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Review of *Materials for the Biography of M. Bakunin.* From Documents in tho Archives of the late Third Department [of State Police] and the Ministry of the Navy. Edited and Annotated by Viatcheslav Polonski. T. I. Moscow, State Edition, 1923. xii, 439, 8vo.

Two or three years ago much noise was made about the memorial written by Bakunin at the request of Tsar Nicholas I (1851). Before it was ever published, some persons—above all, an ex-Anarchist turned Communist, who had not even read its full text —proceeded to discredit and vilify Bakunin on the strength of this document, the full text of which, published in 1921, with an introduction by the editor of the present volume, was sufficient to silence these intrigues. To-day Bakunin's name stands higher than ever and his traducers are no longer heard of.

But one thing was still wanted: that the document in question and others should be presented in their right *milieu,* or frame, and this is done by the present volume. This was the way, in fairness to Bakunin, in which these publications from Russian archives ought to have *begun* years ago. I am glad to see this has been done now; better late than never.

It is *a priori* likely that, when we know a man's life from infancy to deathbed from a thousand sources, source number thousand and one will not modify the impression we have of him, but may add some welcome new touches at the most. So it is with the "Confession" and this whole volume of Bakunin documents.

He and comrades of his were tried for their lives from 1849 to 1851; even twice over in his case, in Saxony and in Austria. These long inquisitorial trials were flagrant revolutionary facts; the testimony and confessions of the accused and documentary evidence seized brought a great number of facts to the knowledge of the judicial authorities (which in Bakunin's case were eagerly picked up by Russian representatives and sent to the Tsar's police). These facts were summarised and used against the prisoners in long accusations, and the prisoners were given the opportunity to present statements in their defence. Of this opportunity Bakunin, always willing to argue matters out with opponents, made use of in a long written defence, some extracts of which I gathered long since from a letter on this subject which he sent to his lawyer (March 23,1850).

Thus Bakunin knew exactly what facts had been discovered by the authorities, and he also knew the many facts upon which, when questioned, he refused to reply, expressed himself in generalities, or pretended failing memory, just as the others did also, though sometimes an unreflected admission gave the inquiring judge a chance, and then the others also had to give up this indefensible position.

Bakunin's case was aggravated by the fact that, as through his public life since the end of 1847, so also through these trials ran a stream of slander and false accusations circulated against him by the Russian Embassy in Paris since he first had publicly proclaimed the reconciliation of Russians and Poles and their struggle in common against Tsarism (November, 1847).

When face to face with the Tsar in the memorial of 1851, called the "Confession" (in the Catholic religious sense), he

knew therefore exactly which facts of his personal and of his revolutionary life were known to his prosecutors and what they did not know and must not learn; he knew also which pretended facts, invented against him, had given a particularly ugly aspect to his case in the eyes of the Tsar; and just as almost every prisoner, however much he despises those who judge him, wishes to put his case in his own words, so Bakunin wrote the memorial of 1851 for the Tsar.

I dissected this document two years ago, examining every statement by itself, and found that it was written with great discretion and care, putting the best face on all that was known, ceding not an inch of new ground; and where it was explicit was where Bakunin, inspired by nationalist ardour, his Slav sentiment, which was so strong in him in 1848–49 and had not yet abated in 1851, spoke to the Tsar as a fellow-Slav, for nationalism makes strange bedfellows like every other common creed.

The present volume contains on pages 3–94 unpublished documents seized among Bakunin's papers or referring to the trials, sent to Russia at the time; also a copy of the letter to the lawyer, which I knew already. This material shows to what extent the " Confession" is a circumscription of the results of the trials, and it would have been the right thing to publish all these papers *together* from the beginning and not to foist off bits of the " Confession" upon an unprepared public.

The "Confession" is again reproduced in a careful edition, with facsimiles (pages 95–248), an edition which, we are told by the editor (who did not himself provide the text for the 1921 edition, for which he wrote a preface), in about 300 instances presents a more correct text than the first print.

Then a charming though sad portion follows: Bakunin's correspondence with his family from the fortress—or at least a portion of it—and the letters of his mother to the Tsar and high officials in his favour, efforts which she continued until April, 1861. She begged them to let him live with her, and his five

brothers offered the Tsar their guarantee as hostages for his quiet behaviour. The first of Bakunin's letters, beginning January 4, 1852, after he had seen his favourite sister Tatiana and one of his brothers, show him cheerful, or pretending cheerfulness, reconstructing in these letters the happy and exceedingly intimate family circle of his early years which we know from the many letters and traditions in Korniloff's book, based on the Russian family papers (1915). Many years had passed, but Bakunin in prison clings again to this Utopia, which, indeed, formed his mind and prepared it to be receptive to generous ideas.

From the correspondence with officials or their letters we learn how every slight improvement in his position in Siberia had to be begged for over and over again; the only refreshing detail, known before but not in the verbatim text, is the letter of Count Muravieff (May 18,1858), the Governor of Eastern Siberia and Bakunin's near relative, who, when he had secured the Amur territory for the Tsar, demanded as his best reward the pardon of Speshnev, Lvoff, Petrashevsky (of the deported Petrashevsky group of 1848), and of his relative Bakunin. He did not get it.

The book concludes with the documents accumulating after Bakunin's happy escape from Siberia. We learn that two midshipmen, about a month too late, delivered an urgent letter recommending that he be watched; and that a miserable informer who denounced his intention to escape, when the ship which bore him away was still in sight and another ship under steam was to hand to hunt him down, met with the philosophical or humanitarian or very well acted indifference of the official, who listened to his deposition while the ship went out of sight, and the warning was sent by a rather slow route to a place where Bakunin never went. Whether red tape, human feeling, or secret understanding brought about this happy result, remains a mystery.

This is a welcome book of Bakunin details, showing his ordeals and how he came well out of them.