremely accomodating..."[6]

In 1859, immediately after the opening of Yokohama Port, a "hotel" opened nearby what was then the Customs Office (now Kanagawa Prefectural Office), facing onto Honchô-dôri Street. Managed by a Dutchman named Eufnagel, it was Japan's first hotel (as opposed to Japanese-style inn). "Hotel", though, is rather a misnomer for what was simply a largely-Japanese style house surrounded by a tiled wall. In the big room containing the bar, which also served as a general meeting place for the guests, a black waiter named Macaulay[7] apparently saw to their needs.

Evenings were the time for shooting practice, for which it seems the big clock over the door served as target. All in all, the place might easily have inspired many a Wild West drama. In the same room stood the billiard table which, as soon as it was installed, proved a great success as a means of killing time. As mentioned earlier, an early Japanese historian named Itabashi Tomoyuki has looked carefully into the question of how Bakunin spent his time and concluded (since we have not yet seen the original article we cannot vouch for his conclusion) that he probably whiled it away on the billiard table, and also blew much of his money in the bar - the first ever in Japan. More than likely there was not much else for Bakunin to do: foreigners were not allowed to leave the settlement without per-mission, and since it is on record that many other interesting guests were staying there beside Bakunin himself, he probably felt quite at home.

There were eight guest rooms, all of them windowless and unheated, and one traveller left a grumbling record of how almost unbearably cold it could be in the gusty, rainy days of November, In those early days, nevertheless, for the foreigners then beginning to reach Japan with increasing frequency, this was the only place to stay, or even just to rest; no-one visited Yokohama without dropping in at least once at the Yokohama Hotel. Sad to say, the hotel was razed to the ground just a few years after Bakunin's visit, one of the few casualties suffered by the foreign settlement of Yokohama, which otherwise remains today much as it was 100 years ago, It is possible, however, even today to stand on the site of the hotel where Bakunin spent his days and nights.

Among Bakunin's other fellow-residents at the Yokohama Hotel, luckily enough, were the scientist Siebold and his son Alexander, whose memoirs Provide one of the key documents concerning Bakunin's stay in Japan. ,;iebold had already been expelled once by the Tokugawa government as a result of the so-called 'Siebold Affair' of 1829[8], but in 1861 had been invited back as diplomatic advisor to the shogunate. In the diary of this second visit we find the following entry:

[6] All quotations have been translated into English from Japanese, and may thus vary from the original.

[7] Proper names - apart from those of well-known people - have had to be guessed from the Japanese transliteration.

[8] Philipp Franz von Siebold, a German, had been attached to a Dutch company at Deshima, Nagasaki, from 1823 to 1828 as doctor and naturalist. During that time he received the *shôgun's* permission to instruct Japanese doctors

> ”In that Yokohama boarding-house we encountered an outlaw from the Wild West Heins, presumably as well as many other inter. esting guests. The presence of the Russian revolutionist Michael Bakunin, in flight from Siberia, was as far as one could see being winked at by the authorities. He was well-endowed with money, and none who came to know him could fail to pay their respects.

3. Across the the Pacific

David Hecht in his memoir ’Russian Radical’s Look at America’ (translated from Japanese; original title unknown) records that Bakunin while in Japan ”perhaps met a politically-progressive American businessman”. Not only the identity of thin man, but even the place where Bakunin met him are a mystery. Indeed, one of the greatest difficulties in tracing Bakunin’s activities in Japan is to Din him down in one place. Sources differ: while all agree that his first port of call was Hakodate in Hokkaido, James Guillaume’s biographical sketch relates that Bakunin went straight from there to Yokohama, while a Japanese source has him instead going to Kanagawa. Max Nettlau’s ’Michael Bakunin: a Biographical Sketch’ mentions ”several” ports, but according to his ’The Life of Michael Bakunin’ Bakunin’ Bakunin’ left *Kanagawa* for San Francisco along with Heine. Since Kanagawa is just along the bay from Yokohama there is a large possibility that Bakunin may have taken a small boat and joined the ship at Kanagawa, or that the ship called first at Kanagawa before making the Pacific crossing. However, there was no settlement there and foreigners were not allowed to reside. As of yet the ”Kanagawa Connection” has not yet been investigated, but when it is there is a good chance that a whole new range of evidence concerning Bakunin’s activities might be opened up.

Anyway, the evidence so far indicates that Bakunin left Yokohama in midSeptember on board the American merchant-ship the ’Carrington’ bound for San Francisco.[9] His fellow-travellers, apart from Heine, included the English clergyman Koo, the discovery of whose diary by Bakunin’s biographer E.H. Carr was highly praised by Max Nettlau. Kos says of Bakunin that he was ”more ’like a friend than anyone I have met for a long time”. Before the voyage ended the two were great friends, Bakunin expressing sympathetic feelings towards Protestantism and telling Kos the story of his life before finally requesting a loan of $250.[10]

Also on board ship one would have found a Japanese speaking perfect English. This was Joseph Hiko (Hamada Hikozô), a pioneer of the newspaper world in Japan who would later shake hands with three American presidents: Pearce, Buchanan and Lincoln. Pure luck fated these men, as well

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in Western medicine, and gathered about him quite a body of disciples. On his return to Germany, however, he tried to take away with him forbidden articles such as maps of Japan, and was discovered. After a year’s confine. ment he was deported and ordered never to return. His friends and disciples were persecuted and many imprisoned. This was the ”Siebold Incident”. After being rejected for the Perry Expedition, he was able t return to Japan in 1859 after a diplomatic treaty had been sign ed between Japan and Holland the previous year. This time he came as political advisor to the *shôgun*. The five years he spent in Deshima, despite the black cloud he fell under as a result of the ”Incident”, were very influential for the development of modern medicine in Japan. The daughter born to him. and his Japanese second-wife (sic) later became Japan’s first Western-style midwife.

[9] Some sources give the date of departure as September 7, while others name the ship as either the ’Peterson’ or the ’Wellington’.

[10] Evidently Bakunin had disposed of much of the money he was carrying when Siebold met him, either on the billiard table or in buying his passage to San Francisco.

as Heine, to be on board the same ship as Bakunin when he left Japan, and a closer investigation of Kos's diary, Heine's books (see note 9) and Hiko's unpublished writings promises now leads.

When Bakunin arrived in San Francisco on October 15 he found more congenial company than that of a clergyman and an acquaintance of presidents. It was the time of the Gold Rush, and among those seeking a quick fortune were many Russian and Polish immigrants, some of whom, according to one source, clubbed together to raise the money for Bakunin's passage to New York (what happened to Koe's loan we do not learn). In New York he borrowed more money from an Englishman named Smith, enough to buy a ticket for Liverpool, where he arrived on December 27, six months after leaving Siberia. He entrained immediately for Orsett House, Herzen's residence in London, and the same evening burst into the drawing-room where the family was having supper. "What! Are you sitting down eating oysters! Well! Tell me the news. What is happening, and where?!"

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