idea that the class organization, which is an instrument of struggle against capital today, will tomorrow be the organ of administration of emancipated society.

All this constitutes the doctrinal foundation of Bakunin's thought, a thought of which we find echoes in the Congress debates of the International. Marx and Engels could not ignore that, yet one never finds in their writings the slightest serious attempt to discuss or refute these ideas: one only finds scornful taunts, even though Bakunin's writings are peppered with commentaries on the Marxian program. The refusal of the debate, contrary to what Mr Nimtz thinks, does not come from Bakunin but from Marx.

Did Marx and Engels, beyond the mockery, understand the idea prevailing in the federalist current, which was largely a majority in the International, according to which the class organization should replace the state and take over the organization of society? It is unlikely that they understood this idea, which was a common heritage of the labour movement and a hundred miles from their conceptual universe. It is also unlikely that they noticed that it was commonly discussed in the International. It was more convenient for them to attribute it to one man, Bakunin, and to turn this one man into ridicule.

We see how Marx caricatures Bakunin's point of view in a letter to Lafargue: "The working class must not occupy itself with politics. They must only organize themselves by trades-unions. One fine day, by means of the International they will supplant the place of all existing states[108]." If one kept to that part of the quotation one could say that Marx understood the point of view of the federalists but that he did not want to discuss it. But the following sentence casts a serious doubt: Marx adds: "*You see what a caricature he has*

[108] 19 April 1870. We could play the same game, but the other way: "The working class must occupy itself with politics. Its task is limited to organizing itself into parties. One fine day they will supplant all existing states." Which is a fairly good definition of Marxist strategy. (Collected Works, vol. 43, p. 490.)

Science and Society

Mr. A. H. Nimtz and Bakunin

René Berthier

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the conquest of political power, it is organized within it to forward the conquest of social power.

IWA: The class organisation model

The divergent strategies of Marx and Bakunin require the use of "vectors" by which both projects will be implemented. For Marx, it is clear, the State and the Parliament are the vectors, thanks to which a socialist party having acquired the majority and having formed a government will implement "despotic inroads on the rights of property" (according to the formula of the *Manifesto*) which will progressively (through a "transitional period") achieve the expropriation of capital[107].

For Bakunin, the vector is the class organization, that is to say a vast structure regrouping salaried workers and their allies (peasants and craftsmen in the process of proletarianization). This organization groups workers on the basis of their role in the production process, by trade and/or industry. Thanks to this type of organization, the proletariat, in the broad sense, occupies all the ramifications of the economic and social body and is able to control the whole of the production in which it is inserted.

This idea emanates from the depths of the working class, it is the expression of the worker's immemorial claim to control their work and their life. Proudhon, who was viscerally close to the workers, did not invent the idea, he merely resumed and developed it. Other workers read Proudhon and took it on their own account. The idea was diffuse in the International and accepted by many militants. Bakunin in turn took it up explicitly. Many militants of the International have expressed this idea. It will be taken up later by the French CGT and by the syndicalist movement as a whole: it is the

[107] See: R. Berthier: "Esquisse d'une réflexion sur la "période de transition" monde-nouveau.net.

R. Berthier: "La Révolution française dans la formation de la théorie révolutionnaire chez Bakounine" monde-nouveau.net

public and to counter the political proposals he made. In 1848-1849 the project of alliance between German and Slav democrats on the question of German unity and Slav independence had to be demolished at all costs. In the International, the federalist project was still to be fought at all costs. The obsessive accusations of Pan-Slavism against Bakunin were the means that Marx and Engels used to try to discredit him politically.

But concerning the working class strategy, the question was whether the working class should organize in an "interclassist" structure (people from all classes can be members) on the basis of programmatic affinities, or in a class structure in which membership is based on the members' place in the production process. This opposition leads to another one, no longer strategic but political: should the working class seize political power by conquering the state, or should it take social power through its class organization? Here lies the heart of the debate. Whatever option is envisaged, there is one unavoidable fact: a social revolution can only produce results if a large mass of the population, and in particular a substantial quantity of the working population, mobilizes.

In the "Marx option", the party (and it will be seen that historical experience shows that it is rather the leadership of the party) plays the role of strategy-making, and mass organizations follow the orientations of the party. It is the party/union social-democratic model of division of labour, a model that applies both to parliamentary social-democracy and to radical social-democracy (Leninism): in both cases the mass organisation is supposed to support the party who decides the policy. In the "Bakunin option", the emphasis is on the mass organization structuring the workers from their workplace, then going upwards according to a federative process.

But the Russian revolutionary is not a spontaneist, he knows well that an organized political minority is necessary. Simply this minority is not organized outside the working class with a view to

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It is generally accepted that the opposition between Marx and Bakunin appears first of all as an opposition on strategy, but the divergences between the two men were not limited, by far, to the IWA policy. There was yet another one perhaps even more fundamental, which appeared some twenty years earlier, concerning international policy and the definition of the "center of reaction in Europe" – Germany or Russia? The main, almost obsessive preoccupation of Marx had always been German unity, for it was the condition of the constitution of the German proletariat as a national political party (What is good for Germany is good for everybody else). Tsarist Russia, according to him, was the principal cause of Germany's delay in uniting and was therefore the centre of reaction in Europe. Bakunin's point of view was more subtle. He considered that Prussia, Austria, and Russia were closely connected with one another because they were the three accomplices of the partition of Poland and consequently equally reactionary. Bakunin willingly admits that Russia had indeed been for a time the driving force of reaction in Europe, but this function had gradually disappeared with the strengthening of Prussian power which led to the constitution of the German Empire. Now it was Bismarck's Germany that had become the centre of reaction. This topic is in some way the object of the fundamental work of Bakunin, published in 1874: *Statism and anarchy*. It was after the publication of this book that Marx and Engels radically changed their vision of the Slavic world[106].

The two oppositions collided within the IWA after 1869 when the current of which Bakunin was the spokesman developed. Marx and Engels only repeated from 1869 the calumnious maneuvers they had resorted to against Bakunin in 1848. The accusations of Pan-Slavism against Bakunin served Marx and Engels as arguments to bring the Russian revolutionist into disrepute with the

[106] See René Berthier, *Bakounine Politique, Révolution et contre-révolution en Europe centrale*, Éditions du Monde Libertaire, 1991.

the masses in favour of the privileged classes. So it is not true that we ignored politics. We do not ignore politics, since we want to kill it positively. And this is the essential point on which we absolutely separate ourselves from radical bourgeois politicians and socialists. Their policy consists in the use, reform and transformation of politics and of the State; while our policy, the only one we admit, is the total abolition of the State and of the policy which is its necessary manifestation.

"And it is only because we frankly want this abolition that we believe we have the right to tell ourselves Internationalists and Revolutionary Socialists[104]."

"Killing" politics means in fact abolition of the State and replacing "the government of men by the administration of things" – a sentence one finds word for word in Engel's *Anti-Dühring* [109]. So the difference between the two men is not in the "killing" of politics but how to achieve this goal: by the conquest of political power for Marx and Engels; by the conquest of social power for Bakunin. What I call the "conquest of social power" is a concept explicitly explained by a number of IWA activists.

"IWA Anti-Authoritarians perceived the International as a vast mass organisation, founded on federalism and internal democracy, offering its structure to the proletariat and poor peasantry. It needed to develop on its own ground, independently from bourgeois organizations. It saw its work as: 1. The destruction of state power through an insurrection of the armed proletariat, organized through sections, trade federations and local IWA federations; 2. The use of its own structures – trade federations and local federations – as a matrix for a future libertarian and federalist society. This was an agenda for what became anarcho-syndicalism[105]."

[104] Bakunin, "Protestation de l'Alliance".

[105] René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism in the International Workers' Association*, Merlin Press, p. 29.

> "Marxist analysis of Bakunin is, it appears, predetermined by the less than flattering analysis of the master (…). Indeed, Marxist arguments against Bakunin are clearly identifiable as arguments from authority (every possible pun intended). Thus Bakunin emerges as a 'voluntarist' with no understanding of political economy or the workings of capital, that is to say, as an impatient and 'apolitical' 'bandit' and a theoretical 'ignoramus' — for the simple reason that he dares to disagree with the historically disputed and, as I will argue, philosophically tenuous doctrine, as he dared to cross Marx in his revolutionary activity. This damning indictment of Bakunin is made in spite of the fact that not one Marxist has actually conducted an in-depth analysis of the theoretical writings of Bakunin. Hence one might accuse Marxist scholars of being, at the very least, uninformed."
>
> Paul McLaughlin. *Mikhail Bakunin:*
>
> *the philosophical basis of his anarchism.*
>
> Algora Publishing

The translation and publication of *Social-democracy and Anarchism*[1] faced me with a situation I had no longer been used to. I found myself confronted on several occasions to the antiquated communist argument on the relations between Marx and Bakunin. There was for instance this sulphurous review, which I qualified as "brezhnevian", on the website of the Communist party of Great Britain[1]. I had not been faced to this sort of argument for years. In France the debates between Marxists and Anarchists have taken

[1] "Bakuninist hatchet job", http:/monde-nouveau.net/ecrire/?exec=article&id_article=605 and my answer: "About Mike Macnair and hatchets" monde-nouveau.net

a different turn, except in certain particularly dogmatic extreme left groups. The French Communists are beginning to consider the possibility that after all, when you think about it, and all things considered, the crushing of the Kronstadt insurrection could have been after all a mistake. There is a similar timid evolution concerning Marx and the International: perhaps after all did he act in a slightly bureaucratic way…

Then during a visit to London to present my book, Tony Zurbrugg, publisher and translator of *Social Democracy & Anarchism*, gave me the issue of *Science & Society* in which Mr A.H. Nimtz wrote an article titled "Another 'Side' to the 'Story'"[2]. I found in this article the same type of argument that anarchists were confronted with in the 70's and 80's when they were debating with "orthodox" ("brezhnevian") communists or with Trotskyists.

Reading Mr Nimtz reminded me of Jacques Duclos, late well known leader of the French Communist party. Duclos published a book in 1974, *Bakounine et Marx. Ombre et lumière* ("Bakunin and Marx, Shadow and Light")[3], of which Marianne Enckell, a Swiss historian, said that "in five hundred pages it contains only one idea and one thousand falsehoods"[4]. The one idea – one of Marx's obsessions – is that Bakunin was an agent of the Tsar. Enckell adds that this book throws a light on the limits of the spirit of orthodoxy. To give an idea of the "scientific" approach to which this very Stalinist leader resorted to, Duclos summed up the constructive work of the socialization of the economy in Spain, during the civil war, saying that the anarchists had collectivized hairdressers' salons. I don't know what Mr Nimtz thinks about this particular topic, and I'm not certain I want to know, but the fact is that he manages to focus on three pages all the stereotyped arguments of Marxism against Bakunin.

[2] "Another "Side" to the "Story"", *Science & Society*, July 2016, Vol. 80, N° 3.

[3] See :www.monde-nouveau.net

[4] "L'emploi du temps (Marx, Bakounine et … Duclos)", *Interrogations* n° 1, décembre 1974. — archivesautonomies.org

class political action" advocated by Marx, mentioned four times as well. Naturally, he does not go further than Marx on the question; he takes for granted what the latter says and does not seek to know what lies behind the alleged refusal of politics attributed to Bakunin, nor does he insist on what Bakunin meant by "politics". Being an abstentionist is regarded by Marx as an eminently blameworthy behaviour. Worse, the anarchists are accused of believing that "the working class must not constitute itself as a political party; it must not, under any pretext, engage in political action, for to combat the State is to recognise the State: and this is contrary to eternal principles"[102]. (We shall see that they are also accused of being against strikes…)

But it seems to me important to point out that Bakunin's abstentionism does not refer to politics in general but to politics as conceived by Marx. Therefore, before examining Bakunin's abstentionism, one must define what he and Marx meant by "Politics", or at least what Bakunin thought Marx meant by "Politics". What Mr Nimtz calls "independent working class political action" is in fact the participation of the socialist party in parliamentary action. In other words, "politics" is strictly reduced to parliamentary politics, and no other form of political action is envisaged.

And this is what Bakunin opposes, not "politics" in a general way. The Russian revolutionary is most of all concerned with opposing the entry of bourgeois politicians in the International. In other words, the real question is not about Bakunin's "abstentionism" but about how he defines "politics" – and the numerous articles he wrote give precise indications on that point[103].

"… politics is precisely nothing but the functioning, the manifestation, both internal and external, of the action of the State, that is, the practice, art and science of domination and exploitation of

[102] Karl Marx, "Political indifferentism", Collected Works, vol. 23, p. 392.

[103] See: "Bakounine faisait-il de la politique?" [Was Bakunin in politics?] *La Rue, revue culturelle et litéraire d'expression anarchiste*, n° 33, 2e trimestre 1983.

"working-class political involvement". But Mr Nimtz is right when he says that Proudhon disagreed with the idea of "working-class political involvement" if it meant participating in the electoral game. Proudhon's opinion was founded on experience : he had been elected to Parliament in 1848 and had discovered that elections simply drove the bourgeoisie to power. Is it necessary to say that Proudhon's view has been widely confirmed by history ? Is it necessary to say that when Socialists come to power through elections, they quickly turn into servants of the bourgeoisie[101]?

This is a conclusion Marx could have reached if he had not been stubbornly convinced that the working class was the majority of the population *and* that it would, arithmetically so to speak, bring one day the Socialists to power. Marx and Engels have always been unable to understand that electoral politics necessarily meant electoral alliances with the "progressive" fractions of the bourgeoisie : the sections of the International in Zurich had shown the way when they adopted the program of German Social-Democrats and became instruments of bourgeois radicalism.

Abstention & "working class political action"

Bakunin's "abstentionist perspective" is mentioned four times by Mr Nimtz in his article, to which he opposes the "working

[101] See Proudhon :

• "Mystification du suffrage universel". monde-nouveau.net. Proudhon shows that after the people had thrown down the monarchy in 1848, their revolution was confiscated by universal suffrage who brought the Conservatives to power.

• "Manifeste des Soixante (1864)" monde-nouveau.net. Tolain, one of the founders of the International, published a brochure in 1863 in which he supports workers' candidates at the complementary election of 1864. The document was signed by 60 workers, and was therefore called "Manifest of the 60".

• "Lettre de Proudhon aux ouvriers en vue des élections de 1864 (8 mars 1864)". monde-nouveau.net Proudhon answers to the workers who ask for his opinion concerning the "Manifeste des Soixante".

• "À propos du Manifeste des Soixante". monde-nouveau.net

Although much shorter (3 pages) than Duclos' book (336 pages), Mr Nimtz's article follows the same method, it "complies with the one-sided truth proposed by the governing body of the IWA. As if in a hundred years historians had never done research, nothing had been completed, reassessed, refuted[5]." What Mr. Nimtz writes is even well below what had written a perfectly orthodox (but nevertheless honest) Marxist historian, a contemporary of Marx: Franz Mehring. The problem is that Mehring, who dared to make some criticisms against Marx and granted Ferdinand Lassalle a role in the foundation of German socialism *[which is the least a historian could do]*, hasn't got the commendation of an Anglo-Saxon Marxist mandarin, Hal Draper. Proclaimed interpreter of Marxist doctrine, Draper is the author of a voluminous work, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* in five volumes, which became a sort of English-language Marxist Bible. Needless to say that Draper's method in dealing with the Marx/Bakunin relationship is strictly consistent with Marxist orthodoxy and does not deviate from the path set by the master – that is to say it is perfectly polemical and perfectly un-scientific.

I felt the need to write a few pages to complete somehow my *Social-democracy and Anarchism*, freeing myself from the requirements an author is obliged to comply to in a published book. So one must on no account take what follows as a *response* to Mr. Nimtz, because his article actually does not call for an answer. Besides, I realize that there is something unfair and disproportionate in answering 80 pages to a three-page article. But, as I have said, I do not seek to reply to Mr Nimtz but to comment on his argument which is, in my opinion, quite paradigmatic of the pre- and misconceptions within academic and Marxist circles.

Mr Nimtz's argumentation is symptomatic of the dominant Marxist attitude and of the Marxist discourse, ignorant of facts, archaic, dogmatic, arrogant, devoid of any critical spirit. I found it

[5] Marianne Enckell, *loc. cit.*

necessary to publicize the libertarian point of view on the issues Mr Nimtz raises so that the reader can have access to another approach.

There is a sort of *1)* academic; and *2)* Marxist monopoly on these questions which I find a bit irritating. This is why I do not feel compelled to proceed with the customary politeness and reserve which academics use in their writings – besides the fact that I am not an "academic"[6]. And besides the fact that he was particularly arrogant towards Anthony Zurbrugg, to whom he replies in his article. There is no better way to situate the gap between the Marxist vision and the anarchist view of history than to quote Marianne Enckell:

"One of my hopes, and one of the reasons why I became a historian is that should stop the dialogue of the deaf between Marx and Bakunin, between dogmatic Marxists and frantic Bakuninists, and that should improve the political questions that were raised over a century ago in the IWA. Too often the disciples look backward, hammering out phrases of their mentors who are nothing but fixed representations[7]."

1. – Records

There is a French proverb about the man who sees the straw in his neighbour's eye but not the beam that is in his own[8]. This proverb suits Mr Nimtz very well. He seems focused on the idea of the exceptional profuseness of the edition and exegesis of Marx's texts (proof of the seriousness and dedication of his followers) – in contrast to the poverty of publishing of Bakunin's texts (proof, on

[6] René Berthier is a French anarcho-syndicalist militant, member of the CGT printing Federation since 1972. He held mandates for many years as a shop steward, as president of his union and at a national level. He has also been a member of the Anarchist Federation since 1984.

[7] Marianne Enckell, *Interrogations* n° 1, décembre 1974.

[8] "People who live in glass houses should not throw stones"?

creation of a political party running for parliamentary elections) as a "basic norm for the organization", as Mr Nimtz says, had only been decided in September 1871 at the London Conference, at what may be called a fractional meeting that brought together Marx's supporters. This decision was then voted the following year during the rigged congress of The Hague which inserted in the IWA statutes an Article 7*a* which made electoral action compulsory. This decision had a catastrophic effect. All the federations denounced the Congress when they realized they had been manipulated. The irony of the story is that some of the federations which had denounced the manoeuvres of Marx nevertheless supported parliamentary strategy, but they accepted that other strategies could be considered: they were simply opposed to it being mandatory.

Of course Bakunin was not opposed to working class political action in general; however, he was:

a) Opposed to the adoption by the IWA of a mandatory political program because it would inevitably produce splits and, as he said, "there would be as many Internationals as there were different programs"[100], and

b) Very reluctant about the electoral strategy because, far from leading to the emancipation of the working class, it led instead to its subjugation to the radical bourgeoisie.

Marx obsessively attempted to introduce the "political issue" in the IWA, *i.e.* parliamentary strategy – "politics" being according to him limited to participating in elections. What Mr Nimtz euphemistically calls "working-class political involvement" was absolutely not a "premise" for the International.

Proudhon had probably never heard about the IWA for he died two months after the foundation of the International; so, strictly speaking, he couldn't have been against the IWA's so-called

[100] Bakounine, "Writings against Marx", Nov.-Dec. 1872. *Bakunin, Selected texts 1868-1875*, Anarres Editions.

abolished, but instead the state"[96]. Such an assertion is completely false and results from the deformations made by Marx and Engels of Bakunin's thought, who in no way neglects class antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Such remarks are extremely curious since Bakunin gives priority to action in favor of the economic emancipation of the proletariat: such a strategy, one might think, should put the workers directly in the face of capital and confront them directly with class antagonisms. Besides, Bakunin does not neglect the political struggle at all, that is to say, the struggle against the State, since it is a key player in the struggle against the social emancipation of the working class.

In 1869 Bakunin wrote that "the antagonism that exists between the worker's world and that of the bourgeoisie is taking on ever more pronounced features"[97]. If I dared, I would say that Bakunin is much more "Marxist" than Marx and Engels. He shows in 1873 that capital and state evolve in a dialectical interdependence: the intensification of class struggle leads to the strengthening of state power, of the "legal, metaphysical, theological and military-police state, considered the last bulwark that protects at the present time the precious privilege of economic exploitation"[98]. He adds that between the two worlds, "no compromise is possible": today there is only "the party of the past and of reaction, including all the possessing and privileged classes" and "the party of the future and of complete human emancipation, that of revolutionary socialism, the party of the proletariat"[99].

It seems difficult to be more explicit.

In spite of what Mr Nimtz says, "political action" in the sense of electoral strategy was absolutely not "a basic norm" for the IWA. The "independent working-class political action" (*i.e.* the

[96] Letter to Th. Cuno, 24 January 1872.

[97] Bakunin, "Politique de l'Internationale". See *Bakunin Selected texts*, translated by Anthony Zurbrugg, Anarres Editions, p. 50.

[98] Bakunin, *Étatisme et anarchie*.

[99] Bakunin, "Protestation de l'Alliance", July 1871.

the contrary, of the little seriousness of the partisans of the Russian revolutionary): "Bakunin and his supporters did not leave the kind of record his rivals did – *which in itself is telling*" *[my emphasis]*, can we read at the very first sentence of his article.

According to Mr Nimtz, "many of the documents *[written by Bakunin]* that might be relevant to the substantive and organizational issues (…) were never completed or published in his lifetime". August H. Nimtz also writes that "most of what is known about Bakunin *et al.* regarding the argument *[with Marx in the International]* comes from the documents, letters, etc. that Marx *et al.* have left". At the end of his article he reiterates his "reliance on the Marx party documents in telling the story of the Marx-Bakunin dispute". Mr Nimtz simply takes up Hal Drapers fallacious arguments, of which I have said what I think[9].

While it is true that the writings of Bakunin have not benefited from the same massive exegetic and editorial work as Marx, they have nothing confidential. Mr. Nimtz is not very curious. To speak only of the "anarchist" period of Bakunin (1868-1876[10]), most of his works – articles or books – were published in his lifetime : they were fully accessible to anyone who takes the trouble to enter a library. Of the 152 Bakunin writings recorded between 1838 and 1876, 104 were published during his lifetime, 48 posthumously. To this must be added 1076 letters, 519 of them in Russian, 402 in French, 62 in German[11].

Mr. Nimtz "assumed" that a collection of Bakunin's writings was available but that he was "unable to locate it"; proof, once again, of the little seriousness of the edition of the texts of Bakunin.

[9] René Berthier, "Social-democracy & Anarchism. – About Mike Macnair and hatchets" (monde-nouveau.net)

[10] In fact 1868-1874, because his health forced him to cease virtually all intellectual activity during the last two years of his life.

[11] See: Pierre Péchoux, "Diffusion d'une oeuvre: Bakounine. Publications dans la langue originale et en traduction". *Revue d'Études slaves*, 1984, vol. 56, pp. 629-633.

There, Mr Nimtz must certainly be joking. I don't know what quantity of Bakunin's writings are available in English, but it has been a long time since most of his writings are available in French – the language in which most of his books were written, except for *Statism and Anarchy* which was written in Russian.

Bakunin's correspondence is something different. Hal Draper suggests that "a good deal of his correspondence" was destroyed by Bakunin's followers with the intention of concealing the truth *[what truth ?]* to the public. This is typical of Draper's turn of mind. Bakunin himself regularly destroyed his correspondence, for reasons of security. He also used to ask his correspondents to destroy the letters he sent them – and fortunately some of them didn't, since we have access to them today.

In 1898 James Guillaume's younger daughter died, causing a deep crisis of despair. Guillaume burned part of his archives, which included some of Bakunin's papers. Besides that, Bakunin's private and intimate correspondence has been given to his wife and partly destroyed. Part of Bakunin's archives were in Kropotkin Museum in Moscow and disappeared in 1938. Another part of his archives were at the University of Naples and was destroyed in September 1943 by the Germans.

Bakunin's archives were dispersed among a great number of persons (Mrs. Bakunin, James Guillaume, Reclus, Marie Goldsmith, Bellerio, Charles Perron, Gambuzzi, Jules Perrier, etc.). Max Nettlau managed the feat to bring together the largest part of them. Bakunin's archives have been entrusted to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam *in 1935*, edited by Arthur Lehning between 1961 and 1981. All this explains why Bakunin's correspondence has not been entrusted to the exegetic care of scholars : he had spent his time escaping from the police and participated in four insurrections, while Marx was studying in the British Museum – something he is not to be blamed for, though.

We see that the difficulty with Bakunin's correspondence does not come from the incompetence or the indifference of his follow-

to plunge into the very writings of Marx and his entourage to unveil these lies.

3. – Politics & Abstention

The preface to Volume 44 of the Collected Works states that Marx and Engels "emphasized that abstention from politics turned workers into the blind instrument of bourgeois politicians" (p. XXII). Bakunin says exactly the contrary: it is the participation in the electoral strategy that has transformed workers into blind instruments of bourgeois politicians. Look at what has happened in Germany and Switzerland, says Bakunin, where the Marxist program prevails : the International has "descended to the point of being no more than a sort of electoral box for the benefit of the radical bourgeois"[93]. Franz Mehring and Iuri Stekloff confirm that wherever national socialist parties were created, the International disappeared. Mehring says: Marx "failed to recognize that (…) the more the International attempted to centralize its forces for the struggle against its external enemies, the more it would suffer dissolution internally". And he adds : "Wherever national workers parties formed the International began to break up[94]."

Which Stekloff confirms when he mentions "the indifference displayed towards the International by such countries as Denmark, Germany, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland (lands where national socialist parties were beginning to develop)"[95].

In the above mentioned introduction to the Collected Works we can also read that Bakunin "does not regard capital, and hence class antagonism between capitalists and wage workers which has arisen through the development of society, as the main evil to be

[93] Bakunin, Lettre au journal *La Liberté* de Bruxelles, 1-8 octobre 1872.

[94] Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx, the Story of his Life*, p. 482. London, 1936 George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Routledge Library Editions, 1936, reprinted 2003.

[95] Iuri Stekloff, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

struggle going on between the Lassallists (German Swiss) and the Marxists (Eisenachers) that any hope of carrying out useful work was completely shattered. (…) As far as the Eisenachers were concerned, though they were the natural allies and supporters of the old International, they paid little heed to the Association, displaying towards it the utmost indifference." (Stekloff, p. 274.)

So if we sum up: what is this "vast majority" of the IWA, mentioned by Mr Nimtz, who supports Marx and Engels? Italy : "friends of Bakunin" ; Spain : a small factional minority manipulated by Lafargue ; Germany : almost nothing "as usual" ; France : "a few refugees" ; Belgium : nothing. Holland: nothing; Portugal: "the movement could hardly be said to exist"; Denmark: "indifference displayed towards the International" (Stekloff); England: "weakly represented"; Austria: nothing.

I'm not inventing anything: Engels and Stekloff say so.

And what is this "most representative meeting of the IWA" Mr Nimtz refers to ? How can he say that Bakunin and James Guillaume were expelled from the IWA by "a majority of the delegates to The Hague Congress" ? What does the "majority" of a rigged convention mean? Only by an incredible conspiracy and manipulation of mandates could the bureaucracy of the General Council manage to expel two militants of the Jura Federation with – to Engel's own admittance – so few people behind them. It was not Bakunin but *Marx and Engels* who organized "a secret operation within the International in violation of its rules" – to quote Mr Nimtz.

What is most surprising is that for generations, so-called Marxist specialists have been hammering us, with the greatest of assumptions and the greatest of arrogances, unprecedented lies based on nothing, if not on their ideological prejudices ("alternative truths" we would say today).The most surprising of all is that for generations the anarchists have contented themselves with shrugging their shoulders before these "alternative truths" without defending themselves, even though all they had to do was

ers, as Mr Nimtz suggests, but from the extreme difficulty in which researchers were to centralize them. If most of his archives are today in Amsterdam, still more than *40 other archival institutions* possess from one to many thousands of pages of his manuscripts.

The arrogance of those who quibble over Bakunin's archives, and in particular his correspondence, will come to more modesty when we remind them that Laura, the daughter of Marx, destroyed the correspondence between her parents. Moreover, many of Marx's personal letters have been removed or modified and censored. Bernstein and Mehring did not hesitate to mutilate Marx-Engels' correspondence. It took Ryazanov great efforts to restore the passages which had been cut or watered down[12].

Six volumes of Bakunin's works were published by the Editions Stock between 1895 and 1913, republished again by the same publisher in 1980. Between 1961 and 1981 the Amsterdam International Institute of Social History released seven large volumes of his works, reprinted in 8 volumes by Éditions Champ Libre from 1973 to 1984. Éditions Tops-Trinquier reprinted volumes III, IV and VII in 2003.

The CD which Mr Nimtz mentions was published in 2000 but it is not the expression of a confidential publishing activity : it is rather the expression of the wide distribution of Bakunin's works. There are countless reissues of his various works, commented editions, selected texts and there is a never-ending stream of books published nowadays analysing his thought, even in English (See Annex).

G.P. Maximoff, a Russian anarcho-syndicalist who fled to the United States, published in 1953 *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism*, a compilation of excerpts organized systematically which gives an excellent insight into the thought of the Russian revolutionary. There are several works of this kind in French.

[12] "Esquisse pour un portrait de Marx", Victor Fay, *L'Homme et la Société*, année 1968, vol. 7, n° 1, p. 273.

One of the most interesting was published by François Munoz in 1965: *Bakounine La liberté*, choix de textes[13].

We must not forget a fundamental book in two volumes published in 1975: *Marx/Bakunin, Socialisme autoritaire ou libertaire* (Union générale d'éditions). These two volumes present didactic texts collected by Georges Ribeill.

The work of Georges Ribeill and that of François Munoz greatly contributed to the training of libertarian militants of my generation.

More recently, Merlin Press published *Bakunin, selected texts* translated by A. W. Zurbrugg. It is true however that most of Bakunin's correspondence had not been accessible to the public

[13] Éditions Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965. See also:

Mr Nimtz should consult the following texts which concern the publication of Bakunin's works :

• Pierre Péchoux, "Écrits et correspondance de Bakounine : bilan des publications", in : *Bakounine, Combats et débats*, Institut d'Études slaves, pp. 45-61 (1979)

• Arthur Lehning, "Michel Bakounine et les historiens. Un aperçu chronologique." in : *Bakounine, Combats et débats*, Institut d'Études slaves, pp. 17-45. (1979)

• "Les papiers de Michel Bakounine à Amsterdam, Jaap Kloosterman"www.iisg.nl

• Marc Vuilleumier, "Les archives de James Guillaume", *Le Mouvement social,* juillet-septembre 1964, pp 95-108.

And no doubt that if Mr Nimtz consults scholar.google.co.uk he will find a lot of references concerning Bakunin in English.The most interesting work in the perspective of Mr Nimtz' narrow approach of Bakunin would probably be Arthur Lehning's, *Bakounine et les autres* ["Bakunin and the Others]. It is a compilation of documents – friendly and not so friendly – from contemporaries of Bakunin: letters, articles, notes, memoirs, police reports, etc. (Union générale d'Éditions, 1976. – Reprinted by Éditions Nuits rouges, 2013.)

And I would highly advise Mr Nimtz to read at least two books; one on Bakunin:

• Paul McLaughlin: *Mikhail Bakunin, the Philosophical Basis of Anarchy,* Algora Publishing, New York (2002). ("The first English-language *philosophical* study of *Bakunin");* the other on the IWA:

• Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism,* PM Press 2016.

• "For France there will only be a few refugees from there and perhaps some from here" ;

• "The Belgians are highly unreliable so that very great efforts will have to be made to secure a *respectable* majority." (Italics by Engels.) ("For some years to come, the Belgians kept up close relationships with the Bakuninists", says Stekloff (p. 273.)

• Holland : Engels doesn't mention Holland in his letter to Liebknecht, but this is what Stekloff says : "In Holland, likewise, Engels' hopes of a cleavage between the Dutch internationalists and the Bakuninists were not realised" (p. 273).

• Portugal : "Although, thanks to Lafargue's influence, Portugal had remained faithful to the General Council, the movement could hardly be said to exist there at all." (Stekloff, p. 273.)

Actually, there was a socialist group in Portugal around the years 1860-1870, which was mostly under Proudhon's influence, They had relations with Spanish refugees who were members of the IWA in Lisbon in 1871: Mora, Morago and Lorenzo[92]. Anselmo Lorenzo talks about it in his memoirs. They created a Portuguese section which had some importance, especially in Lisbon. This does not fit with what Engels and Stekloff say. Besides, what Stekloff says is not very consistent with the fact that was formed in 1911 an anarcho-syndicalist confederation, the CGT, which was the most important of the country and which declared 150,000 members when it joined the Berlin IWA in 1922.

• Austria : "The workers' movement in Austria was cloven asunder. Led by Scheu, the Bakuninist section rose up against the leadership of the moderate and opportunist Oberwind. The General Council had nothing helpful to expect, therefore, from Austria." (Stekloff, p. 274.)

• "As for Germany, where the movement might have served as a basis for the International, there was at this time so fierce a

[92] Carlos da Fonseca, *A origem da 1a Internacional em Lisboa,* Editorial Estampa, 1973.

encouraging for the General Council, if we believe Stekloff: "In German Switzerland and in Geneva there were some stalwarts who still remained faithful to the old International, but their minds were for the nonce filled with the idea of setting up a Swiss Workers' League in preparation for a social democratic party[89]."

Engels then tries to assess who will support the General Council at the Hague Congress:

• "Apart from Turin, the Italians will send nothing but friends of Bakunin" ("In Italy, the Marxist group was extremely weak", says Stekloff) ;

• "The Spaniards will be divided, though it is not yet possible to say in what proportions". This is quite an understatement. The Spaniards were indeed "divided" between an extremely minor factional federation constituted by Lafargue, who had been sent by the General Council in Spain to break the legitimate federation of tens of thousands of workers which was formed after the passage of Fanelli, on behalf of the Alliance.

We have seen that the conspirational activities of Lafargue, who had been sent to Spain by the General Council, had pitifully failed, but that the handful of members Marx's son-in-law had managed to gather were granted the status of federation with the right to vote the expulsion of Bakunin and James Guillaume from the International. This is no doubt what Mr Nimtz means by "democracy". As Iuri Stekloff says : "Notwithstanding Engels' optimism, Spain was lost to the Marxists. The New Madrid Federation, founded with the active participation of Mesa and Lafargue, did not succeed in freeing the majority of the Spanish internationalists from Bakuninist influence[90]."

• "Germany will be weakly represented as usual"[91] ;

• England: "the same applies to England" *(Ibid.)*

[89] G.M. Stekloff, *op. cit.* p. 274.

[90] G.M. Stekloff, *op. cit.* p. 273.

[91] Engels to J.P. Becker, 9 May 1872 (SW p. 373)

until the publication of the CD by the Amsterdam Institute, while that of Marx and Engels was the subject of systematic editions (and manipulations).

What about Marx?

Two of his most fundamental texts were not published during his lifetime: one theoretical: *German Ideology* (1932); the other programmatic: *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1891). Not mentioning the *1844 Manuscripts* (1932), *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* (1903); *Class Struggles in France* 1895.

The *Grundrisse* were first published in East Germany in 1953 (1939 according to other sources) and the first French translation was done in 1967.

Of course one can not expect the entire work of an author like Marx to be published instantly. I simply want to put into perspective the image that Mr. Nimtz gives of a Marx whose texts are immediately published and commented by a battalion of exegets. Some of Marx's fundamental texts were not published earlier than some of Bakunin's fundamental texts.

The first complete edition, or MEGA (for Marx-Engels GesamtAusgabe), began in the USSR *in the 1920s* under the direction of Ryazanov who was purged by Stalin and were not able to complete his project. A second edition will follow, the MEW (Marx Engels Werke) which is still the most widespread edition, but it is by no means a complete or scientific edition: it does not respect the original texts, contains highly ideological notes and prefaces, and is based on an edition highly influenced by Soviet Russia.

I'm afraid that what Mr Nimtz says of the eagerness with which the followers of Marx published and commented his works is a myth. In France, for instance, if we except the translation of Book I of *Capital* in 1875, *no writing by Marx or Engels had been published*

until 1880[14]! The *Communist Manifesto* was not published in France until August 1895 in the form of a serial in a socialist journal, *Le Socialiste*, so its circulation was considerably reduced and the text was not available in brochure. It appeared in pamphlet form only in 1897, more than 50 years after its first publication and 21 years after Bakunin's death! (Incidentally, Bakunin had translated the first edition of the *Manifesto* in Russian[15].)

The conditions under which the writings of Marx were published in France are interesting. Marx had two very zealous partisans: his son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, and Jules Guesde. But zealous as they were, they did not want to spread his works, preferring to publish their own texts, which they considered more accessible.

"… the relation that Guesde and Lafargue maintain with the theory of Marx and Engels does not prompt them to spread, as a matter of priority, the texts of the two theoreticians. Consequently, it is their own pamphlets, judged more effective, that the Guesdists, deprived of publisher, published directly through a printer[16]."

Guesde[17] and Lafargue had a dogmatic and mechanistic interpretation of Marxism. Marx had just read a particularly flatulent book, *The Economic Determinism of Karl Marx,* in which Lafargue develops an extremely mechanistic and dogmatic interpretation of his thought. It was on this occasion that he uttered this famous sentence: "If this is Marxism, I, Karl Marx, am not a Marxist"[18].

[14] See: Jacqueline Cahen, "Les premiers éditeurs de Marx et Engels en France [1880-1901]

[15] See Preface to the Russian publication (1882). Also: Marx to Engels, 10 April 1870.

[16] Jacqueline Cahen, "Les premiers éditeurs de Marx et Engels en France (1880-1901)", chrhc.revues.org

[17] Jules Guesde claimed a very rigid Marxist orthodoxy. He advocated the subordination of the trade unions to the Socialist party. Revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists successfully fought him until the Leninist theses on the party / union relationship, very similar to those of Guesde, eventually dominated after the Russian Revolution.

[18] See letter of Engels to Bernstein, 2 nov. 1882.

mandate cannot be queried at the Congress? This would mean *a)* that it would have to declare itself to be the German Federation of the International in reality and not merely figuratively and *b)* that as such it would pay its dues before the Congress. The matter is becoming serious and we have to know where we are, or else you will force us to act on our own initiative and to consider the Social-Democratic Workers' party as an alien body for whom the International has no significance. We cannot allow the representation of the German workers at the Congress to be fumbled or forfeited for reasons unknown to us, but which cannot be other than petty. We should like to ask for a clear statement about this quickly[88] ."

So this is probably the "democracy" Mr Nimtz refers to. Considering all this, we are entitled to wonder who *actually* undermined the "internal democratic functioning" of the International and who were the real conspirators. All this did not prevent the delegates of ghost German sections to vote the expulsion of Bakunin and James Guillaume.

So we understand that Mr Nimtz supports the view of Marx in this debate, but it would be interesting to see what support Marx *et al.* could actually rely on at the time. A letter Engels wrote to J. P. Becker, dated 9 May 1872, is very instructive. Engels is concerned about not having a majority among Swiss delegates – by Swiss delegates, he does not have the Jura federation in mind, of course, but the Genevan workers' aristocracy enmeshed in electoral compromises with the local liberal bourgeoisie.

Engels wants to have "a compact and reliable majority of the Swiss delegates". He is convinced that the "Alliance people" will use "all the old tricks to gain the majority for themselves, *just as in Basel"*. He is convinced that the "Jurassians will make sure that imaginary sections secure representation". In other words he suspects the Jurassians will do precisely what Marx and himself are about to do in The Hague. But the situation in Switzerland is not

[88] *Ibid.*

the General Council in Paris, he repented and vowed to become a bitter opponent of the International[85].

This fact, mentioned by James Guillaume, is confirmed by the Bolshevik historian Stekloff :

"After the prosecution of the French internationalists in June (during the course of which it transpired than Van Heddeghem, alias Walter, and d'Entraygues, alias Swarm, who had been delegates at the Hague Congress, and had voted with the Marxists, were provocative agents and traitors), the General Council severed all connection with France[86]."

Immediately after the Hague Congress, the English Federal Council realized that the delegate who represented it was not even a member of the International ! Germany possessed no section of the International, but only individual members in extremely small numbers and could not therefore send regular delegates to The Hague. However, so as to strengthen the position of Marx, nine Germans were introduced as delegates of non-existent sections of the IWA. Besides, to vote at the Congress the sections had to pay their dues, which the Germans had not done. Bebel wrote in the *Volkstaat* of 16 March 1872 that the Germans had never paid contributions to London ! Engels was outraged to note that he could count only 208 individual German membership cards : "I must ask you straight out to tell us frankly how the International stands with you: roughly how many stamps have been distributed to how many places, and *which places* are involved ? The 208 counted by Fink are surely not all there are[87] ?"

"Does the Social-Democratic Workers' party intend to be represented at the Congress and if so how does it propose to place itself 'en règle' with the General Council in advance so that its

[85] James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, vol I, t. 2 p. 326.

[86] G.M. Stekloff, *History of The First International, op. cit.* p. 273 www.marxists.org

[87] Engels to W. Liebknecht, 22 May, 1872: Marx & Engels Collected Works Volume 44, p. 376.

These words have often been misinterpreted. It is often said that Marx wanted to explain that he did not want to create a system, an orthodoxy. The reality is much more trivial: he simply wanted to dissociate himself from the vulgar interpretation of his son-in-law.

If I mention this anecdote, it is to show that the publication and exegesis of the thought of Marx by his followers was something very toilsome and not always very glorious. As his correspondence shows, Marx was permanently confronted with followers who did not understand much about his theories, and this goes for Germany as well as France. Bebel read the *Capital* two years after it was published and Marx wrote to Engels that Liebknecht had not read fifteen pages of the book (Marx to Engels, 25 January 1868).

Bakunin was probably one of the rare who had actually read the book[19]. Marx had sent him Vol. 1 when it was published. Bakunin always considered it as a necessary reference for the workers "It should have been translated into French a long time ago", he wrote, "for no other contains such a deep enlightened, scientific, decisive and if I could say, such a terribly unmasking analysis of the formation of bourgeois capital", etc. The only problem, adds Bakunin, is that its style is "too metaphysical and abstract", which makes it difficult to read for most of the workers. *The Capital*, says Bakunin again, "is nothing but the death sentence, scientifically motivated" of the bourgeoisie[20].

The collectivists of the First International agreed with Bakunin on that point : so Carlo Cafiero, a follower of Bakunin (ex-follower of Engels, so he knew what he was talking about), wrote an "Abstract" of *Capital* so that it could be read by the workers, and James Guillaume, another of Bakunin's followers, wrote a preface. A particularly non-sectarian attitude[21].

[19] Strangely, the Lassalleans, among whom was Schweitzer, took *Das Kapital* very seriously, contrarily to the Eisenachians – at the beginning at least.

[20] Bakounine, *Œuvres*, Champ libre, VIII, 357.

[21] *Compendio del Capitale*, Carlo Cafiero, 1878. First French publication: Stock, 1910. Republished in 2008 and 2013, Éditions du Chien rouge.

R.P. Morgan confirms Bakunin's point of view when he writes that "Socialist newspapers in Germany agreed in recognizing the book's importance, but almost all of them limited themselves, when publishing extracts, to the relatively uncomplicated Introduction, and even on this (with the exception of Schweitzer's *Social-Demokrat*) they attempted no detailed commentaries"[22]. The irony of the story is that the Lassalleans were more interested by *Capital* than the Eisenachians.

What about today?

Things do not seem as idyllic as that. The reasons why the works of Marx and Engels may have been very massively diffused, thanks to communist Russia and China, are perhaps also the reasons why this diffusion may not have the required quality.

"How can we understand that there is not at this time any edition of the complete works of Marx in France, that his major works, when they are available, often circulate in editions that are at least debatable? (…)

"At the end of 2009, a quick glance at the available works reveals that the various attempts at systematic publication of Marx, whether scientific or not, have never been completed." (…)

"…in the English-speaking world the edition of the Collected Works has just finished, which regroups in 50 volumes a large part of the works of Marx and Engels already known, which can furthermore be found in digital form." (…)

"The reader hardly understands why one text remains almost untraceable, another is available in multiple editions and for what reasons critical apparatus and dated translations sometimes find themselves at the forefront of 'new' publications[23]."

[22] R.P. Morgan, *op. cit*, p. 133.

[23] Jean-Numa Ducange, "Éditer Marx et Engels en France : mission impossible ? A propos de Miguel Abensour et Louis Janover, *Maximilien Rubel,*

instance Engels had tried to rely on Cafiero to launch a campaign to discredit Bakunin in Italy. But Engels proved so zealous that Cafiero, disgusted, broke suddenly and sided with Bakunin[84].

Mr Nimtz writes that a "majority of delegates to the Hague congress" had outnumbered Bakunin's followers at The Hague. Such an assertion would be admissible if Mr Nimtz referred to a congress in which the delegates had been regularly elected by federations or sections and had outnumbered the self-appointed members of the General Council… Mr Nimtz invites us to examine *who* were these delegates that he uncritically sees as a "majority". For the Hague Congress of September 1872 was as fake as the London Conference the previous year. French delegates appeared in The Hague holding mandates no one knew where they came from and how they had got them. The verification of mandates was impossible. Serrailler, Secretary of the General Council for France (where the IWA was as prohibited as it was in Germany, but where, unlike Germany, there were active sections) arrived in The Hague with his pockets full of mandates.

Six French delegates were only known by their pseudonyms, without indication of the city they held their mandate from. The only one who announced a city – Rouen, in Normandy – found himself soon after repudiated by the Rouen Federation because he had voted with the General Council when he had the imperative mandate to vote for the federalists.

Same thing with Bordeaux. The Internationalists of this city realized later that their delegate, who had received the imperative mandate to vote for the federalists, voted for the General Council. Two other French delegates, Swarm and Walter – pseudonyms – were arrested shortly after and went on trial ; one in Toulouse, the other in Paris. It appeared soon after that Swarm, agent of the General Council in Toulouse, was a spy ; concerning Walter, agent of

[84] See: Wolfgang Eckhardt, *First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association*, PM Press, p. 121 sq.

of the General Council"[83]. So Mr Nimtz should reconsider his saying that the Hague Congress was "the most representative meeting of the IWA" and that "a majority of delegates" had decided to exclude Bakunin. He can only say that a "majority" of non-elected, non-representative self-appointed bureaucrats took that decision.

In his article, Mr. Nimtz manages to turn the demonstration of confidence of the federalist delegates into a Machiavellian attempt of the "Bakunians *et al.*" to seize power and "impose his abstentionist perspective on the International", while the question of abstention was not even on the agenda! Bakunin was actually not in favour of parliamentary strategy but he never advocated absence of action. He proposed something else and it is this "something else" Marx never wanted to discuss.

Majority?

Mr Nimtz seems very concerned by the fact that at The Hague Congress Bakunin did not have a "majority" while Marx allegedly did. He writes that "supporters of Bakunin's abstentionist views actively took part in the debate and were outvoted", but he forgets to say that if Marx and Engels were unable to prevent certain delegates from participating in the Congress, most of the others had been carefully selected. So it does not make much sense to say that the partisans of Bakunin took an "active part" in the debates if one does not specify that they were a small minority in a rigged congress. So we cannot be surprised that they were "outvoted".

Faced with the political project of Marx, the Bakuninists naively thought they would resolve to their advantage what they saw as a simple conflict of ideas. Besides, at the eve of the Hague Congress, they perfectly knew that Marx and the General Council had no support among the federations, in spite of the conspirational manoeuvres carried out by the latter to undermine the federalists. For

[83] G.M. Stekloff, *History of the First International*, London Martin Lawrence limited, p. 271. See: www.marxists.org.

Hence we do not have, as Mr Nimtz seems to believe, on one side an army of competent, devoted and serious disciples who published the works of Marx and commented on them, and on the other side a bunch of dilettantes who did not take matters seriously. It was only *in the 1980s* that the project of a second MEGA was born, freed from the ideological slag of the MEW and exploiting the huge collection of manuscripts left by Marx. In other words, the truly scientific non-ideologically biased publication of Marx's works started ten years after the scientific publication of Bakunin's works by the International Institute of Social History of Amsterdam!!!

Maybe should I mention Maximilien Rubel, an internationally recognized specialist of Marx, who was a member of the Scientific Council of the Marx-Engels International Foundation. He directed the edition of Marx's texts published in the "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade", a prestigious collection of Gallimard editions. Rubel translated many of Marx's unpublished texts into French. Mr. Nimtz will certainly like to learn that Rubel thought that Marx was a theorist of anarchism! He wrote in 1973 an article entitled "Marx, théoricien de l'anarchisme"[24] ("Marx, theorist of anarchism"), which appeared in his book *Marx critique du marxisme* ("Marx, critic of Marxism")[25].

A few months before he died, I interviewed Rubel on Radio libertaire, the radio of the French Anarchist Federation, hoping to have details on this (questionable) "anarchist" Marx. Clearly, he

pour redécouvrir Marx, et de diverses rééditions de Karl Marx, *Le Capital*". www.revuedeslivres.onoma6.com

[24] Petite Bibliothèque Payot/Critique de la politique, 1974. See also my refutation: "L'anarchisme dans le miroir de Maximilien Rubel" (monde-nouveau.net)

[25] Rubel is not the inventor of the idea that Marx was an "anarchist". Hans Kelsen, for example, wrote an article in 1925, "Marx oder Lassalle" [Marx or Lassalle] in which he states that "the political theory that Marx and Engels developed is pure anarchism" (quoted by Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun, *Mythes et mémoires du mouvement ouvrier. Le cas Ferdinand Lassalle*, Logiques sociales. L'Harmattan, 1990.)

had no intention of talking about this theses he had developed in the early 70s. Whenever I questioned him about Marx's "anarchism", he evaded and explained that he was now much more interested in Proudhon. It took a long time for me to understand this change of attitude. He had been much interested in the notes Marx had written on the sidelines of his copy of Bakunin's book, *Statism and Anarchy* [27]. These marginal notes reveal that Marx had reached positions surprisingly close to those of Proudhon. But this is another story.

Mr Nimtz is completely mistaken if he thinks that Marx's doctrine was widespread during his lifetime: it was almost completely unknown simply because *Marx had not been much published* – which brings to its right place his remark concerning the absence of "debate" between him and Bakunin, and the absence of dissemination of Bakunin's writings. Outside of Germany, those of Marx were not more disseminated, in fact. The writings and thought of Marx were so poorly disseminated that Bakunin attributed to him Lassalle's political orientation, because he did not have the material elements to make the difference.

There was in Germany an implicit agreement to designate Lassalle and Marx as the co-founders of social democracy (a thesis which strongly displeases Hal Draper), beyond the disagreements between the two men, and in spite of the predominant influence of Lassalle. This was particularly the case after the founding of the German Social-Democratic party in Gotha in 1875 from the fusion of the Eisenachians (who may be regarded as vaguely "Marxists"), and the Lassalleans. At that time, Marx and Engels were in fact cut off from the German labour movement. Until his death in 1864, Lassalle was their only contact with the working class in Germany. Liebknecht and Bebel, on the other hand, were more concerned to create a democratic opposition to Prussia than to develop a socialist movement, and they relied on all democrats – manual workers, lawyers, teachers, traders. And when the party of Eisenach was created in 1869, its social composition was very varied. Bebel won an

laume, who was one of the editors of the report, noted that this provision only applied to the 1867 election, but the English provisional statutes include this passage as if it were permanent.

The last appointments to the General Council took place in Brussels (1868). Arthur Lehning noted that "during the period from 1864 to 1872, some 200 members had been appointed to the General Council"[81] – but very few had been elected: this does not exactly speak in favour of the "democratic" organization Mr Nimtz claims the IWA was: rarely have we seen such an undemocratic organization.

The Jura federation wrote a circular to the Federations of the IWA in which it denounced the bureaucratic functioning of the governing body of the International: it pointed out that nothing in the statutes allowed the General Council to assume any power over the federations; it stated that the composition of the General Council had so far been decided "in trust" on the basis of lists presented to the Congress "and that it contained mostly absolutely unknown names to the delegates". The confidence had been so far that "the faculty had even been left to the General Council to appoint whom it pleased; and, by this provision of the statutes, the appointment of the General Council by the Congress became illusory. Indeed, the Council could, afterwards, appoint any staff who would have completely changed the majority…[82]"

There is no doubt that if the project of the Jura Federation to return to the election of members of the General Council had seen the beginning of implementation, few members of this organization who had manoeuvred to exclude Bakunin and James Guillaume would have remained in place, beginning with Marx, whose sole official function was to represent a… non-existent German federation. Even the Bolshevik historian Iuri Stekloff recognizes that "there was not a single national federation rallying to the support

[81] Bakounine, *Œuvres*, Champ libre, II, note 231, p. 464.
[82] James Guillaume, *Ibid.*, p. 230.

James Guillaume notes that there was one unknown without a warrant[79]. Bakunin commented:

"It is fair to add to this list the daughters of Karl Marx, who were allowed to sit at the last meeting of this secret conference. The chronicle does not say if the conference gave them the right to vote; it could have done so without derogation because these young ladies had as many titles to represent the International proletariat than the greatest number of delegates[80]."

The International workers' Association was something unprecedented and the inevitable trials and errors originated by this situation had not been followed by the establishment of precise and… democratic rules. Appointments to the General Council had something really fanciful. Naturally the International represented something new and the final shape of such an organization had yet to be discovered. As usual in such cases, the absence of rules favoured the establishment of an irremovable feudalism.

At the inaugural meeting of St Martin's Hall, September 28, 1864, thirty-two members had been appointed to the General Council with the right of co-optation (*The Beehive Newspaper*, London, 1 October 1864). An English edition of the statutes was published in November: 52 members were appointed. A second edition, published soon after shows changes in membership. The Geneva Congress in 1866 voted the General Statutes stipulating that the Congress would appoint the members of the General Council: 63 members were so appointed. The articles in French, published in London by the General Council, give the names of the members of the General Council.

The Lausanne Congress in 1867 confirmed the appointments of the Geneva Congress, but added that "the General Council is authorized to appoint other members if it is necessary". James Guil-

[79] James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, Premier volume, 3e partie, ch XI, pp. 192-193.

[80] *Mémoire présenté par la Fédération jurassienne,* 1re partie, p. 204.

election campaign in 1867 in a semi-rural constituency dominated by household manufactures.

When Engels wrote in 1865 that Liebknecht was "the only reliable contact we have in Germany"[26], it must be remembered that:

a) He was a contact that Marx and Engels considered as "simple-minded"[27], someone "not enough of a dialectician to criticize two sides at once" [to be accused by Marx of not understanding dialectics was the supreme insult. The same goes for Lenin, who accused Bukharin, though considered the greatest theoretician of the Bolshevik party, of not understanding dialectics – which leaves us agape about the theoretical level of party leaders.]

b) That Liebknecht was materially dependent on non-socialists and non-socialist organizations;

c) That he has always shown (Bebel as well) a very mild interest in the International.

Marx had made a severe criticism of the socialist program adopted in Gotha, whose inspiration was very clearly Lassallean: the congress ended with the song of the "Marseillaise of the Workers" whose text said: "We follow the audacious path that was shown to us by […] Lassalle" – which certainly did not please Marx.

The socialist leaders did not want to hear about Marx's disagreements concerning the Gotha program, so Marx's critical text was not published. And when Marx asked Liebknecht to communicate it to Bebel, Liebknecht refused. When Bebel eventually read these critical notes in 1891 (Marx was dead), he tried by all means to prevent their publication… Lassalle was seen as the man who had given life to the German labour movement after the failure of 1848. It is Lassalle who had put in place the theoretical and organizational structures of what would later be called German Social-Democracy.

[26] Engels to Marx, 7 August 1865.

[27] Marx to Kugelmann, 24 June 1868.

Marx had been in correspondence with Lassalle since 1848, and had at first been satisfied with the constant references which his friend (and nevertheless rival) made to his ideas. Indeed Lassalle did contribute to spread the ideas of Marx in Germany. Exiled to England, Marx probably thought that his intellectual superiority would eventually prevail. Perhaps this explains why he constantly refrained from publicly attacking Lassalle. In private it was something else. In the correspondence of Marx and Engels appears the fear, and also the bitterness of the two men at the idea that the socialist agitator would usurp and distort their ideas. "That braggart has had the pamphlet you've got, the speech on the 'workers' estate', reprinted in Switzerland with the pompous title *Workers' Programme.* As you know, the thing's no more no less than a badly done vulgarisation of the *Manifesto* and of other things we have advocated so often that they have already become commonplace to a certain extent. (…) Is not this the most egregious effrontery? The fellow evidently thinks himself destined to take over our stock-in-trade. And withal, how absurdly grotesque[28]!"

"Lassalle is the man who connects Marx and Engels organically to the German labour movement: it is therefore not without some reason that Bakunin declares that he actually realized what Marx would have liked to do. It may be imagined that Marx and Engels had developed an exasperated jealousy and frustration towards Lassalle. Until his premature death in 1864, Lassalle *was* the German labour movement. Bakunin was perfectly right to note that it was only after his death that Marx openly and publicly attacked his friend and rival, but it was too late: Lassallism was firmly anchored in the German working class. And it was undoubtedly not the least of the frustrations for Marx to have to see, until the end

[28] Marx to Engels, 28 January 1863.

workers should be included in the debates – an implicit assumption that not all are as enlightened as others, and a telling assessment about what they think of workers."

It is hard to believe that Mr Nimtz is speaking of Bakunin, not of Marx.

Once again, we see that the "secret organization within the International" (Nimtz *dixit*) was the work of Marx, not Bakunin.

Marx and his friends had taken advantage of the disorganization which followed the Franco-Prussian war and the crushing of the Commune of Paris to convene a private meeting which decided without congress debate to transform in a mandatory way the International into a political party aiming to gain access to power. This was a question which had been debated in the organization but which had not led to the irreparable because the autonomy of the federations had not been called into question, that is to say the faculty for each Federation to define its own path towards emancipation.

The London conference consisted of twenty-three members, thirteen of whom – a majority – were members of the General Council and appointed by it, and had no mandate – precisely the case raised by Thiesz during the Conference of September 5. Seven of these non-elected members sat as corresponding secretaries of various countries which were not represented at the Conference[78]. But the General Council had appointed six other of its members to represent it. Only nine persons were delegated by sections : six Belgian delegates [one of whom was also a member of the General Council], two Swiss delegates, a Spanish delegate.

[78] "These thirteen members of the General Council, who had no mandate, formed by themselves the majority of the Conference, composed of twenty-three members. James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, t. II, 3e partie, p. 194.

that what Mr Nimtz presents as an exemplary democratic body under the kindly supervision of Karl Marx is nothing more than a bureaucrat's nest made up of a majority of co-opted men.

The minutes of the meeting say that Vaillant "believes that the Council would be perfectly justified merely to convene the Conference so as to inform on the situation of the association, without granting voting rights to delegates. The Council has the right to decide itself on organizational matters because it is the centre of the Association, it best knows the needs of the Association as a whole, and it is best placed to judge what is best for promoting its interests[76]." This shows that the London Conference had set up all the bureaucratic arrangements that will be implemented a year later in The Hague. Moreover, the direction taken by the discussions in the General Council showed that it obviously regarded the IWA as a political party, not as a trade union-type organization, as had originally been the case.

The London conference took place from 16 to 23 September 1871. Its confidentiality was increased by the fact that it took place at the very home of Marx. There is a very significant letter Engels sent to Liebknecht on that issue[77]:

"Both the General Council and the Conference itself had resolved that the meetings should be held in private. An explicit resolution, of which you are aware, charged the General Council with the task of deciding which resolutions should be made public and which not."

Probably another example of what Mr Nimtz regards as the exemplary democracy of the General Council. Which reminds us of something Mr Nimtz wrote in his article:

"…If the entire membership of the organization isn't privy to what other members are doing, it makes it difficult to carry out effective collective actions. Secret organizing assumes that not all

[76] *Ibid* p. 137.

[77] Engels to Liebknecht. 27-28 May 1872.

of his life, the posthumous triumph of Lassalle, which the 'Critique of the program of Gotha' did not succeed in erasing[29]."

The question reappeared in 1913 during the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the ADAV, the Lassallean party[30]. Two men confronted each other about the respective place of Lassalle and Marx in the genesis of the German labour movement: Franz Mehring defended Lassalle for the sake of historical truth; Karl Kautsky, for his part, was the spokesman for what is beginning to become Marxist orthodoxy.

It can be considered that Kautsky is the inventor of "Marxism". "Marxism" took a long time to be recognized as a political doctrine; in Germany because of the strong impregnation of Lassalle's thought; in France because of the short-mindedness of the closest disciples of Marx, Lafargue and Guesde, but also because of the permanent and sordid quarrels of the half-dozen tiny socialist parties, and probably most of all because of the dominant influence of revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism until the war. Contrary to what some idealists seem to believe, the expansion of Marxism was not the result of a brutal illumination but of laborious trials and errors.

2. – Debates, Democracy & Majority

Were there any debates within the IWA?

M. Nimtz writes that there has been "no open airing and debate of the principled differences" between Marx and Bakunin; he complains about the "lack of a public debate about the substantive po-

[29] René Berthier, *Bakounine politique, Révolution et contre-révolution en Europe centrale*. Éditions du Monde libertaire, 1991, p. 201.

[30] Concerning Ferdinand Lassalle, see Sonia Dayan-Herzbrun: • *Mythes et mémoires du mouvement ouvrier – Le cas Ferdinand Lassalle*, éditions L'Harmattan, 1990.

• *L'invention du parti ouvrier – Aux origines de la social-démocratie (1848-1864)*, éditions L'Harmattan. 1990.

litical differences". He wonders why "the Marx party and his later partisans were so conscientious in completing and publishing their side of the story".

The answer to this question is very simple. Marx and Engels absolutely did not want any debate with the federalist current. For proof, when the Congress of Basel rejected the motion of the General Council on inheritance, the account which was made of this congress reproduced the text of this motion but did not specify that it had been rejected. Debating in these conditions seems difficult to me.

"Their" side of the story can be found in a book published in 1972 in Moscow, *Marx, Engels, Lenin, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism* [33]. Of the 200 pages written by Marx and Engels, 40 are letters that were inaccessible to the public at the time. A large part of the texts concern anarchism but not specifically Bakunin, but we learn that he is a "man without any theoretical knowledge" and that "as theorist it is zero"[31]. Of course they never explain in what Bakunin didn't have "any theoretical knowledge" and in what "as a theorist he is zero" – besides the fact that this remark contradicts with Engels saying that Bakunin should be respected because "he understood Hegel"[32].

Bakunin's ideas are distorted to the extreme with disparaging allusions to his physique: "I should very much like to know whether the good Bakunin would entrust his portly frame to a railway carriage if that railway were administered on the principle

[31] Letter to F. Bolte, 23-11-1871.

[32] According to Charles Rappoport who relates in his *Memoirs* a conversation he had with Engels in 1893 in London. *Une vie révolutionnaire, 1883-1940, Les Mémoires de Charles Rappoport,* Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'Homme, 1991, p. 145.

ple. It takes a page to present the General Council's argument on inheritance, but does not inform readers that these views, and the motion it sponsored, *had been decisively rejected by the congress* [77]. Endless examples of this kind can be given. In fact, Marx and Engels are *very efficient conspirators*, much more efficient that Bakunin who, compared to them, was an amateur.

The General Council meeting of September 5, 1871 is interesting in more ways than one. Let us remember that we are on the eve of the confidential London Conference which will set up the exclusion of Bakunin and James Guillaume. Marx says that the General Council is a "governing body that is separate from its constituents" and has thus "as a Council, a collective policy"[74]. In other words the General Council is an entity which is superior to the sum of the federations that constitute it and therefore it has a better understanding of collective interests. Although this argument is not entirely false and can easily be compensated by control and rotation of mandates, this is what all bureaucratic bodies say to justify their power.

Another issue addressed was that of the voting members of the General Council. Thiesz "believes that no board member shall be allowed to vote for his own account. If they do, they will re-elect themselves." On the contrary, Engels believes that "the Council has always been represented by delegates – in unlimited numbers – who are entitled to vote, and this right should not be abandoned." Eccarius, who will soon break away from Marx and Engels, pointed out that if the Council "overwhelms" the other delegates, that is to say, if it *appoints* more delegates than there are *elected* delegates, it would be just as well to ratify directly the decisions of the Council: "The Council has no right to overwhelm all the other delegates, it might as well vote a number of decisions and invite the sections to ratify them and dispense with convening the Congess[75]." It is clear

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Ibid.*

"Composed for five consecutive years of the same men, always re-elected, and by the Basel resolutions covered of a great power over the Sections, it *[the General Council]* ended up considering itself as the legitimate head of the International. The mandate of a member of the General Council had become, in the hands of a few individuals, a personal property, and London seemed to them the immovable capital of our Association. Gradually, these men, who were nothing but our representatives – and most of them were not even our regular representatives because they had not been elected by the Congress – these men, we say, accustomed to walk at our head and to speak in our name, have been led, by the natural flow of things and by the very force of this situation, to want to dominate the International with their special program and their personal doctrine[72]."

Hales confirms the analysis of James Guillaume: he noted that "the majority of members constituting the [General] Council were co-opted from the Basel Congress. The members elected by the Congress are a minority"[73].

Marx used proved manipulation techniques. One of them consisted in not translating documents sent by other federations or in summing them up in a very oriented way, so that the only-English speaking members of the General Council had only very partial informations. When John Hales was secretary of the General Council, Engels refused to hand him over the address of Anselmo Lorenzo, a Spanish leader, and Hales was unable to answer him because Lorenzo had not given his address in Spain. Many records of the General Council are written and edited with partisan intentions. The General Council report of the Basel IWA Congress is an exam-

[72] Circulaire à toutes les Fédérations de l'Association internationale des travailleurs, ou "La Circulaire de Sonvillier", (12 Novembre 1871) (James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, Premier volume, 4e partie, ch. 1er, p. 239. Éditions Gérard Lebovici.)

[73] Minutes of the General Council (French version; Éditions du Progrès, Moscou), 5 september 1871, p. 236.

that no one need be at his post unless he chose to submit to the authority of the regulations[33]."

Bakunin is labelled as a "Stirnerian" by Engels in his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classic German philosophy* (1888) and in a letter to Max Hildebrand[34], which is a total absurdity[35].

James Guillaume is called by Engels a "straight-laced pedant who applied the fanaticism of the Swiss Calvinists to the anarchist doctrine", and as a "narrow-minded schoolmaster" and "pope of this new faith"[36]. Engels' attitude is particularly unfair because at that very same time, James Guillaume was making great efforts to try to bring about a rapprochement between the Social-Democrats and the "anti-authoritarians". This explains the intensifying attacks against him, since the German socialist leaders opposed any eventuality of reconciliation[37].

As for the texts which do not belong to the correspondence, the book of the Moscow edition gives us to read:

• A speech by Engels on the "political action of the working class" delivered in London at a confidential meeting (September 1871) of the IWA to close relations of Marx – a speech which will be published for the first time in … 1934 in *The Communist International* No. 29.

• Resolutions bureaucratically decided at the London confidential conference, without congress debates, about the political action of the working class.

[33] „Ich möchte wissen, ob der gute Bakunin seinen dicken Körper einem Eisenbahnwagen anvertrauen würde…" Engels to Paul Lafargue, 30 December 1871.

[34] October 22, 1889.

[35] See: René Berthier, *Lire Stirner*, monde-nouveau.net

[36] Frederick Engels, "From Italy", *Vorwärts* n ° 32, 16 March 1877. Complete Works, Laurence & Wishart, vol. 24, p. 176.

[37] See ""Initiatives for reconciliaiton appear to gain ground" and "German socialists oppose rapprochement" in: René Berthier, *Social-Democracy & Anarchism in the International Worlers' Association*, Anarres Editions, pp. 109-113.

• A text by Engels about the Congress of Sonvillier of the Jura Federation published in the *Volksstaat* in January 1872.

• "Alleged splits in the International, private circular [*sic*] of the General Council"…

• A draft of Engels' Anti-Bakunin Address published for the first time in Russian in 1940.

• The text of resolution 7*a* introduced forcibly in the statutes of the International, without debate in congress, about the "constitution of the proletarian party".

It seems that the Russian communists have nothing else to present to us: if they wanted to show that Marx and Engels had attempted the slightest debate with Bakunin, we can say that they failed. Or, to paraphrase Mr Nimtz, if they had "found a smoking gun" showing that the "Marx party" had attempted a dialogue, they "would have cited it".

For one is left to wonder whether the terms of the "debate" between Marx and Bakunin, which Mr Nimtz refers to, are so present in the writings of Marx. We must naturally distinguish published writings (accessible in principle to contemporaries) and correspondence (by definition private and inaccessible to contemporaries, at least for a time). I am in possession of the works of Marx published in France by Gallimard (La Pléiade), a reference edition under the direction of Maximilien Rubel[38], a recognized and distinguished "marxologist" (in spite of his fantasy about Marx's "anarchism"). This is about 7000 pages and I have found absolutely nothing to inform the reader about a "debate" between the two men. Bakunin is vaguely mentioned occasionally, especially in Rubel's notes.

I have on the other hand the works of Bakunin published by "Champ libre" on the basis of the edition which was produced by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam[39]. Eight large volumes (about 4300 pages), of which

[38] Published between 1965 and 1994.

[39] Published between 1961 and 1984.

animated by the true spirit of the International be excluded by a majority unfaithful to the principles." It is obvious that Bakunin then did not consider the General Council as an *adversary* but as a possible *ally* against the reactionary spirit of local coteries. Which was the case in Geneva… whose sections Marx supported.

Bakunin later wrote (January 23, 1872) to his Italian friends that he had made "a serious mistake": "I arrived at the Basel Congress with the impression that a regional federation, guided by an intriguing and reactionary faction, could do abuse of power, and I looked for a remedy in the authority of the General Council." He added that the Belgians, "who also knew better than us the secret and very authoritarian provisions of certain people who make up the General Council", had tried in vain to make him change his mind. Marx would later on make an extremely cynical use of these administrative resolutions when the decision was taken to exclude from the International the federations who did not comply with the expulsions which had been decided at the Hague Congress: the Basel Congress having naively given the General Council the possibility of suspending *sections*, Marx pointed out that since the General Council could already suspend one by one all the sections of a federation, it could thereby suspend an entire federation; the suspension of a whole federation was simply a compliance of the statutes[71]. Such a resolution could be voted only because the Congress delegates were totally confident with the members of the General Council. No one could then imagine that those who controlled the General Council would use a few years later this resolution in such a Machiavellian way.

Since Mr Nimtz is so concerned with the issue of democracy let us see how it was applied within the General Council itself. James Guillaume explains that the composition of the General Council was practically immovable:

[71] See James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs,* Vol. I, Volume 2, p. 338.

"Bakunin had no qualms in introducing his proposal to increase its powers. Clearly, he was no shrinking violet when it came to taking initiatives." I'm afraid Mr Nimtz is dead wrong: he follows a little too literally the lucubrations of Hal Draper. Contrary to what Mr Nimtz thinks, it wasn't Bakunin but Eccarius, *on behalf of the General Council*, who proposed the "administrative resolution". J.-Ph. Becker published in the *Vorbote* (year 1870, page 4) an account of the discussion that took place on this subject during the Administrative Session of the Congress (Wednesday 8 September). One can read: "Eccarius proposes, on behalf of the General Council, that the latter has the right to exclude any section which would act contrary to the spirit of the International, subject to congressional approval[69]."

Bakunin was in fact astoundingly naive. He and his friends supported the vote of the administrative resolutions proposed by the General Council. James Guillaume commented : "We were all inspired by the most complete goodwill in respect of the men from London. And so blind was our confidence that we contributed more than anyone to the vote in favour of these administrative resolutions which gave the General Council authority, authority which they were to use so despicably[70]." In fact, Bakunin approved that provision, not because it would enable him to "take control of the International" but, paradoxically, *to prevent arbitrary expulsions.*

In his report, Eccarius writes that Bakunin recognized the General Council the opportunity to "deny new sections to join the International until the following Congress; as for the National Committees, he wants to recognize their right to exclude sections of their Federation, *but not the right to exclude them from the International*" *[my emphasis]*. Eccarius adds: Bakunin "noted that if the national organisations had the right to suspend, it could occur that Sections

[69] James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, vol. I, 2nd part, ch. XI, p. 207.

[70] *Mémoire de la Fédération jurassienne*, p. 82. See also: James Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, Book 1, Part 2, Chapter 11, 1905, p. 207.

• volume 1 concerns the International and the conflict with Mazzini,

• volume 2 is devoted to "The First International in Italy and the Conflict with Marx",

• volume 3 concerns the "Conflicts in the International" and the "German-Slavic question and State communism",

• volume 4: *Statism and Anarchy* whose subtitle is "The struggle between two parties in the IWA",

• volume 5 concerns his relations with Necaev,

• volume 6 concerns the Slavic question,

• volume 7 concerns the Franco-German war and the Commune.

• volume 8 on the Franco-German war. It is in this volume that Bakunin praises Marx's "magnificent volume on Capital" (p. 357).

Many of the texts mentioned here had been published in Bakunin's lifetime and Mr Nimtz will easily understand that they often comment on Marx's ideas and positions. I conclude that if one wants to find out about the "debate" that interests us, one will have easier access to the "Bakunin" version than to the "Marx" version.

What could have been the material conditions for a debate between the two men? The last time they met was in 1864 after Bakunin had escaped from Siberia[40]. He was not a member of the IWA yet. So no face-to-face meeting. Mr Nimtz is absolutely right when he says that "at no time there was a direct confrontation on what truly separated them". If by "debate" Mr Nimtz means two persons exposing their respective options in a contradictory

[40] Marx wrote to Engels a letter on that occasion, saying: "Bakunin sends his regards. He left today for Italy where he is living (Florence). I saw him yesterday for the first time in 16 years. I must say I liked him very much, more so than previously." (…) " From now on – after the collapse of the Polish affair – he (Bakunin) will only involve himself in the socialist movement." (…) "On the whole, he is one of the few people whom after 16 years I find to have moved forwards and not backwards." (Marx to Engels, 7 November 1864.)

(but nevertheless relatively loyal) way there actually never was a debate between the two men, but naturally Mr Nimtz does not consider the possibility that Marx and Engels were responsible for this situation.

Actually, Marx and Engels never wanted a public debate with Bakunin and they took great care to avoid it. Mr Nimtz obviously never noticed that the writings of Marx and Engels never contained any argued comment on Bakunin's *global political views*. They only mention Bakunin to ridicule him, to insult him or to distort outrageously his ideas. The only exception is a practically unknown document which has not been published, Marx's marginal notes on Bakunin's book *Statism and Anarchy*[41]. The problem is that in his comments, Marx sounds strangely Proudhonian…[42].

As concerns Bakunin, his works are literally scattered with comments on the political and strategic positions of Marx. It is difficult to find a text of his "anarchist" period without encountering explanations concerning his oppositions with Marx and with the "German Communists", that is to say, the Social-Democrats. His critique of social democracy and parliamentary strategy is remarkably modern.

Despite the inevitably controversial context in the case of disagreements such as those which opposed Marx and Bakunin, the Russian revolutionary does not try to distort the ideas of Marx, while Marx and Engels caricatured to the extreme Bakunin's point of view, dotting their comments with insults: "the fat Bakunin", "that damned Russian"[43]. He is an "Ass" called "Mohammed-

[41] See www.collectif-smolny.org.

[42] See also G. P. Maximoff's *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin,* Glencoe (Ill.), 1953, pp. 286-288.

[43] Engels to Marx, July 30, 1869.

tionary called for an alliance of German and Slav democrats against despotism. Engels ends his pamphlet with these lines:

"Then there will be a struggle, an 'inexorable life-and-death struggle' against those Slavs who betray the revolution; an annihilating[66] fight and ruthless terror—not in the interests of Germany, but in the interests of the revolution[67]!"

Of course, the "revolution" which Engels refers to is not the proletarian revolution but the bourgeois revolution that will achieve German national unity and confirm German domination over the Slavic territories.

This digression on the revolution of 1848 seemed necessary to show that the strategic divergences between Bakunin and Marx/Engels existed long before the founding of the International. After 1868, Marx and his entourage merely rephrased the accusations and calumnies they had made against Bakunin 20 years earlier[68].

At the Basel congress, administrative resolutions were put to the vote which Mr Nimtz suggests they had been Bakunin's idea, motivated by Machiavellian intentions. These resolutions were intended to strengthen the powers of the General Council by giving it the right to refuse admission to new associations and to suspend sections – decisions which had to be submitted to a subsequent congress. Mr Nimtz says – speaking of the General Council – that

[66] The German "Vernichtung" can be translated by "destruction", "elimination" or "extermination". "Vernichtungskampf" could very well mean "war of extermination".

[67] Engels, *Op. cit* p. 378.

[68] Among the many campaigns of slander orchestrated by Marx/Engels, there was this *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* article (6 July 1848) asserting that George Sand (a well-known woman writer) was in possession of evidence that Bakunin was "an instrument of Russia or an agent newly entered into its service, and that he must be made responsible in large part for the arrest of the unfortunate Poles which has been carried out recently". Naturally, George Sand categorically denied, after which Marx replied that by publishing this "information", the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* had provided Bakunin with "an opportunity to dispel this suspicion, which really existed in Paris in certain circles." But the evil was done, and this calumny paralyzed the activity of Bakunin for a long time.

Marx and Engels were radically opposed because a tactical alliance with the Slavic democrats would have challenged German national unity and would have withdrawn from Germany the control it exercised over Slavonic territories, such as Bohemia. Bakunin's activity in favour of democracy in Central Europe owed him 8 years of fortress in Russia and 4 years of relegation in Siberia, after which he escaped[63]. Few revolutionaries of the time paid as much for democracy in Germany, yet Bakunin does not have a statue erected in his honor.

Marx and Engels were convinced that the German domination of Slavonic territories in Central Europe was a "historical progress"[64]:

"An independent Bohemian-Moravian state would be wedged between Silesia and Austria; Austria and Styria would be cut off by the 'South-Slav republic' from their natural *débouché* [outlet] – the Adriatic Sea and the Mediterranean; and the eastern part of Germany would be torn to pieces like a loaf of bread that has been gnawed by rats! And all that by way of thanks for the Germans having given themselves the trouble of civilizing the stubborn Czechs and Slovenes, and introducing among them trade, industry, a tolerable degree of agriculture, and culture[65]!"

These not-really "proletarian-internationalist" lines were written in a hysterical anti-Bakuninian pamphlet Engels wrote in response to Bakunin's "Call to Slavs" in which the Russian revolu-

[63] Engels rightly defines pan-slavism as "the creation of a Slav state under Russian domination". ('The Magyar Struggle", Collected Works, vol. 8, p. 233.). Bakunin was fiercely opposed to pan-Slavism.

[64] Just as US domination over California was a "historical progress": "And will Bakunin accuse the Americans of a 'war of conquest', which, although it deals a severe blow to his theory based on 'justice and humanity', was nevertheless waged wholly and solely in the interest of civilisation? Or is it perhaps unfortunate that splendid California has been taken away from the lazy Mexicans, who could not do anything with it?" (Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism".)

[65] Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism". *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, February 16, 1849. Marx-Engels Collected Works vol. 8, pp. 369.

Bakunine, a Mahomet without a Koran"[44], a "pope"[45] ; or an "emperor"[46]. Etc.

It is true however that what Bakunin says about Marx does not always reflect the latter's thought : indeed, Bakunin relied on what was known at that time about Marx's political ideas, that is to say in fact very little[47]. This is the reason why he attributes to Marx positions which are those of Lassalle, identifying the programs of the two men. But Bakunin is wrong when he writes that "Lassalle's program is in no way different from that of Marx, whom Lassalle recognized as his master"[48].

"The confusion between the points of view of the two men is explained by the discretion of Marx's criticism of Lassalle during his lifetime. Marx, in fact, exiled to London, depended on Lassalle for the publication and distribution of his works in Germany, and also occasionally for borrowing money from him. Bakunin emphasizes, moreover, that 'the protest which Mr Marx issued after the death of Lassalle in the preface to *Capital* appears only stranger. (It is Bakunin who emphasizes.) But the author of the *Manifesto* did not hesitate to criticize the founder of the ADAV in his correspondence with Engels or with Kugelmann: there are monuments of rancor. What is most evident is the constant complaints of Marx who accuses Lassalle of stealing his ideas: 'A truly singular protest', says Bakunin, 'on the part of a communist who advocates collective and Does not understand that an idea, once expressed, no longer belongs to anyone'[49]."

[44] Letter to Lafargue, 19-04-1870.

[45] Engels to Cafiero, 14 June 1872.

[46] *The Labor Standard*, March 1878.

[47] See: "Les débuts du marxisme théorique en France et en Italie (1880-1897)", Neil McInnes – Juin 1960, pp. 5 – 51.

[48] Bakounine, *Étatisme et anarchie*, Champ libre, IV, p. 345.

[49] René Berthier, *Bakounine politique, Révolution et contre-révolution en Europe centrale*, Éditions du Monde libertaire, 1991, ch. 6, "Marx et Lassalle".

Mr. Nimtz seems to be unaware that during Bakunin's lifetime Marx was practically unknown outside a small circle of persons while Bakunin was very famous because of his activity during the 1848-1849 revolution in Central Europe. As for the German labour movement, Marx was not much in favour precisely because of his activity during that period, as we shall see.

The diffusion of the *Communist Manifesto* in Germany in 1848 had been checked by Marx and Engels themselves who feared that the book should disoblige the bourgeois radicals whom the authors hoped they would subsidize the *Neue Rheinishe Gazette*, a liberal bourgeois publication. Marx had appealed to Engels to put pressure to sell shares for the *NRG*, and "Engels replied that he was having little success raising money and that he would have none at all if a copy of the programme of seventeen points ever found its way to Eberfeld or Barmen", writes William Otto Henderson[50]. His exact words were: "If even a single copy of our 17 points were to circulate here, all would be lost for us". (The 17-point program, or "Demands of the Communist party in Germany", incorporated the content of the *Communist Manifesto.*) In the same letter, Engels informed Marx of his fear at the rise of the action of the textile workers, who were in danger of compromising everything: "The workers are beginning to bestir themselves a little, still in a very crude way, but as a mass. They at once formed coalitions. But to us, that can only be a hindrance"[51].

There is no possible mistake: *a)* The workers are bestirring themselves; *b)* They do it "as a mass"; *c)* They "form coalitions". All that obviously counteracts Marx and Engels' action. In other words, the ink of the *Manifesto* was hardly dry that its authors wanted to delete it.

[50] William Otto Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels*, vol 1, p. 142. See also in French: Marx-Engels, *Correspondance,* Éditions sociales, Paris 1971, pages 540 and 543.

[51] Marx, Engels, 25 April 1848.

conference was botched; it was made with intimates of Mr. Marx, carefully sorted by himself, and a few dupes. The Conference voted whatever he saw fit to propose, and the Marxian program, transformed into official truth, found itself as a binding principle to the whole International[62]."

Democracy?

In his article, Mr Nimtz seems very concerned with the issue of democracy and, of course, Bakunin and his friends are accused of wanting to challenge it and establish their "dictatorship". As is often the case among Marxists, Nimtz blindly sticks to the letter of Marx's speech. It is after the Basel Congress (1869) that the aggressiveness of Marx against Bakunin showed itself openly. Indeed, the votes of the delegates on the question of the inheritance, which had symbolic value for Marx, so divided up :

63 % of the delegates voted for the "Collectivist" texts.

31 % for the "Marxist" texts.

6 % for the mutualists (proudhonians).

Naturally, such a situation was unacceptable for Marx, although it was the *democratic* expression of the delegates of the International at that time, a fact Mr Nimtz should not deny. Eccarius is said to have muttered: "Marx will be terribly annoyed!"

However, if Mr Nimtz considers as democratic only what is in keeping with his views and those of Marx, he should say so. After all, the Constitution of the Soviet Union was considered by the Communists as "the most democratic in the world".

It was after the Basel Congress that the systematic campaign of calumnies against Bakunin, orchestrated by Marx, Engels and their followers, began. Bakunin was in particular accused of being a "Slavophile", which was to him the supreme insult, for during the revolution of 1848-49 he never ceased to call the Slavs of Central Europe to fight against the Russian empire and to ally with the German democrats against despotism, a point of view to which

[62] Bakounine, *Écrit contre Marx*, *Œuvres*, Champ libre, III, 167.

What was is it the *Manifesto* said? "The Communists disdain to *conceal their* views and aims…" ?…

How can we explain such an incredible attitude?

Marx had just "discovered" "historical materialism" (an expression never found in his writings, for that matter) and according to this miraculous method he had concluded that the German bourgeois had to make "their" revolution before the proletariat could enter the scene[52]. In fact he projected on the German Revolution of 1848 the categories he had analysed in the French Revolution of 1789, a perfectly artificial approach insofar as revolutionary processes can not be identical 60 years apart. This is why it was absolutely necessary to prevent the German proletariat from moving: so as not to hinder the bourgeois revolution[53]. Besides, there was another reason to keep the workers from stirring: what Marx and Engels had in mind was absolutely not social revolution but national unity for Germany (which was divided in about 50 different states).

Of course, the German working class could not successfully achieve a proletarian revolution in 1848, but it would have had the historical experience of a revolutionary movement. Instead, the collaboration of the leaders of the movement with the liberal bourgeoisie provoked bitterness and discouragement.

Bakunin did not seek to bring historical events into pre-established theoretical patterns. His analysis of the nature of the German revolution was, in my opinion, much more convincing than that of Marx. He started from the idea that the "revolutionary inconsistency of the German bourgeoisie" was the result of complex determinations on which I shall not insist, that in 1848 the German bourgeoisie was incapable of coping with its historical tasks insofar as the main antagonism in society was no longer that

[52] See: Marx, "Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality", 1847.

[53] See: René Berthier, "La Révolution française comme archétype: 1848 ou le 1789 manqué de la bourgeoisie allemande" in: *Les anarchistes et la Révolution française,* Éditions du Monde libertaire, 1990.

system and at the same time to postpone the foreign invasion"[59]. Stekloff adds that Bakunin's plan was not so ridiculous: "In Bakunin's mind, it was necessary to use the commotion provoked by the war, the inability of the bourgeoisie, the patriotic protests of the masses, its confuse social tendencies in order to attempt a decisive intervention of the workers in the great centres, involve the peasantry and thus start the world social revolution. Nobody, then, has proposed a better plan"[60]. Of course, Bakunin failed, but he failed while pushing the workers forward, not pulling them backwards as Marx had done.

A French historian of social democracy, Georges Haupt, who can definitely not be suspected of sympathy for anarchism, wrote that the refusal of Marx to engage a doctrinal debate with Bakunin "is primarily tactical. All the efforts of Marx tend to minimize Bakunin, to deny any theoretical consistency to his rival. He refuses to recognize Bakunin's system of thought, not because he denies its consistency, as he assures peremptorily, but because Marx seeks to discredit him and to reduce him to the level of a sect leader and of an old style conspirator"[61]. If Mr Nimtz is right to emphasize "the lack of a public debate about the substantive political differences" between Marx and Bakunin, Marx only was responsible for it.

The only "debate" the Bakunists were invited to participate in took place in 1872 at the rigged Hague Congress during which Bakunin and James Guillaume were expelled – a decision which had anyway been taken one year earlier in a confidential meeting between Marx and chosen delegates : the so called "London conference" about which Bakunin commented: "We know how this

[59] Iouri Stekloff [Iuri Stekloff], *M.A. Bakounine, sa vie et son activité,* Moscou, 1927, t. IV, première partie, ch. III, 1, La tentative de Lyon. – Quoted by Fernand Rude, in *De la Guerre à la Commune*, éditions Anthropos p. 20.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] Georges Haupt, *Bakounine combats et débats,* Institut d'études slaves, 1979, p. 141.

which opposed it to the survivals of the feudal order still existing in Germany, but that which opposed it to the working class.

"The bourgeoisie had no longer any reason to consider the dominant political regimes then in Germany as the main enemy; it had, on the contrary, every reason to privilege an alliance with power. Especially since the destruction of the feudal relations had been done anyway, in Prussia at least, at the initiative of the State itself. Bakunin shows very explicitly that the establishment of the Customs union (*Zollverein*) and the innumerable economic measures taken centrally by the Prussian State in favour of industrial and commercial development had done more to destroy the feudal relations than all the revolutionary inclinations of the German liberals. The first cannon of the Krupp factories, let us recall, came out in the year of the publication of the *Manifesto*. The one and the other would help to ensure, twenty-three years later, the hegemony of the German proletariat in Europe[54]."

(I admit that the last sentence, written 25 years ago, may seem a little forced, but we must remember that Marx rejoiced that the French defeat in 1870 would transfer the centre of gravity of the European workers' movement from France to Germany[55].) If one refers to Bakunin's analysis, there was no reason why the proletariat should condition its activity on the success of the "bourgeois revolution" which Marx called for. The German workers, on the contrary, had every reason to conduct their own historical experience, to engage in an autonomous action in opposition to the State and the bourgeoisie, who in any case would have allied themselves against the working class.

In other words, Marx deliberately attempted to sabotage the revolutionary activity of the German proletarians because this activity did not stick with the vague historical theory he had sketched in

[54] See: René Berthier, *Bakounine politique, Révolution et contre-révolution en Europe centrale*, Éditions du Monde libertaire, 1991, ch. 4, "Ni féodale, ni tout à fait moderne".

[55] See: Marx to Engels, 20 July 1870.

1846 in *German Ideology*, directly inspired by Saint-Simon 59. In the middle of the revolution he even dissolved the League of Communists, the first communist party in history[56], because he thought it was useless! For this betrayal the English section of the League of Communists excluded him in 1850[57]. So Marx did not only exclude from the First International the whole organized working class of the time, in 1872; he was excluded from the first Communist party in history in 1850. Here is quite a curriculum!!! It is scarcely believable that he could seriously ever have been taken as a thinker of the revolution.

The *Communist Manifesto,* as well as Marx himself, remained virtually unknown in Germany except for an elite of left-wing leaders. It took almost a generation, with the publication of the first book of *Capital*, for the name of Marx to be recognized by the workers. As says Gary P. Steenson referring to the legacy of failure after the 1848-1849 revolution: "there was the strongly felt but ill-defined conviction that the cause of the workers, in particular, had been betrayed in 1848-1849"[58].

And it is the same man who mocks the attempts made by Bakunin at Lyons during the Franco-Prussian War, to raise and organize the proletariat of this city. A Bolshevik historian, Iuri Stekloff, declares that Bakunin's intervention in Lyons was "a generous attempt to awaken the sleeping energy of the French proletariat and to direct it towards the struggle against the capitalist

[56] See René Berthier, "1848 : Quand Marx liquide le premier parti communiste de l'histoire… et s'en fait exclure." [When Marx liquidates the first communist party in history … and is excluded from it)] monde-nouveau.net

[57] See: Fernando Claudin, *Marx, Engels et la révolution de 1848,* éd. François Maspéro, pp. 312-313

[58] Gary P. Steenson, *"Not One Man, Not One Penny", German Social-Democracy, 1863-1914*, p. 3, University of Pittsburgh Press. Due to the conflict between the two socialist factions, Marx postponed Liebknecht's demand to publish a new version of the *Communist Manifesto*. See: R.P. Morgan, Cambridge University Press, p. 169.

René Berthier
Science and Society
Mr. A. H. Nimtz and Bakunin
2016

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cel-gl@orange.fr; visit our website: monde-nouveau.net

theanarchistlibrary.org

made of my doctrines!" This remark makes it clear that Marx simply could not understand a political and social project different from his own: any project different from his was only a deviation from his own ideas. In fact, the federalists' social project was totally outside the mental universe of Marx – and of social-democracy generally speaking.

Marx adds in his letter to Lafargue: "The ass has not even seen that every class movement is necessarily and was always a political movement." *But Bakunin perfectly agrees with that!* He simply does not limit the "political movement" to electoral activity. Bakunin continues:

"If political and philosophical questions had not been posed in the International it is the proletariat itself who would have posed them. The apparent contradiction between the exclusion of political and philosophical questions from the program of the International and the need to discuss them is resolved by freedom. It is the existence of an official theory which would kill, by making it absolutely useless, living discussion, that is, the development of the own thought of the workers' movement[109]."

Almost two years later, Marx resumed his mockery in a letter to Theodor Cuno: "Now as, according to Bakunin, the International was not formed for political struggle but in order that it might at once replace the old machinery of state when social liquidation occurs, it follows that it must come as near as possible to the Bakuninist ideal of future society[110]."

[109] Bakunin, "La Politique de l'Internationale", 1869. English translation in *Bakunin Selected Texts 1868-1875* Edited and translated by A.W. Zurbrugg, Annares Editions.

[110] Engels to Th. Cuno, 24 January 1872, Collected Works, 44 p. 307.

About Bakunin and the "transition period": "The abolition of the State is thus the political goal of the International, the fulfillment of which is the precondition or necessary accompaniment of the economic emancipation of the proletariat. But this goal can not be achieved at once, because in history, as in the physical world, nothing is done at once. Even the most sudden, the most unexpected and the most radical revolutions have always been prepared by a long

Whilst caricatured, the exposition of Bakunin's point of view remains however relatively accurate. But Bakunin is far from being the only one to think thus: as I have said, it was in the International a widely held opinion, of which Bakunin was not the inventor. Caesar De Paepe wrote a short text in 1869, entitled "The present institutions of the International from the point of view of their future". The Belgian militant starts from the idea that the institutions which the proletariat creates under capitalism are a prefiguration of the institutions of the future: "We want to show that the International already offers the type of society to come, and that its various institutions, with the necessary modifications, will form the future social order." We could propose a perfectly Marxist approach to confirm this option. Marx says that the bourgeoisie had created, within the feudal society, the material basis of their power, founded on private property of means of production. The working class also develops within the capitalist system the basis of their power, which is not founded on property but on their organization. This is what the Marxist Anton Pannekoek says:

"Since revolutionary class struggle against the bourgeoisie and its organs is inseparable from the seizure of the productive apparatus by workers and its application to production, the same organi-

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process of decomposition and new formation, underground or visible work, but never interrupted and ever increasing. So for the International also it is not a question of destroying all the States overnight. To undertake it or to dream it would be madness." (Aux compagnons de la Fédération jurassienne, Oeuvres, Champ libre, III, 75-76).

There are however many Bakunin texts in which he vigorously opposes the idea of transition, as for example in a letter to the newspaper *La Liberté* of Brussels dating from October 1872: "We do not admit, even as a revolutionary transition, the National Conventions, the Constituent Assemblies, the provisional governments, or the so-called revolutionary dictatorships; because we are convinced that the revolution is sincere, honest and real only in the masses, and that when it is concentrated in the hands of a few governing individuals, it inevitably and immediately becomes the reaction." In fact, it is not so much the transition to which it is opposed as the transition implemented by state institutions, be it "national conventions" or "revolutionary dictatorships".

zation that unites the class for its struggle also acts as a form for the organization of the new productive process[111]."

Paradoxically, the best definition of revolutionary syndicalism or anarcho-syndicalism was given by a Marxist (a heterodox Marxist, it is true).

It goes without saying that such a position would not be appropriate if the International were regarded as a political party. For Bakunin, the refusal of parliamentary strategy amounts to preserving the proletariat from bourgeois politics:

"The International, thus putting the proletariat outside the politics of the states and the bourgeois world, constitutes a new world, the world of the proletariat, in solidarity with all countries. This world is that of the future[112]."

Bakunin does not blame the Marxists and the Lassalleans for occupying themselves with politics, he blames them for occupying themselves with what he calls "positive politics" (in the sense of the Hegelian dialectics), that is, conservative, bourgeois, politics.

"…whoever tends to the realization of a practical end can not remain indifferent to the real conditions of the environment, with which one must necessarily conform one's action, unless one sees all one's efforts struck with impotence and sterility.

"This necessity of conforming one's action to the actual conditions of the environment imposes on the International a character, a tendency and an aim which are political.

"'Ah! Will say our adversaries, you, too, recognize that the International should not separate the economic question from the political question.' No doubt that we recognize it, and what is more, we have never ignored it. It is improperly, and let us tell you, it is with bad faith that you accused us of disregarding politics. What we have always rejected and what we continue to reject energetically

[111] Anton Pannekoek, "General Remarks on the Question of Organisation", 1938; http:// www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoe/1938/general-remarks.htm

[112] *Écrit contre Marx.*

today is not politics in general, it is your policy of bourgeois socialists, of patriot socialists and of statesman socialists, the inevitable consequence of which will place the proletariat always under the dependency of the bourgeoisie[113]."

Here again, it is difficult to be more explicit.

Marx could be extremely critical of the German Social-Democrats, even accusing them of being "infected with parliamentary cretinism"[114]. If Bakunin condemned parliamentary strategy (but he did not condemn universal suffrage as such[115]), because he considered that it could not be an instrument for the emancipation of the proletariat, he did not raise abstention at the level of a metaphysical principle ("abstentionist cretinism", to paraphrase Marx?). He acknowledged a certain utility in communal, local elections, and even circumstantially advised his friend Gambuzzi to intervene in Parliament. If there is a well-founded critical analysis of electoralism in Bakunin, there is no such hysterical and visceral condemnation characteristic of many anarchists after his death.

Workers' autonomy

The notion of worker's autonomy was strongly anchored in the Belgian and French labour movement, much influenced by Proud-

[113] "Aux compagnons de la Fédération jurassienne", Champ libre, III, pp. 71-72.

[114] Marx to Sorge, 19 September 1879, Collected Works vol. 45, p. 414.

[115] "Does this mean that we Revolutionary Socialists do not want universal suffrage, and that we prefer either the limited suffrage or the despotism of one? Not at all. What we are saying is that universal suffrage, considered by itself and acting in a society founded on economic and social inequality, will always be an illusion to the people; That on the part of the bourgeois democrats it will never be anything but an odious lie, the surest instrument for consolidating, with an appearance of liberalism and justice, to the detriment of popular interests and freedom, eternal domination of the exploiting and possessing classes ." (Bakounine, "La situation politique en France" (Letter to Palix, Lyon, 29 septembre 1870-début octobre 1870. Champ libre, vol. 7, pp. 198-199.)

hon. Proudhon had been elected to the Constituent Assembly after the Revolution of 1848. He had thus experienced parliamentary action and realized that universal suffrage did nothing more than bring the bourgeoisie to power. He had therefore endeavoured to think of other means of guaranteeing genuine popular sovereignty. It may be said that it is he who *formulated* the idea that the labour movement creates within the capitalist system the foundations of the emancipated society.

"The ideas of workers' associations, workers' autonomy vis-à-vis capital and the state, of management of production by the producers themselves (we would say self-management today), the notion of federalism in politics, etc. have been elaborated by Proudhon, but they constituted, in fact, a common heritage of the working classes, they were aspirations born within the workers and often expressed in a confused but firm manner. Proudhonian ideas are much more a draft of the hopes that have arisen spontaneously in the heart of the working people than a rigorous science, an intangible doctrine. The reference to Proudhon then in the working classes is always a reference to this common heritage. Thus we shall see all kinds of 'Proudhonians' very different from each other[116]."

Proudhonism will therefore undergo forced mutations provoked by the evolution of class struggle. Until 1866 the Belgian and French Proudhonians were opposed to strikes, but after 1867 they could only note the great value of strikes in the field of propaganda, solidarity and workers' unity. The Proudhonians who did not adapt were marginalized and then eliminated after 1868, when the IWA was forced to take a combative position. The idea of workers' autonomy had been clarified in Proudhon's *La Capacité politique des classes ouvrières* (The Political Capacity of the Working Classes), published posthumously in 1865 (after the

[116] "L'AIT", an unsigned text written in the mid 1970s by a group of the "Alliance syndicaliste révolutionnaire et anarcho-syndicaliste", probably by the group of Saint-Dizier (France).
See: monde-nouveau.net

foundation of the IWA, then), in which he calls the proletariat to "separate consciously" from the bourgeoisie: "The working class must end its tutorship, it must act exclusively by itself and for itself".

Belgian Internationals were probably the first (after Proudhon) who formulated the idea of workers' autonomy. Two years before the Commune of Paris, they conceived of their organization as an integral class organization of the proletariat, a revolutionary trade union organization, built on the basis of dual federalism: *horizontal* with local branches responsible for all general political problems, and *vertical* (Unions and federations of trade or industry). For them, this organization alone was capable of assuming all the tasks of the proletarian revolution through its own structures: the liquidation of the political organization of society and the direct management of the workers. On 28 February 1869, we can read in *L'Internationale*, the journal of the Belgian Federation.

"The International workers' Association carried in its flanks the social regeneration. There are many who agree that if the association comes to realize its program, it will have effectively established the reign of justice, but who believe that certain current institutions of the International are only temporary and destined to disappear. We want to show that the International already offers this type of society to come and that its various institutions with the necessary modifications will form the future social order[117]."

So these ideas were far from being specific to Bakunin: they were widespread and could be found in the texts of various militants of the International: César de Paepe, but not only. Bakunin was only one of the many who shared the idea according to which the IWA – that is the class organization of the proletariat – should assume today the day to day struggle to improve the condition of the working class, and tomorrow the general organization of society once capitalism and state are overthrown. It was a common-

[117] *L'Internationale*, 28 February 1869.

Websites:

Bakunin Library
www.libertarian-labyrinth.org- library/
The Anarchist Library
theanarchistlibrary.org
Robert Graham's anarchist weblog
robertgraham.wordpress.com/
Mikhail Bakunin Reference Archive
www.marxists.org

[1] *Social-democracy and Anarchism in the International Workers' Association, 1864-1877,* by Rene Berthier, Merlin Press.
www.merlinpress.co.uk

[27] H. Mayer, *Marx on Bakunin: A neglected text. – K. Marx, Marginal notes on Bakunin's "Statism and anarchy". Études de Marxologie* n° 2, octobre 1959.

[33] Moscow, Progress Publisher, 1972.

[77] *Report of the Fourth Annual Congress of the International Working Men's Association, held at Basel, in Switzerland, from the 6th to the 11th September, 1869*; Published by the General Council, 1869; available via http://hdl. handle.net/10622/B6E656DD-15BA-4E47-A6F7-B7132F4544C3

[109] Which is also a quotation from the French pre-socialist Saint-Simon (1760-1825).

[197] An allusion to Engels' anti-Bakuninian pamphlet.

place idea at the time and accepted within the IWA; it cannot be attributed to Bakunin alone. Marx and Engels could not ignore this idea, which will be found later in revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism[118]. Yet whenever Marx and Engels evoke it, it is never to debate, but always to caricature and mock it.

Marxist incomprehension

In June 1873 James Guillaume and J.L. Pindy participated in a social-democratic congress in Olten, Switzerland. This was probably the only example of relatively effective "dialogue" between federalists and social-democrats. A few months after the exclusion of the Jura Federation, the federalists tried nevertheless to engage in a dialogue[119]. In his report, James Guillaume shows the *total incomprehension* of the German-speaking socialists before the theses of the federalist current. He recognizes that state-socialists had a right to defend their choices and that they had their legitimate ideals,

"But the vexing side of things was that in their camp, there was no equal tolerance: there was a belief that they were in possession of the true scientific doctrine, and dissidents were looked on with pity; furthermore not content with pity, there was a belief that they had been given the mission to extinguish heresy and it was their duty to implant everywhere one wholesome eternal doctrine[120]."

[118] This idea can be traced back to Proudhon, whose reservations concerning the usefulness of strikes are complex and can not be summed up as "Proudhon was against strikes". The apparent paradox between his stance on strikes and the fact that the French revolutionary syndicalists referred to him is analyzed in Daniel Colson, "Proudhon et le syndicalisme révolutionnaire", raforum.info

[119] After the exclusion of Bakunin and James Guillaume, the Jura Federation made several attempts at rapprochement and reconciliation with the German and Swiss Social-Democrats. These attempts failed because of the haughty refusal of the socialist leaders.

[120] See: René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism in the International Workers' Association*, Merlin Press, pp. 107-108.

One could be strongly incited to think that such a statement, written in 1873, anticipates prophetically the fate of state communism. Guillaume appeared to be "extremely irritated by the self-satisfaction and arrogance of those who defended 'scientific' socialism, some of them going so far as to accuse the Jurassians of being 'enemies of the workers', 'traitors paid by the bourgeoisie to preach false doctrines'". He realized that dialogue was impossible, because the mind-set of Social-Democrat militants made any mutual comprehension impossible and because the meaning of words was not the same on both sides. The Jurassians' explications of federalist organization, in opposition to centralist organization, was translated systematically into German expressions that conveyed that "the Jura delegates wished every organisation to remain isolated, with no union one with another". James Guillaume adds: "Every attempt to get a better translation was frustrated. Not out of ill will, but rather, they said, because it was impossible to translate us more clearly[121]."

"Here we have a perfect illustration of the total impossibility of a dialogue between representatives of the two currents of the labour movement because Social-Democrats were simply incapable of understanding basic Anti-Authoritarian concepts[122]."

I think the same unbridgeable barrier existed between Marx and Bakunin: Marx was "structurally" incapable of understanding the federalists' point of view in the International based on the notion of workers' autonomy.

4. – Political movement or class organisation ?

Marxists authors have an irritating habit of deforming the original draft of the IWA and of acting as if it had been created in Marx's image to fulfil the purpose that Marx had assigned to it. The per-

[121] James Guillaume, Vol 2, part 5, chapter 3, p. 75. (Éditions Gérard Lebovici).
[122] René Berthier, *Social-Democracy & Anarchism, op. cit.* p. 108.

• *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association* by Wolfgang Eckhardt
• *Bakunin* by Sam Dolgoff
• *Bakunin and the Human Subject* by Brian Morris
• *Bakunin on Anarchy*HYPERLINK "www.amazon.co.uk" (RLE Anarchy): 4 (Routledge Library Editions: Anarchy)
• *Michel Bakunin communist* by Guy Alfred Aldred
• *Anarchism and Marxism* by Daniel Guérin
• *Doctrine of Anarchism of Michael Bakunin* by Eugene Pyziur
• *Michael Bakunin* by Edward Hallett Carr
• *Bakunin's Social Philosophy*HYPERLINK "www.amazon.co.uk" : Written by George Politis, 2006 Edition, Publisher: Trafford Publishing [Paperback] by George Politis
• *A Critique of State Socialism* by Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin and Warren Richard
• *Bakunin, the Philosophy of Freedom* by Brian: B Morris
• *We do not fear anarchy, we invoke it*, Robert Graham, AK Press

On Bakunin and secret organizations

• Arthur Lehning, "Bakunin's Conceptions of Revolutionary Organisations and their Role: a study of his 'Secret Societies'", in *Essays in Honour of E.H.Carr,* Editors: Abramsky, Chimen, Williams, Beryl J. (Eds.). 1974.
• M. Vuilleumier, "La concezione bakuniniana dell'organsazione rivoluzionaria", in Bakunin cent'anni dopo, Atti del convegno internazionale di studi bakuniniani, Edizioni Antistato (1977), pp. 403-421
• Jean-Christophe Angaut, preface to Bakunin's "Principes et Organisation de la Société Internationale Révolutionnaire", Éditions du Chat ivre, 2012.
• René Berthier, "Action et Organisation" (monde-nouveau.net) ; "Masses et minorités révolutionnaires (monde-nouveau.net)
• René Berthier, presentation and notes for "Le Catéchisme révolutionnaire" [of Bakunin], monde-nouveau.net

Once the breach was open for the establishment of a representative system, the working class, and especially some of its elites, rushed through it. Bakunin knew that perfectly and he had a point of view that is still relevant on the opportunistic temptations of socialists and working class elites who use the working class as a stepping stone for their political careers.

The question is not whether social-democratic strategy or revolutionary syndicalist-type strategy, which was in fact the one advocated by Bakunin, was more effective in achieving immediate and temporary improvements in the living conditions of the working population; the question is: what would be the most effective way for this working population to collectively take over all the machinery of society and to make them work so that they meet the needs of the entire population?

The basis of the debate between Marx and Bakunin, between Marxism and Anarchism is there. Unfortunately, Marx's (and his supporters today's) stubborn refusal to discuss these issues, his obsession with accusing Bakunin of all kinds of ills, his systematic avoidance of debate, prevented the establishment of a real debate that could have led to a constructive synthesis.

R.B.

November 2016-February 2017

Some Books on Bakunin and the IWA in English

• Bakunin: Selected Texts 1868-1875, Anarres Editions.

• Mikhail Bakunin: HYPERLINK "www.amazon.co.uk" The Philosophical Basis of His Theory of Anarchy by Paul McLaughlin

• The Bakunin Handbook – HYPERLINK "www.amazon.co.uk" Everything You Need To Know About Bakunin by Brad Duffy

• *Essential Bakunin* by Mikhail Bakunin

• *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism* by Michael Bakunin and G.P. Maximoff

fect example of this fantasy projection can be found in Iuri Stekloff, a Bolshevik historian, who said that the International worked according to the principles of "democratic centralism"! An interesting anachronism… Stekloff is so much convinced the International was a party that he wrote :

"At that congress *[The Hague]* there was to be a decisive conflict between the champions of the political struggle of the proletariat and of democratic centralism in the organization of the International on the one hand, and the champions of anarchism alike on the political field and in matters of organization, on the other[123]."

Stekloff correctly perceives the debate between centralists and federalists; however, he imagines that the International is something like the Bolshevik party, operating on the principle of "democratic centralism", that is to say an organization whose lower and intermediate structures have no power of decision and are totally submitted to the centre. Actually, the IWA was created by the joint will of English trade unionists and French Proudhonists to organize solidarity between workers of the two countries. Nothing more. In 1862, during the Universal Exhibition of London, a delegation of 340 French workers went to the British capital and built relationships with English trade unionists, discussing the technical and economic progress over the past years. The British workers took the opportunity to propose a rapprochement with their French comrades. The French workers were amazed by the level of organization of their comrades from across the Channel. In 1863, the English trade unionists invited French workers to attend a demonstration in favour of the independence of Poland. Mass meetings were organized. At that time, there was then a real effervescence in the European working class. Ongoing relationships were then established on both sides of the Channel. Naturally, Marx had nothing to do with all this.

[123] G.M. Stekloff, *History of the First International*, London Martin Lawrence limited, p. 228. See: www.marxists.org

On 22 July 1864 a meeting brought together key union leaders in London and six French workers. The next day, the British hosted the French in a restricted meeting during which the foundations were laid for an agreement. The International Workers Association was finally constituted during a trip Tolain, Perrachon and Passementier (three Proudhonists, incidentally) made to London in September 1864. On September 29, 1864, at a meeting in St. Martin's Hall, the IWA was officially constituted. The French project to create sections in Europe connected by a central committee, that would be called "General Council", was approved. Quoting one of the signatories of the "Manifeste des Soixante"[124], James Guillaume wrote with some reason that the International was "a child born in the workshops of Paris and fostered in London." The English Odger was appointed Chairman of the General Council.

The new organization was first mainly Anglo-French. However it integrated Polish, German, Italian immigrants – not particularly proletarians, by the way… An interim committee, which Marx, Jung, Eccarius joined, was responsible for drafting the statutes of the organization. In spite of the explicit or implicit point of view of many Marxist authors, the IWA was by no means a creation of Karl Marx, who remained totally alien to the preparatory work that took place between 1862 and 1864. And its "premises" – as Mr Nimtz notes – has nothing to do with electoral politics. James Guillaume quite rightly says : "Like the cuckoo, he [Marx] came to lay his egg in a nest that was not his. His purpose was, from day one, to make the great labour organization the instrument of

[124] The "Manifeste des Soixante", written by Henri Tolain and signed by sixty proletarians in 1864, was a program supporting claims for workers' candidates in a by-election under the Second Empire. It demanded a genuine political, economic and social democracy. It is an important text in the history of the French labour movement. See: "Manifeste des Soixante" (monde-nouveau.net and René Berthier, "À propos du Manifeste des Soixante" (monde-nouveau.net)

provoked armed reactions from the power: policemen or soldiers who often fired. The worker tempted by reformism was very quickly facing armed men: police, army or thugs: there was no place for reformism.

Between the two sets of examples, there was the intermediate situation: France and Belgium, where power repressed the labour movement but progressively granted political and social concessions: universal suffrage, legal unions, etc., sometimes as a result of tragic struggles, such as the Paris Commune or the very harsh strikes in Belgium for universal suffrage. That does not mean that the police ceased altogether to shoot the workers and peasants, but these practices slowed down and eventually disappeared – in France around 1908-1909 when the CGT realized violent strikes caused too many casualties among the workers, and granted a greater space for negotiation.

Actually, the main question was not: "Should we vote or not?" but "Can we improve our situation through negotiation (trade unions) and mediation (Parliament)?" The Jura Federation saw things differently: should the workers seize advantages through confrontation, at a time when violent confrontations were beginning to decline and alternatives seemed to appear with elections? Most workers would probably prefer avoiding violent confrontation because unpaid days had dramatic consequences, and it was never pleasant to be brutalized by the police.

If in Latin countries such as Italy and Spain the revolutionary movement remained still very active, it was not because the "Latins" were genetically programmed to be revolutionaries but because the global material development of society, the level of cultural development, the institutions, the state of mind of the ruling classes, etc., were such that there was no mediation, no culture of negotiation between State and Capital on the one hand, working class on the other. State repression of economic struggles and dictatorial power left little choice to the working class but revolutionary action.

political parties. This is where the problem lies and if one does not have this in mind, one cannot understand the real issues of the opposition between the two men.

The European society in which they evolved was carrying two political and social models related to the respective development of productive forces and political superstructures that supported them. These two models were not reconcilable, in the sense that it was impossible to impose a uniform strategy in radically different contexts. The difference between these two contexts forms the material basis of the division between "anarchism" and "social-democracy". Of course we must go beyond the usual simplistic explanations about the conflict between the two men, which is an idealistic approach.

Bakunin, who had a presentiment of this failure, noted that there was a clear division between the Latin and Anglo-Germanic countries. The Russian revolutionary quickly sketched this view, without insisting. César De Paepe also had the intuition of the rift which would divide the labour movement, and this is perhaps the reason why he envisaged the possibility of two Internationals: one for the Latin countries, the other for the countries of the North. Of course that was not the solution.

Europe in the 1870's was divided into countries where existed, even at an embryonic stage, different forms of social mediation, such as representative democracy, trade unionism, etc. And countries where these forms of mediation did not exist or were repressed. In the first case, the implementation of mediation and negotiation structures between the working class and capital lead to a certain degree of circumstantial concessions on both sides. Parliament was one of those mediation bodies. This was the case in England and Germany, and Switzerland: even if the representative system was partial, it was obviously evolving in a positive way. In countries where no mediation structures existed, such as Spain and Italy, and to a large degree France and Belgium at that time, the slightest claim from the factory and field workers

his personal views[125]." Naturally this is an exaggeration due to resentment following the exclusion of which he was the victim, orchestrated by Marx.

The International Working Men's Association[126] basically was a union type of International : no one disputed this fact. The conflicts within it and the divisions were introduced by the manoeuvres of Marx and his entourage who tried to call into question the trade union character of the International and to transform it into an International of political parties. But electoral politics *never* constituted the "premises" of the organisation.

The question was whether the "political movement" was or was not to be subordinated "as a means" to "the emancipation of the working classes": in other words should the working class be organized into a political party for the conquest of power through elections (and in this case the IWA was to be subordinated to the social-democratic party); or should the "political movement" be understood as the different components of the *working class* coexisting in the same organization. Reduced to the essentials, the problem was to define the International as an organization of political parties with a unique program and obedience to party discipline, or as a union-type organization made up of heterogeneous and autonomous federations. There were those who believed that the conquest of the emancipation was to be done through the ballot box and those who promoted not *political abstention* as Marx and Engels used to put it, but *non-participation* in elections and the joint struggle against the state and the bourgeoisie. The first option corresponded to most of the British and Germans – but (significantly)

[125] James Guillaume : *Karl Marx pangermaniste,* p. 5. (Reprint from the collection of the University of Michigan Library.)

[126] This is the original name of the organization, although political correctness, if not historical truth, has changed it (rightly so) in "International Worker's Association".

neither British nor Germans had a Federation[127] –, the second corresponded to the strategy advocated by those who were identified with the ideas of Bakunin (and which constituted the *active* majority of the IWA).

Thanks to his control of the apparatus of the IWA and with the support of the Blanquists (whom Marx will soon later betray), Marx and his friends had been able to impose their interpretation (*which had never been discussed in Congress*) of the Inaugural address: "the conquest of political power has become the first duty of the working class", which amounted in fact to transform the IWA into a centralized International of political parties, and the General Council into a Central Committee. So somehow, Stekloff was not entirely wrong when he said that the IWA was working on the basis of "democratic centralism": he was only expressing how *Marx* saw things.

The decisions taken during the confidential London conference in September 1871 to transform the IWA into an International of political parties were soon followed in October by strong reactions when the information was released. Several federations of the International denounced them: Jura, Belgium, Italy, Spain. Bakunin played no part in these reactions. It was not a personal disputation between Marx and Bakunin but an opposition of all the *actually existing federations* of the International against Marx. Obviously, the "secret organization within the IWA" Mr Nimtz mentions belonged to Marx. The expulsions of Bakunin and James Guillaume in The Hague had been very carefully prepared by Marx's secret organization.

[127] There has been belatedly a short-lived British federation the history of which still has to be written. Let us remember that Franz Mehring notes in his biography of Karl Marx that wherever national socialist parties were created, the Internation declined.

let the red aside: it is too violent and it might shock our possible allies, the Liberals. With Marx, the German Social-Democrats, who had already at that time all the vices of social-democracy, these vices which bogged down Marxism everywhere (…): wildest hopes in universal suffrage, in reforms achieved by a bourgeois parliament through dubious alliances and compromises with the 'Liberals'. With Marx: in Geneva, the citizen-workers of the watch industry who formed a kind of respected and considered labour aristocracy, who earned twice as much as the workers of the 'hard jobs', who had some education and political rights, who were all busy entering into electoral alliances with bourgeois 'radicals'[198]."

In fact, François Munoz is not quite right: by 1872 the British trade unionists had lost a great part of their interest in the International.

Bakunin's approach was a perfectly materialistic one for it was based on the observation of the great heterogeneity of the objective conditions in which the various federations of the International were placed: they were, says Bakunin, "in so different conditions of temperament, culture and economic development"[199] that it was impossible to adopt a program applicable to all federations. It was necessary to leave the political debate evolve by a gradual ripening. Only a progressive maturation of the international working class and a unification of the conditions of existence, *and free political debate*, could lead to the definition of a program for the whole of the working class. The question is that Marx was perfectly aware of that, and he totally agreed with Bakunin on that point, *in so far as it concerned the trade union's movement*. He too considered that the trade unions should not adopt a uniform and mandatory program. So where was the problem? Simply here: contrary to Bakunin, Marx considered the IWA as an International of

[198] François Munoz, *Bakounine, La liberté*, choix de textes. Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965. Préface, pp.13-14.

[199] Bakounine, *Écrit contre Marx*, Champ libre, III, 179.

of social-democratic parties. I think if you don't have this in mind, you completely miss the point[197].

The problem of the International was not a matter of opposition between Marx and Bakunin, nor between "Marxism" (which did not exist) and "anarchism" (which did not exist either). It was a matter of opposition between two models of society of which neither Marx nor Bakunin were the inventors, but which they conveyed somewhat in spite of themselves and of which they were the spokesmen. If we were to pose the problem in terms of "historical materialism", we should ask ourselves what were the material elements that led to the formation of these two social/political projects, these two different strategies and what were the social forces supporting them.

In 1965 was published a booklet with selected texts by Bakunin. The author of the preface, François Munoz, proposed a materialist approach of the opposition between Bakunin and Marx, that is to say, based on the actual conditions of life of the workers of the time. No need to say how backward Mr Nimtz is in his reflection on the question.

"With Bakunin: the workers of the Catalan industry and the miners of Borinage, who could hope for no peaceful reform since even their simple strikes were drowned by the wealthy in bloodshed. With Bakunin: the downgraded youth of Italy, whose future was blocked. With Bakunin: the desperate peasants of Andalusia, hungry prey of large landowners, and who formed strong sections of the International. With Bakunin in Geneva, the foreign workers, who did the hardest jobs and who were poorly paid, despised, and without political rights.

"With Marx: the English trade unionists, so satisfied with the movement for electoral reform that it soon became for them an end in itself: tomorrow the workers will vote, and then everything will necessarily be pink, won't it? Well, I mean red. But for today

[197] René Berthier, "About Mike Macnair and hatchets", monde-nouveau.net.

Bakunin against strikes ?

In 1873, Marx wrote a pamphlet on "Political indifferentism"[128] in which he accused the anarchists of being opposed to political parties. He accuses them also of being opposed to strikes:

"Workers must not go on strike; for to struggle to increase one's wages or to prevent their decrease is like recognizing wages: and this is contrary to the eternal principles of the emancipation of the working class[129]!"

"Political indifferentism", a relatively short text, was written in 1873 and was published in 1874. At that time, illness and exhaustion had forced Bakunin to give up all political activity. Strangely, "Political indifferentism" does not explicitly mention Bakunin. In fact, Marx is probably targeting the Italian anarchists, for the article was written for an Italian publication, *l'Almanacco Repubblicano per l'anno 1874.*

This raises the question of relations between Bakunin and his Italian friends. Although there were many sections of the International in Italy (at the creation of which Bakunin had contributed in some cases), an Italian federation had belatedly formed in 1872. The Italians represented in a way the "leftist" wing of the entourage of Bakunin. It is they who, in my opinion, are at the origin of the foundation of "anarchism" as a political current. In analysing Bakunin's work, one finds that he referred to himself as a "collectivist" or a "revolutionary socialist"; he mostly used the word "anarchy" in its normal (and negative) sense of "disorder", "chaos", almost never to designate a political current; and when he did so, one notes that he uses linguistic precautions to explicate his thought[130]. Anyway, whether "Political indifferentism" was written for Bakunin or for

[128] Collected Works, vol. 23.

[129] Karl Marx, "Political indifferentism", Collected Works, vol. 23, p. 392.

[130] René Berthier, "L'usage du mot 'anarchie' chez Bakounine" [The use of the word "Anarchy" in Bakunin], monde-nouveau.net

the Italian anarchists, Marx is wrong when he says they were opposed to strikes.

What is unfortunate in this case is that the two men are much more in agreement than is usually believed. Indeed, if we put aside electoral strategy, Bakunin is absolutely not opposed to political action, although his definition is not the same as that of Marx; and he is absolutely not opposed to day-to-day union struggle which is precisely *one of the foundations of his policy.* The reason why he opposes the adoption of a compulsory program by the IWA is that he thinks that the daily experience of industrial action contributes to make workers aware of the gap separating them from the bourgeoisie and to make them acquire a class consciousness[131]. The daily struggle is therefore a determining element of the revolutionary strategy. It would be fastidious to cite all the Bakunin texts dealing with this issue.

"Who does not know what every single strike means to the workers in terms of suffering and sacrifices? But strikes are necessary; indeed, they are necessary to such an extent that without them it would be impossible to arouse the masses for a social struggle, nor would it be possible to have them organized […]

"There is no better means of detaching the workers from the political influence of the bourgeoisie than a strike. […]

[131] There was an interesting debate in the French and Italian working class at the beginning of the 20th century when the ideas of the Jura Federation and of Bakunin were "rediscovered" thanks James Guillaume who published documents of that period. The debate was on "automatism": do the workers necessarily acquire revolutionary class consciousness through the experience of day-to-day action on the work-place. The two parts of the debate, the pros and cons, were mistaken in referring each to only one aspect of the analysis of Bakunin, who did not pose the problem in these terms. See :

• Maurizio Antonioli, "Bakunin tra sindacalismo rivoluzionario e anarchismo", Bakunin cent'anni dopo, Edizioni Antistato, 1976. French translation : éditions Noir & Rouge.

• René Berthier, *1814-2014, Bakounine bicentenaire. L'Héritage,* Cercle d'études libertaires Gaston-Leval.

recognise – in full justice – the immense services that they have given, and continue to give even today to the IWA, we will never cease to fight their false authoritarian theories, their dictatorial leanings, and that manner of subterranean intrigues, vain grudges, miserable personal animosities, dirty insults and infamous slurs, which moreover characterise political struggles of almost all Germans, and which they have sadly brought with them into the IWA."

Such ideas, however surprising they may seem, were sincere; Bakunin reiterates them many times. He was of course in error in attributing to Marx the "creation" of the IWA, but he often repeated that the latter had preserved the International from bourgeois influence.

Neither Anarchists nor Marxists appeared to be aware that from a theoretical point of view Bakunin and Marx were in fact very close, although they deeply diverged on political questions and strategy. So if after all Anarchism and Marxism developed separately – on the level of doctrine and theory – this development emanated out of identical preoccupations but with the formulation of different conclusions. If a certain number of Anarchists refuse to consider that the birth of Anarchism and Marxism came out of identical conditions, this refusal both impedes a grasp of points on which they come close and equally impedes a true perspective and understanding of differences.

Anyway, I am always surprised to see how a debate between an anarchist and a communist, discussing the same historical event, gives the impression that the two persons are speaking about two completely different things and live in two completely different worlds. And I sometimes wonder if the gap will ever be filled.

Both the gap and the misunderstanding started with Bakunin and Marx, because the two men were not speaking about the same thing : the former had in mind an international organisation of trade-union-like structures ; the latter had in mind an international

"This work should have been translated into French long ago, for none, as far as I know, contains such a profound, luminous, scientific, and decisive analysis, and, if I may so express it, such a mercilessly unmasking analysis of the formation of bourgeois capital and of the systematic and cruel exploitation that this capital continues to exert over the work of the proletariat. The unique defect of this work, perfectly positivist, with all due respect to *La Liberté* of Brussels, – positivist in the sense that, based on a thorough study of economic facts, it admits of no other logic than the logic of facts – its only defect, I say, is to have been written, partly, but in part only, in a style that is too metaphysical and abstract, which has probably misled *La Liberté* of Brussels and which makes it difficult to read and almost out of reach for the majority of the workers. And it is the workers above all who should read it, nevertheless. The bourgeois will never read it, or, if they read it, they will not understand it, and if they understand it, they will never speak of it because this work is nothing but a death sentence scientifically motivated and irrevocably pronounced, not against them as individuals but against their class[196]."

This is for Marx's merits as a theorist. Here for his merits as a political activist, which we can read in *Protestation de l'Alliance* (July 1871), where he gives his opinion on the role of Marx in the International:

"We seize this opportunity to render homage to the illustrious chiefs of the German communist party, to citizens Marx and Engels…, and also citizen J. Philipp Becker, our one-time friend, and now our implacable enemy. They were – as far as it is possible for any individual to create something – the veritable creators of the International Association. We do this with as much pleasure as we will soon be compelled to combat them. Our esteem for them is sincere and profound, but does not go so far as idolatry and will never draw us to enslave ourselves to them. And, whilst continuing to

[196] Bakounine, *Œuvres*, Book 3, Paris, Stock, 1908, pp. 209.

"Yes, strikes are of an enormous value; they create, organize and form a worker's army, an army which is bound to break down the power of the bourgeoisie and the State, and lay the ground for a new world[132]."

The Russian revolutionary had explained his views as soon as 1869 in a series of articles for *L'Égalité* of Geneva entitled "Politique de l'Internationale" (Politics of the International)[133]: unlike Marx, Bakunin does not limit politics to parliamentary action, although to him the political is a concept strictly related to the sphere of the State[134]. This is why "the real policy of the workers, the policy of the International Association"[135], is yet to be invented. This also is why, says Bakunin, the International has excluded all political tendency from its program so as not to turn into a sect.

A key point of the Bakuninian strategy, affirmed in his programmatic document entitled "Politics of the International", states that "the reduction of working hours and higher wages" are a priority demand of the working class[136] – a point on which Bakunin and Marx are in total agreement: this same claim is the very last sentence of Book III of *The Capital* [137]!

Hostilities begin

Bakunin's point of view on the electoral activity of the working class stemmed from the careful observation he made of it in

[132] "World Revolutionary Alliance of Social Democracy". Quoted by G.P. Maximoff, *Bakunin*, The Free Press, New York, 1964, pp. 384-385.

[133] Cf. English translation: *Bakunin Selected Texts 1868-1875*, Anarres Editions pp. 42-56.

[134] Jean-Christophe Angaut, "Bakounine et le concept de politique", atelierdecreationlibertaire.com

[135] *Le Socialisme libertaire, Paris,* Denoël, 1973, pp. 163-164.

[136] Bakunin, "The Politics of the International" (1869), in *Bakunin Selected Writings* 18368-1875, Anarres Editions, p. 56.

[137] In the French version of Éditions de La Pléiade : Karl Marx, *Œuvres, Économie*, II, p. 1488.

Switzerland. Tocqueville expresses the situation perfectly. In chapter VI of *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (Of Democracy in America), he evokes those citizens "so dependent on the central power" who must "choose from time to time the representatives of that power; this rare and brief exercise of their free choice, however important it may be, will not prevent them from gradually losing the faculties of thinking, feeling, and acting for themselves, and thus gradually falling below the level of humanity."

Bakunin could have said the same thing, for his criticism of democracy lies entirely in the continuity of Tocqueville's. However, he added some elements which Tocqueville had evidently not envisaged, in particular the illusion of democracy in a system where the population is divided between possessors and non-possessors.

Bakunin understood two things that Marx and Engels seem to have ignored:

a) Since the working class does not represent the majority of the population, in order to achieve power through elections it will be forced to contract electoral alliances with more moderate parties, which will lead the socialist party to adulterate its program.

b) Even if the working class came to power through elections and undertook major reforms, the bourgeoisie would sweep away "democracy" and react with the utmost vigour: "The proletariat has nothing to expect from the bourgeoisie, not from their intelligence, not from their sense of equity, even less from their politics; not from the bourgeois Radicals, not from bourgeois so-called Socialists…[138]."

History has amply demonstrated the pertinence of Bakunin's analysis[139].

[138] Bakunin, "Writings against Marx", in *Bakunin Selected texts 1868-1875*, Anarres Éditions, p. 234.

[139] As soon as the proletariat begins to claim its rights, says Bakunin, "the political liberalism of the bourgeois disappears and, finding in itself neither the means nor the power necessary to repress the masses, it immolates itself in favor of the conservation of the economic interests of the bourgeois, it gives way to mil-

Conclusion

It is amazing to see how the Marxist discourse on anarchism and Bakunin is stereotyped and frozen. It has not changed since Marx himself, who sets the tone and provides the rationale. The disciples follow the master without taking any distance, without adding much either, often repeating word to word what Marx said. What Marx says is taken for granted. It is surprising to see how those who most claim "scientific socialism" practice it so little when it comes to themselves.

Yet on the Marxist side there are people capable of a non-ideological approach. Franz Mehring is one of those rare authors who, without ever straying from Marxist orthodoxy, are able to put the events and debates in context.

Here's what I say in *Social-Democracy & Anarchism*:

"The creation of the IWA was a turning point for Anarchism and Marxism. It may be useful to momentarily step back to adjust perspective and to put 'theoreticians' in their proper place. The Marxist Franz Mehring is one of the rare few who saw the situation accurately. Writing on the Bakuninist opposition, he says: it was apparent that the reason why it used Bakunin's name was that it believed that in his ideas it found solutions to those social conflicts and antagonisms, which had brought about its very existence.

"Strictly speaking the same might be said of Marx. So in these matters Mehring does not take an ideological approach. His analysis is made in terms of class and of the contending social forces. Moreover, it is precisely here that the key to unravelling the conflict in the IWA is to be found. Bakunin and Marx invented nothing, they witnessed events and theorised about them[195]."

Despite innumerable slurs spread by Marx and his entourage, Bakunin never questioned his merits. When the Russian revolutionary was in Italy, Marx sent him Book I of *The Capital* which had just been published. Later Bakunin made this comment:

[195] *Social-democracy and Anarchism, op. cit.* p. 10.

On October 17, 1876, the *Tagwacht* of Zurich published a letter, signed by a "Central Committee of the Group of German-speaking International Sections", which was a violent attack on the anti-authoritarian International. It read among other niceties:

"In all the mumbling of conciliation and unity, designed to betray sentimentality and mislead hearts, we see simply, and once again, *the Bakuninists at work* [197] , as always seeking in all places, consciously and unconsciously, to provoke discord and disorganization, instead of unity and organization, bringing to the labour movement contention and division instead of peace and conciliation[192]."

In other words, the federalists sow discord by proposing a reconciliation.

This letter was obviously aimed at showing that there was no possible understanding between the two currents of the labour movement, "between the representatives of scientific socialism", as the authors of the letter modestly call themselves, and the "cracked brains of the Bakuninist International"[193]. Knowing that Becker was one of the signatories of this letter, there is every reason to believe that it was Marx who sent him to sabotage the attempts to reunify the workers' movement. Some time later Becker published a letter which expressed in a significant way the opinion of his masters: "How could we, having such profound differences of opinion, allow ourselves to be made into the laughing stock of the world, through an attempt to reconcile fire and water (…) In consequence an end needs to be made as soon as possible of any sentimental desire for reconciliation[194]."

[192] See René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*, p. 112.

[193] James Guillaume, 6e partie, ch. VII, p. 87. See René Berthier, *op. cit.* p. 112.

[194] Quoted in James Guillaume, *L'Internationale documents et souvenirs*, 6e partie, Ch. VII, p. 87.

Bakunin knew since the congress of Basel, when the resolutions inspired by Marx were clearly rejected in favour of the "federalist" resolutions, that a conflict had become inevitable. But he wanted to delay this confrontation until the last moment, both because he recognized the positive role played by his opponent, and for tactical reasons.

"Marx is undeniably a very useful man in the International Society. Even to this day he exercises a wise and firmest influence on his party, he is the strongest obstacle to the invasion of bourgeois ideas and tendencies. And I would never forgive myself if I had only tried to efface or even weaken his beneficent influence for the simple purpose of avenging myself of him. However, it could happen, and even within a short time, that I would engage in a struggle with him, not for personal offence, of course, but for a question of principle, about state communism, of which he and the English and German parties he runs are the warmest supporters. Then it will be a fight to the death. But there is a time for everything and time for this struggle has not yet rung[140]."

Bakunin honestly recognized Marx's merits as a theorist: "Marx is a man of great intelligence and, moreover, a scholar in the widest sense of the word. He is a profound economist…" etc.[141]. He also recognized the inescapable role he had played in preserving the

itary dictatorship" ("Manuscrit de 114 pages", Oeuvres, Stock IV, p. 172). Bakunin had closely analyzed French post-1789 society. He makes very interesting observations on the attitude of the bourgeoisie faced with the popular threat and develops theses on what he calls "Caesarism" which are to be related to Marx's notion of "Bonapartism". Naturally, making a comparative study of the notions developed by the two authors would imply prior recognition of a minimum of normative value to the thought of Bakunin, which few Marxist intellectuals are willing to do.

[140] Letter to Herzen, 26 Octobre 1869, in CDRom IISH Amsterdam. The same letter in a slightly different translation can be found in *Michel Bakounine, Socialisme autoritaire ou socialisme libertaire*, pp. 90-91, UGE 1975.

[141] "Rapports personnels avec Marx. Pièces justificatives", n° 2. In: *Bakounine, Œuvres complètes*, Éditions Champ libre, vol. 2, p. 121, décember 1871.

International from bourgeois influence: "Then Marx is passionately devoted to the cause of the proletariat. No one has the right to doubt it; For he has been serving for thirty years with perseverance and fidelity, which have never been denied. He gave his whole life to this cause…"[142]. That is why, although he knew that there would one day be an open confrontation, he had delayed the moment as much as possible.

Although the sincerity of the homage he renders to Marx can not be questioned, Bakunin is not a "shrinking violet", as Mr. Nimtz says: he acknowledges in his letter to Herzen that he spared Marx by tactics: he thinks that one must avoid being the first to engage in an "open war". If the premises of the confrontation appeared at the Basel Congress in September 1869, the conflict broke out at the London conference at the initiative of Marx in September 1871.

About this London Conference, Bakunin wrote to his friends of the Bologna International in December 1871:

"The General Council has just declared the war. But do not be afraid, dear friends, the existence, power and real unity of the International, will not suffer because its unity is not above, it is not in a uniform theoretical dogma imposed on the mass of the proletariat […] It is below, in the identical material situation of suffering, needs and real aspirations of the proletariat of all countries[143]."

It appears that Bakunin was not afraid of a confrontation because, according to him, the true international was in the midst of militants and federations, not in its directing apparatus: on this ground he thought that the federalist theses he defended had nothing to fear. In retrospect, Bakunin and his friends seem to have been naive insofar as they thought that there would be a debate of ideas in which they would make their point. They had not considered that Marx's control of the IWA apparatus would allow him

[142] *Ibid.*

[143] Bakounine, "Lettre aux Internationaux de Bologne", décembre 1871. Œuvres, Champ libre, II, p. 105.

more from the Lassallean sensibility of the Congress than from the strictly much more sectarian Social-Democratic sensibility.

In the *Bulletin* of the Jura Federation of September 3, 1876, we can read:

"The much-desired rapprochement between the socialists of the various shades, and especially between those of the said anarchist fraction and those whose ideal is the popular state (*Volksstaat*), seems to be on the right track. We salute with great joy this important fact, which will have the effect of greatly increasing the strength of the revolutionary party, dissipating many misunderstandings, and supplying to men who judged each other only on hearsay, the opportunity to learn to know and to esteem one another."

The Jurassian *Bulletin* adds: "…we have always sought for union and peace, and (…) the conciliation that is being accomplished today is only the realization of the wish that we have not ceased to emit for eight years."

Of course, all these attempts, somewhat naive of course, but whose sincerity can not be denied, were mocked by the Social-democratic leaders. All the German-speaking newspapers, and in particular the *Volksstaat* and the *Tagwacht*, had engaged in a most lively polemic against the Jurassians, which did not prevent the *Solidarité* of 25 June 1870 from encouraging Jura sections to subscribe to the socialist newspapers without distinction, and among the German newspapers they recommended the *Volksstaat*, "the most commendable of the German socialist newspapers".

The naive but sincere attempts of the Jurassians (the "anarchists") to reconcile the two currents of the workers' movement obviously did not have the approval of the socialist leaders. The *Tagwacht*, to which, as James Guillaume says, "we had so often stretched out the hand of conciliation" published an article reprinting among other things, the accusation of Bakunin being a "Russian agent". It was obviously a provocation destined to make matters worse.

in this direction. I will not go into all of them but just mention some of them.

"United as we are on the ground of fundamental principles, is it not regrettable that we have not thought of agreeing to common action? What has not been done can still be done. … It would be up to the Romande Federal Committee to take the initiative of a meeting of delegates from all over Switzerland, which would undoubtedly bring about happy results[188]."

There was no follow-up to this call, but the Federalist militants did not give up:

"Five months ago, *Le Progrès* proposed a meeting of delegates from French-speaking Switzerland and German-speaking Switzerland, with the aim of achieving a rapprochement and a closer union. This proposal did not follow. We believe that the time has come to seriously consider a meeting of this kind, which could only have happy results, since on both sides we are disposed to a common action[189]."

Mr Nimtz probably does not know that the "anarchists", that is the Jura Federation, had sent their "fraternal greetings to the congress of German socialists meeting in Gotha"[190]. The Gotha congress report acknowledged this message, expressing "regrets for past divisions that had reigned between workers of various countries; satisfaction felt for the happy success of the union of German workers, and the need to forget past discord and to bring together all forces to accomplish common goals".

At Bakunin's funeral, on July 3, 1876, a resolution had been passed in which the "partisans of the workers' state" and the "partisans of the free federation of producer groups" expressed their wish that "irksome and vain past dissensions should be forgotten"[191]. I must say that these favourable dispositions probably emanated

[188] *Le Progrès* du Locle, 25 December 1869.
[189] *Solidarité* of 28 May 1870.
[190] See René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*, p. 127.
[191] See René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*, p. 127-128.

to completely evacuate the debate. Their excuse is that they lacked the historical experience; they were then in an unprecedented situation. Today we know the power of an uncontrolled minority who is at the head of an apparatus

During the year between the London conference and the Hague Congress, the legitimacy of the General Council had seriously been shaken because Marx and his followers had taken advantage of the situation to decide on an issue which had divided the International, which should have been the subject to debate in the organization and had not been settled by a Congress decision: the so-called "political question". The challenging of the policy that Marx wanted to impose on the International owed nothing to the instigation of Bakunin. The federations did not need Bakunin to be fed-up with Marx and were perfectly capable of having an opinion for themselves. However, this challenge tended to be exclusively reduced by the "marxists" to a personal conflict between Bakunin and Marx: indeed, when you want to avoid a political confrontation of ideas it is very convenient to reduce things to a personal dispute.

Bakunin foresaw

Bakunin foresaw an attack on him and the federalist current and, in the months preceding the London Conference, drafted a text entitled "Protest of the Alliance" (Protestation de l'Alliance). But as usual, he bifurcates from the initial object of his text: he makes a staggering analysis of the bureaucratic phenomenon based on his observation of the Geneva committees which "by sacrificing and devoting themselves", had made commandment a "sweet habit and by a kind of natural and almost inevitable hallucination in all those who keep the power too long in their hands […], have finally imagined that they were indispensable men".

A sort of "governmental aristocracy" had gradually formed "within the very working-class sections of the construction workers". The increasing authority of the committees has developed

"the indifference and ignorance of the sections in all matters other than strikes and the payment of dues". It is there, says Bakunin, "a natural consequence of the moral and intellectual apathy of the sections, and this apathy in turn is the equally necessary result of the automatic subordination to which the authoritarianism of the Committees has reduced the sections[144]."

The example of the Geneva International is interesting in the eyes of Bakunin because it was made up of militants who were devoted and initially devoid of personal ambitions, but who eventually forgot that their strength lied in the masses. What happened at the level of the section also took place at the level of the Geneva Central Committee. The constitution of an aristocracy within the workers' organization paved the way for its alliance with bourgeois radicalism in the elections.

There is a direct link between the constitution of a ruling aristocracy and the support given to the bourgeois candidates who were supposed to take over from the workers' struggles. Politics as envisaged by Marx was perfectly described by Bakunin: the alliance of a radical party with a moderate one leads to the weakening of the former and to the alignment of the program of the radical party with that of the moderate one.

5. – Conspiracy, Secret Communications and Expulsions

In convening the The Hague Congress, Marx and Engels intended to:

a) Introduce electoral strategy in the International and transform it into a political party;

b) Get rid of opponents – mainly Bakunin and his friends;

c) Transfer the General Council to New York, out of reach of his opposition.

Concerning Bakunin, this is how Mr. Nimtz presents the case:

[144] *Protestation de l'Alliance, op. cit.*, pp. 4-5 du manuscrit. CDRom IISH Amsterdam.

"In my opinion the General Council in New York has made a great mistake by suspending the Jura Federation. (…) The great achievement of the Hague Congress was to induce the rotten elements to exclude themselves, *i.e.* to leave. The procedure of the General Council now threatens to invalidate that achievement[186]."

The New York General Council then voted for a resolution declaring that all local and regional federations that had rejected the decisions of the congress of The Hague "had placed themselves outside the IWA and no longer formed a part of it". Engels made a list of those he wanted Sorge to declare as having "departed" from the International[187].

The international congress convened in Saint-Imier by the opponents to the decisions of the Hague Congress confirmed the position adopted by the Jura Congress and decided that the IWA would continue to operate but with amended statutes. Marxist and mainstream literature present this congress as a split, *which it was not.* The International Working Man's Association (or: "International Workers' Association", to be politically correct) simply decided in a perfectly regular Congress to change the rules by which it worked.

In conclusion, after having expelled the Jura Federation, the General Council eventually expelled *all the federations which refused to ratify the decisions taken in The Hague.* In other words, Marx and Engels and a small handful of accomplices expelled from the First International the whole international working class that was organized within it!!!

There is an astonishing paradox in the history of the turbulent relations between Anarchists and Marxists – I prefer to speak of federalists and centralists. The federalists constantly attempted, in the interest of workers, to alleviate the divergences which opposed them to the parliamentary socialists. They took several initiatives

[186] Marx to Bolte, 14 February 1873, ME Collected Works vol 43, Moscow & London, L&W, pp. 475-476.

[187] Engels to Sorge, 3 May 1873. ME Collected Works vol 43 Moscow & London, L&W p. 494.

countries of Europe varied so much that any form of centralized international direction was impossible"[184]. This is *exactly* what Bakunin had been repeating for years.

Marx's claim to achieve a "powerful centralization" made no sense at a time when the communications – men and mail – were slow, when the techniques to reproduce documents were archaic. Besides, the different federations of the International, all placed in extremely different conditions, had to face problems that were too complex to be resolved by the General Council. The facts themselves showed the need for decentralization.

After The Hague, the Jura Federation convened a congress (15 September 1872) which voted a resolution denouncing the exclusion of Bakunin and James Guillaume. Later the same day an extraordinary international congress had been convened which in turn rejected both the resolutions taken in The Hague and the legitimacy of the General Council. The Saint-Imier congress developed what appeared as an anti-sectarian attitude. It rejected the imposition over the proletariat of a "uniform line of conduct, or political programme, as a unique path that might lead to its social liberation". That would be, it said, "a pretension as absurd as it was reactionary". "The principle of diverse paths to socialism was thereby recognised. Federations and sections were seen to be asserting their incontestable right to determine for themselves their own political path and to follow the path that they thought best[185]."

As for Marx, he had no such open-mindedness; he saw things from the viewpoint of a manipulative politician. When he realized that his control over the International was eluding him, he made sure that the General Council was transferred to New York where there was a small colony of Germans who were devoted to him. The new general Council decided to suspend the Jura Federation, which made Marx very angry:

[184] R. Morgan, *op. Cit.,* p. 227.

[185] René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*, *op. cit.*

"The Bakunin tendency was expelled from the IWA (…) not because of its program but because a majority of delegates to the Hague congress agreed that it had organized a secret operation within the International in clear violation of its rules."

Mr Nimtz is wrong. At The Hague, it was not the "Bakunin tendency" that was expelled but two men: Michael Bakunin and James Guillaume. There was a third man – Adhémar Schwitzguébel – but the Congress delegates thought they had done enough and refrained from excommunicating him. Only a little later was a whole federation expelled – the Jura Federation. But Mr Nimtz omits to say that shortly later, *all* the federations denounced the exclusions when they realized they had been manipulated and they too were finally *all* expelled. (When I say "all the federations" I mean the federations that actually existed, paid their dues and showed a minimum of interest for the International – which excludes the Germans[145].)

Like Marx, Mr. Nimtz is very anxious to present Bakunin as a conspirator resorting to "organizational manoeuvres to create a state within the state" in order to "impose his abstentionist perspective on the International". Here we have the typical situation of the crook who accuses his victim of having swindled him, because Marx had already created his own "State within the State". Indeed, a close reading of the thousands of pages of the *Minutes* of the General Council shows that it was controlled by a small clique of men close to Marx, Marx himself staying usually in the background, but his correspondence leaves no doubt. The notes and comments writ-

[145] See: Roger Morgan, *The German Social-Democrats and the International – 1864-1872*, Cambridge University Press, 1965. Roger Morgan provides very precise information on the hesitant and opportunistic attitude of the German socialist leaders in relation to the International. He also shows that the German workers at the grassroots level were interested in the International and sought its support in the struggles they were leading but were faced with the apathy of their leaders. Finally, Morgan shows that if the workers' organisations did not legally have the right to join the International, the law was only very weakly applied: this prohibition served as a pretext for the Socialist leaders not to get too tightly involved.

ten by the Soviet publishers of the *Minutes* of the General Council are quite significant. For example, we read in the volume for the years 1866 and 1868: "In the General Council, Dupont, Lafargue and Jung – Marx and Engel's disciples and followers …" (p. 16). And "The minutes of the General Council reflect the unyielding struggle waged by Marx and his followers Dupont and Jung… etc. (p. 20). Etc. Everything is done for the reader to understand that Marx was the one who pulled the strings.

The predominance of Marx on the General Council was due to several concurring factors: his undeniable intellectual superiority, of course – which Bakunin was the first to acknowledge. But also his availability, the loss of interest of the British Trade Unions in the case after the Commune of Paris. And also he had surrounded himself with some faithful men who supported him and with whom he constituted an organized group – *exactly what he blamed Bakunin for doing*[146]. This group ensured him the control of the General Council of which he considered he was the owner. This is why he could write to Engels *as soon as 1865*: "The International Association takes up an enormous amount of time, as I am in fact the head of it[147]." The situation is no different in 1872: Engels writes to Liebknecht (15-22 May) : "you have no idea how hard-pressed we are, because Marx, myself and 1 or 2 others have to do absolutely *everything*"[148]. [*My emphasis*]

Marx and Engels became more and more isolated. After they had been disavowed by the (perfectly regular) international congress of Saint-Imier in 1872, they attempted to organize in Geneva their own secessionist congress in September 1873. Most of their remaining supporters politely declined the invitation. Once more, as in The Hague, Becker did the dirty work for his

[146] Bakunin's famous "Alliance", the existence of which can not be denied any more than one can deny the existence of the fraction surrounding Marx, provoked in the latter crises of paranoia and made him literally hysterical.

[147] Marx to Engels, 13 March 1865, Collected Works 42, p. 130.

[148] Collected Works, Lawrence & Wishart, vol. 44 p. 374.

which they had been victims at The Hague, they rejected the decisions of this rigged Congress:

September 1872 :
The Jura federation
October 1872 :
The delegates of the French sections
December 1872 :
The Italian federation
The Belgian federation
January-February 1873 :
The Spanish federation
The Dutch federation
The English federation

Of course, all these federations were not "Bakunist", and the denial of the practices of Marx and his friends was not a rallying sign to the "anarchistic" point of view. This denial expressed however in a clear way to what point all the federations of the IWA were fed up with Marx, Engels and their clique. It also expressed that the international unity of the labour movement could not depend on the imposition of a unique program and strategy: it was possible only on the basis of practical solidarity, as proposed by Bakunin. The "powerful centralization of all the powers in the hands of the General Council", which Marx demanded in September 1872[183], led to the *de facto* dissolution of the IWA.

Strangely, this analysis was shared by a German Social-Democratic leader, Wilhelm Liebknecht. R. Morgan mentions a letter written to Marx in 1875, in which Liebknecht analyses the causes of the failure of the International: the "fiasco" of the International, "as Liebknecht bluntly put it in a letter to Engels, was that the problems of the labour movement in the different

[183] Marx's speech delivered in Amsterdam, published by *La Liberté* of Bruxelles on 15 September 1872 and by the *Handelsblad* of Amsterdam on 10 September 1872. The *Handelsblad* version is reproduced in extenso in Bakounine, *Œuvres,* Champ libre, III, note 133, P. 411.

ety called Alliance. But for Engels, this secret society was the same as the Spanish Alianza.

In conclusion of the report of the Committee of The Hague congress,
the program of the Alliance was considered as incompatible with that of the International – but it was not very clear what program was concerned: the one which had originally existed but which Bakunin had amended because he recognized it could not be accepted by the General Council? The one that the biased Committee which had been appointed for the prosecution acknowledged it could not prove the existence? The program of the Alliance as a regular section of Geneva whose validity had been recognized by the General Council? The one of the Spanish Alianza?

"If, finally, one asks what really did exist in terms of organisation, the answer must be: very little indeed. The Alliance 'had no list of members, no agreed rules or program (since Bakunin's numerous drafts were all made on his own responsibility), no officers, no subscriptions, and no regular meetings. A political association having none of these attributes was a myth[182]."

To conclude on the fantasy projection concerning Bakunin's secret intentions, or on the charge Mr Nimtz carries against Bakunin, let us say a few words about the famous "Confidential communication" (January 1870) which is a model of conspiracy and covert activity – but on Marx's side.

Expulsions

The conspiracy orchestrated by Marx and his faction at The Hague Congress could not remain undetected indefinitely. When the different Federations of the IWA realized the manipulation of

[182] Arthur Lehning, "Bakunin's Conception of Revolutionary Organisations and Their Role: a Study of His 'Secret Societies'", in *Essays in Honour of E.H. Carr*, The Macmillan Press, 1974, p. 76.

masters and scraped the bottom of the barrel to find phoney delegates. The Congress was such a "fiasco", as Marx said[149], that the minutes of the congress were not published, not even a short report.

Being surrounded by men with whom he constituted a covert organized group is not blameable in itself: but there is no point blaming Bakunin for doing the same, in another perspective. While Marx wanted to centralize the power in the hands of the General Council, Bakunin wanted to decentralize it at the level of autonomous federations – but doing so was not precisely the optimum condition for exercising a "dictatorship" on the International, as Marx suspected.

Marx is as much a "conspirator" as Bakunin, if not more. But at least Bakunin "conspired" to *create* things (the first sections of the IWA in Italy, a strong federation in Spain, etc.). And Bakunin never expelled the whole organized international working class from the IWA.

Secret Communications

In January 1870 Marx sent to the Romande federal committee a "private communication" in which he harshly attacked Bakunin. It was a reaction against an imaginary conspiracy supposedly orchestrated by three papers: *L'Égalité* of Geneva, *Le Progrès* of Le Locle, and *Le Travail* of Paris. Naturally, Bakunin was suspected of being in the shadow, pulling the strings. This "Private communication" was voted by the General Council on January 1st, 1870. The Jura sections had not been informed about it and were informed of its existence only in 1872 when another anti-Bakunin document was published, "The Fictitious Splits in the International".

There was of course no "conspiracy" against Marx, but he did have some reason to be upset, for Paul Robin, who was close to

[149] Letter to Sorge, 27 September 1873, in Collected Works, 1989, Vol. 44, p. 534.

Bakunin, had succeeded him as editor of *L'Égalité*, and had committed a series of blunders. Robin had published anonymous letters which accused the General Council of having omitted to publish a regular information bulletin, of not having taken position on the conflict between Liebknecht and Schweitzer, etc. Bakunin, who was not even in Geneva at that time, had blamed Paul Robin for having made "an unjust protestation and at the same time impolitic and absurd"[150]. Naturally, Bakunin was accused of being responsible.

Marx was very good at shooting a bullet through his foot. He sent the anti-Bakunin "Communication" to Belgium, where there was a real federation, very active, and in Germany, where there was none. The "Communication" had no success in Belgium, and practically no impact in Germany. He made a try with France where his son-in-law Lafargue lived[151]. Marx used the same arguments as in the previous "Communications" and asked Lafargue to keep an eye on Paul Robin, who was then living in Paris. Soon after, Lafargue answered that he had asked several people their opinion of Bakunin ("without telling them mine", he added): "I saw that all favoured him. An open attack on him is impossible, and here is why: for all those who know him, he represents radical ideas, while his Swiss opponents are reactionaries" – which was precisely the case[152]. The "Communication" Marx had sent to France had absolutely no effect on Bakunin's reputation and the one he had sent to Belgium had resulted in vigorous protests. So Marx stopped sending "private communications" throughout Europe.

But since he was the correspondent of the General Council for Germany, he sent a "Confidential Communication" (March 28, 1870) to Dr. Kugelmann for it to be publicized amongst the leaders of the German socialist party[153]. This text is one of the many

[150] Bakunin, "Mémoire sur l'Alliance", CDRom IISH Amsterdam.

[151] See Marx to Lafargue, 19 April 1870 Collected Works, vol 43, p. 489.

[152] Lafargue to Marx, quoted in Wolfgang Eckhardt, *First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association*, PM Press.

[153] See *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs, vol. I,* pp 262-263 and 291-299.

"Lafargue claimed that the Marxists had vanquished Bakunin's followers. Engels also asserted that at Saragossa 'our people won a victory over the Bakunists'. The very opposite was true. Although the conference had rejected some Bakunist resolutions it had elected a new Spanish Federal Council which was dominated by Bakunin's followers. (...) Engels admitted at this time that in Catalonia – Spain's only industrial province – the Bakunists controlled the International and its journal, *La Federación*." [...]

"Lafargue's mission had failed, writes Henderson, because when he left Spain at the end of July 1872 the International was split into hostile factions and only a small minority of the branches supported the General Council in London. The politically conscious workers had found the doctrines of Bakunin and Proudhon more palatable than those of Marx. Engels could not derive much satisfaction from the contemplation of his work as corresponding secretary for Spain[181]."

Henderson is right except on one point: the Spanish workers had not so much found Bakunin's ideas more "palatable" as they had found Lafargue's behaviour ethically unacceptable. Most of the Spanish workers who had first joined Lafargue had got disgusted with his methods and gone back to their original (Bakunist) federation.

* * * * *

At the Hague Congress, the Committee which had been set up to prosecute the case of the Alliance amalgamated the two structures (Alliance and *Alianza*) in such a way that one does not know what all this was about: the existence of this "Alliance" could not be proved (although the "Alliance" of Geneva had been a public organisation adhering to the IWA), but Bakunin was suspected of having "tried and perhaps succeeded" to form a Spanish secret soci-

[181] W.O. Henderson, *ibid.*

tous and overactive "Alliance", this was left behind. The Spanish "Alianza" was on the other hand very active and dynamic and if its name was probably not due to chance, it was in no way adherent to any conspiratorial International seeking to exercise its "dictatorship" on the IWA. But at the Hague Congress, the Alliance and the "*Alianza"* were considered as one organisation.

Lafargue did not give up his sabotage work.

He created a rival federation with *eight other men* (compared to the 331 sections and 30 or 40.000 members of the Spanish federation in 1873[179]) and called it "New Madrid Federation" which intended to be integrated in the Spanish regional Federation (the Spanish internationalists considered Spain a "region" of the International). Of course, the Spanish Federal Council refused, but the General Council in London bureaucratically pronounced the admission of this 9-men federation to the International. So it was as a member of this bogus federation that Lafargue was appointed delegate to The Hague Congress where he could vote the exclusion of Bakunin and James Guillaume !!! (Is this Mr Nimtz's "democracy" ?) The General Council had implemented incredible manipulations to prevent the Spanish federation (the *real* one) to send delegates to The Hague, knowing that they would not be docile.

In the same way that Marx's reports had inflated the results of the International in Germany because he needed to substantiate his position in the General Council, "Engels and Lafargue exaggerated their achievements in Spain", writes W.O. Henderson, author of a biography of Engels[180]. In spite of the repression and the ban on their activities, the Spanish branches of the International had held their third conference in Saragossa in April 1872. About this conference,

[179] To compare with the German 208 members Engels refers to in his letter to W. Liebknecht, 22 May, 1872.

[180] William Otto Henderson, *The Life of Freidrich Engels*, Routledge, 1976, Vol. 2, p. 539

pieces to be assigned to the campaign of slander against Bakunin orchestrated by Marx to discredit him politically: accusations of being an agent of the tsar, a crook, a swindler, etc.

Let us remind that on the eve of the Basel Congress (September 1869), Liebknecht, who had accused Bakunin of being a Russian agent, was brought before a court of honour and had admitted that he "had acted with guilty lightness". This did not prevent Marx from taking the charge once more in his "Confidential Communication", in which we also learn that Bakunin had fanatical supporters, wanted to establish his dictatorship on the International, to capture the legacy of Herzen, etc. Any reader with a minimum of common sense perceives immediately paranoia behind this speech.

The "status" of this Communication is curious because although "confidential" and emanating from the sole will of its author – Marx – it was written on three sheets of paper bearing the letterhead of IWA and therefore seemed apparently official. Bakunin was never able to defend himself against the charges contained in this Circular because he never knew anything about it! The secrecy of this document was so well kept that James Guillaume could not read it until it was released July 12, 1902 in the *Neue Zeit*, the journal of the Social Democratic party. So w*ho is the conspirator* ?

It was the second time Marx had used his position in the General Council to attack Bakunin: he had previously "denounced" the Russian revolutionary to the Belgian Federal council. Marx writes in this "Confidential Communication" that he had known Bakunin since 1843, that he had met him again "shortly after the foundation of the International" and that he had "taken him into the Association", which is not true. Marx and Bakunin had actually met in 1864, but the only commitment that Bakunin, who was about to leave for Italy, took vis-à-vis Marx was to fight the influence of Mazzini in that country, "to lay some counter-mines for Mr Mazzini in Florence"[154]. Bakunin was behind the creation of several sections of

[154] Marx to Engels, 11 April 1865, Collected Works, 42, p. 140.

the International in Italy while he was not yet a member, a fact Marx was perfectly aware of, since he wrote on 4 September 1867 to Engels a letter praising the Italian paper *Libertà e Giustizia*, saying: "I assume that Bakunin is involved"[155].

Bakunin joined the International in June 1868.

Fritz Brupbacher's opinion is probably the most pertinent concerning this affair: he writes in *Marx und Bakunin* :

"there will be nobody on the entire surface of the earth, outside of a handful of fanatics who deny that this communication appears as printing on Marx's character an indelible stain."

Franz Mehring attempts to cut corners exonerating Marx, but he nevertheless notes that "it is hardly necessary to enumerate the many errors the communication contains. Generally speaking, the more incriminating the accusations against Bakunin appear to be, the more baseless they are in reality[156]." No wonder why Mr Nimtz doesn't like Mehring…

The Alliance

The question of Bakunin's "secret societies" is complex because it is linked to the context of the struggle against the despotic regimes reconstituted in Europe after the Vienna Congress at the fall of Napoleon, in 1815. During the revolution of 1848-1849 in Central Europe Bakunin had resorted to clandestine organisations, which was inevitable in such a revolutionary period. It took the immeasurable naivety of Marx to dissolve the first Communist party in history – the Communist League – in 1848 because, in his mind, freedom of press and of speech had been established, and since the League was an organisation for propaganda and not for

[155] Marx to Engels, 4 September 1867, Collected Works, 42, p. 420

[156] Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx : the Story of His Life*, Chapter Thirteen: The International at Its Zenith : 7. "The Confidential Communication", www.marxists.org

reaucratic means to maintain their power, blamed Bakunin and his friends because they advocated a decentralized organisation which would have deprived them of the power they held without being elected and without control.

Marx's successors today, beginning with Mr Nimtz, repeat without any critical mind a distorted story told by Marx only, with the same arguments, often with the same words.

The Spanish "Alianza"

After Fanelli, a member of the "Alliance", had been to Spain, the International had known an important development, but naturally the Spanish workers were not on the centralist side. Marx and Engels sent Lafargue to Spain in January 1872 in order to do a fractionist work and undermine the activities of the Spanish International, but he failed miserably. He also did so well that the activists who initially followed him eventually joined the Bakunists. Lafargue caused a terrible mess, but was finally expelled from the Madrid federation on June 9, 1872[177].

However, Lafargue had clearly explained that the "Alianza" was a strictly Spanish affair in which Bakunin had nothing to do[178]. But as the "prosecution case" against Bakunin and his friends at the Hague Congress had been mounted on the basis of a ubiqui-

[177] See documents reproduced in James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs*, Vol. 4, p. 294.

[178] Besides, the Alianza "was dissolved at the Saragossa Congress when it had accomplished its propaganda work" (F. Sorge, "Minutes of the Fifth General Congress of the IWA at The Hague, September 1872", cf. *The Hague Congress*, vol. 1, p.128. On 7 September 1872, a delegate, Alerini declared that the Alianza "has ceased to exist because traitors have foully denounced it" (Le Moussi, "Minutes", p. 101) The Barcelona local Federation published a statement in March 1873 saying that the Alianza "dissolved itself over questions that arose in its midst" (Consejo Local de la Federación Barcelonesa, Circular à todas les Federaciones locales y Secciones de la région espanola, Barcelona, Imp. De Manero, 1873, p. 20). This is what had happened: Lafargue had published the names of leading members of the "Alianza" who were then victims of police repression.

that they were in favour of parliamentary strategy but were not in favour of imposing such politics on all federations[174].

Concerning the Alliance, this is what I wrote in *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*:

"Marx and Engels developed a truly paranoid obsession with the Bakuninist 'Alliance'; they saw the worst in it and thought it was behind every initiative that, from their own perspective, erred from the proper course. The phantom of the Alliance – with Bakunin standing behind it – haunted Marx and Engels. Franz Mehring, a perfectly orthodox Marxist militant and historian, would write in his biography of Marx that there was nothing that could substantiate Marx and Engels' accusations against Bakunin – however, they were not entirely wrong.[175]"

Indeed, let us imagine a group of militants who share the same views on the forms of society to build, on the strategy to be implemented and on the necessary forms of organisation: it would be extremely naive to think that these persons did not constitute any form of organisation aiming specifically at achieving this goal. No one seems to have pointed out that this is precisely what Marx had done: he had gathered around him men who shared his views and implemented the means deemed necessary to achieve them. This group played a leading part at the head of the IWA – although few of them had been elected. And no one, beginning with Mr Nimtz, blames them for it. But they blame Bakunin[176].

These same men who were organized as a fraction within the General Council and who used the most reprehensible and most bu-

[174] Quoted in James Guillaume, *L'Internationale, documents et souvenirs,* Vol. 2, part 5 Chapter 2, p. 25. English translation in René Berthier, *Social-Democracy and Anarchism*, Anarres Editions, p. 18.

[175] *Social-Democracy and Anarchism,* Merlin Press, p. 19.

[176] These men had names: Dupont, Lafargue, Jung, Eccarius, Lessner, Forx, Shaw within the General Council, Utin, Becker, Sorge, and the whole leadership of the Social-Democratic party in Germany which was not even a member of the IWA.

conspiracy, it was no longer useful. Fernando Claudin quotes the report of a meeting held in June 1848 in Cologne:

"Marx proposed the dissolution of the League. As there was no agreement on this issue and Schapper and Moll required that the League be kept at all costs, Marx made use of the full powers granted to him and dissolved the League. Marx considered that the existence of the League was no longer necessary because it was a propaganda organisation and not an organisation to conspire, and that under the new conditions of freedom of press and of propaganda, the latter could be done openly without going through a secret organisation[157]."

Of course, Marx can't be blamed for having had no idea, *in 1848,* of what a socialist party could be. But at the same time and under identical circumstances, Bakunin – who was not yet an anarchist, by far – proposed at least one form of organisation capable of supporting the revolutionaries in their activity.

The famous "Alliance" which obsessed Marx and Engels and had become their pet peeve, will be one of the pretexts called by Marx to justify the expulsion of Bakunin and James Guillaume from the International. Guillaume always said that he had refused to be a member of the Alliance, which did exist, but not under the fantasized shape that Marx and Engels imagined. The main element of the prosecution case is a document – in fact a pamphlet – written by Engels, Lafargue and Marx, "The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Workers' Association", in which the Russian revolutionary and the Alliance are accused of wanting to destroy the International, no less[158]. This text did nothing but repeat and develop the thesis of another document, a "Confidential Communication" of the General Council titled "The Fictitious Splits in the International".

[157] *Soious Kommunistov,* pp. 220-221, quoted by Fernando Claudin, *Marx, Engels et la révolution de 1848*, François Maspéro, 1981, p. 133.

[158] Report published by order of the International congress of The Hague – London & Hamburg, 1873.

The International Alliance for Socialist Democracy was originally conceived as an international organisation, but to comply with the statutes of the IWA it was transformed into a local section. Bakunin and a group of 84 followers had constituted the "Alliance" on 28 October 1868; they had applied for membership as a Geneva section of the IWA. The General Council refused because an "international" organisation could not join as such to another international[159]. Bakunin acknowledged that "the protests of the General Council against the Rules of the Alliance were perfectly correct"[160]. He pointed out that the objections of the General Council applied to the settlement of the Alliance, *not to its program.* The Alliance therefore decided to bring its statutes into line with those of the International. One of the most fierce opponents of this compliance was J.P. Becker, who shortly after became one of the most fierce opponents of Bakunin.

The Alliance was then recognized by the General Council as a regular Genevan section of the International:

"…on 22 December 1868 the General Council annulled these rules *[of the Alliance]* as being contrary to the Rules of our Association and declared that the sections of the Alliance could only be admitted separately and that the Alliance must either be disbanded or cease to belong to the International. On 9 March 1869, the General Council informed the Alliance that 'there exists, therefore, no obstacle to the transformation of the sections of the Alliance into sections of the Int. W. Ass.'[161]"

The confusion was deliberately maintained between this Genevan Alliance which was a perfectly regular section of the International, and the existence of an "Alianza" that had been

[159] See Collected Works vol 43 : Marx to Engels 15 December 1868 ; Engels to Marx 18 December 1868 ; Marx to Hermann Jung 28 December 1868. And Bakunin to Marx, 22 December 1868, quoted in : *Marx/Bakounine, socialisme autoritaire ou libertaire*, Union générale d'éditions, vol. 1, p. 74-75.

[160] Bakounine, "Rapport sur l'Alliance".

[161] See Engels to Cafiero, 1-3 July 1871, Collected Works vol. 44, pp. 163-164.

"The protocol commission of the Hague congress, consisting of Dupont, Engels, Frankel, Le Moussu, Marx and Seraillier, therefore took over the task and a few weeks before the Geneva congress it issued a memorandum entitled: 'The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Workingmen's Association'. This memorandum was drawn up by Engels and Lafargue whilst Marx's share in the work was no more than the editing of one or two of the concluding pages, though naturally he is no less responsible for the whole than its actual authors[172]."

In fact, Marx was terrified at the idea that Bakunin should do what he himself had achieved: take the control of the General Council, if not of the International. But he didn't understand that the federalist project of ensuring the autonomy of the federations did not fit at all with his phantasm of a Bakunin striving to take the control of the General Council, simply because the federalist tendency of the International was in favour of the *autonomy* of the federations, which were to decide by themselves the strategy of emancipation and not wait for Marx or anybody else to explain what to do[173]. The accusation of Bakunin striving to take control of the General Council is inconsistent with the fact that Bakunin was opposed to defining a unique and compulsory program for the IWA: he founded his strategy on the fact that the federations were all placed in extremely different contexts, which meant that no unique program or unique strategy could be possible. This is why John Hales, in the name of the British Committee, wrote to the Jura Federation

[172] F. Mehring, *ibid.,* p. 496.

[173] "Whence, also, the idea that Bakunin wanted to transfer the seat of the General Council to Switzerland, although the Russian revolutionary explicitly says the opposite: he favors a reduction in the powers of the council and does not seek to gain influence over it." Jean-Christophe Angaut, *The Marx-Bakunin Conflict at the International: A Clash of Political Practices, (*www.cairn-int.info)

tle is lost by the fact that this is impossible for reasons of space[167]." (Quite an understatement…) Mehring adds that this pamphlet is below anything else Marx and Engels ever published: "The Alliance pamphlet is not a historical document, but a one-sided indictment whose tendentious character is apparent on every page of it."

Mehring could have added that the defamation of their opponents in the "Fictitious Splits" had borne no fruits, "but had instead caused waves of protest and a never-ending discussion about the General Council's right to exist"[168].

Besides, this document "does not deal at all with the internal causes responsible for the decline on the International", "the Alliance pamphlet does not even offer proof of the very existence of such an Alliance. Even the committee of inquiry set up by The Hague congress had to content itself with possibilities and probabilities in this connection[169]."

"Cuno, who gave the report on behalf of the committee, did not put forward any material evidence, but declared instead that the majority of the committee had reached the moral certainty that their conclusions were correct, and asked for a vote of confidence from the congress[170]."

In other words the committee brings no proof of its accusations but is in favour of the expulsion. Franz Mehring adds: "This concluding scene of The Hague congress was certainly unworthy of it. Naturally, the congress could not know that the decisions of the majority of the committee were invalid because one member was a police spy"[171]… (besides the fact which Mehring does not mention that one member of the committee had declared Bakunin not guilty.)

[167] F. Mehring, *Karl Marx, the Story of his life*, Routledge, p. 496.
[168] *First Socalist Schism*, p. 286.
[169] F. Mehring, *ibid.*, p. 498.
[170] F. Mehring, *ibid.*, p. 491.
[171] F. Mehring, *ibid,*. p. 491.

founded in Spain and which, apart from the name, had nothing to do with the Bakuninian Alliance. Marx and Engels perfectly knew that. Making propaganda for one's ideas requires a minimum of organisation. Bakunin's balance sheet on this point is rather positive. Even though he was not yet a member of the IWA, he played a key role in the Italian labour movement, largely contributing to detach it from the influence of Mazzini: he contributed to the creation of sections of the International in the Peninsula[162]. Members of the Alliance founded the first sections of the International in Italy and Spain: Gambuzzi in Naples, Friscia in Sicily, Fanelli in Madrid and Barcelona.

The Alliance had been instrumental to detach the most exploited workers of Geneva from the influence of the gentrified citizen-workers, those precisely whom Marx supported, and who made electoral alliances with the local bourgeoisie. Lafargue was perfectly right when he wrote to his father-in-law: "for all those who know him, he represents radical ideas, while his Swiss opponents are reactionaries".

Arman Ross, on this point, provides interesting insights. Speaking of the militants who were close to Bakunin, he wrote in 1926 that there was "a group of people who saw things the same way and who worked for the same cause. Sometimes we called our group 'Alliance' while Bakunin sometimes called it 'the sanctuary' (…) I repeat once again that during my six or seven years of intimate relations with Bakunin, Guillaume, etc., there was never anything

[162] See:

• T.R. Ravindranathan, *Bakunin and the Italians*, McGill-Queens University Press, 1988

• Robert Paris, "Bakounine en Italie ou le socialisme italien face à ses origines", in Combats et débats. Paris, Institut d'études slaves, 1979.

• Gaetano Manfredonia, "Bakounine en Italie (1864-67): révolution sociale ou révolution nationale?", in *Actualité de Bakounine. 1814-2014*, Éditions du Monde Libertaire 2014.

between us that could give the impression of a conspiracy or a secret society[163]."

But it is James Guillaume who probably gives the best description of what the Alliance was:

"What especially struck me in the explanations he [Bakunin] gave me was that it wasn't the old classical secret society sort of association in which one must obey orders from above; the organisation was only a free rapprochement of men united for collective action, without formalities, without solemnity, no mysterious rites, simply because they trusted each other, and for whom agreement seemed preferable to isolated action[164]."

What Arman Ross and James Guillaume describe looks surprisingly like the group formed by Marx himself and his friends. In other words, Bakunin did nothing else than what Marx himself did. The Alliance was to Bakunin nothing but an instrument whose activity he followed quite casually. Having left Geneva at the end of 1869, he wrote to Becker (who was later to become an ardent opponent of the Russian revolutionary) on December 4, 1869:

"My dear old man, it is absolutely necessary to support the section of the Alliance of Geneva –- if only as an imaginary centre of propaganda and action for Italy, Spain and for southern France as well as for the French-speaking Switzerland. You know better than I that certain imaginary existences are very useful – and that they should not be disdained at all. You know that in the whole of history there is only a quarter of reality, at least three quarters of imagination, and that it is not its imaginative part which has acted at all times least powerfully upon men[165]."

[163] *Bakounine et les autres,* Union générale d'Éditions, 1976, p. 284.

[164] *Bakounine et les autres,* Union générale d'Éditions, 1976, p. 267.

[165] Quoted in: *Marx/Bakounine, socialisme autoritaire ou libertaire*, Union générale d'éditions, vol. 1, p. 92.

Research shows that Bakunin attached little importance to these "secret societies"[166], whose role was pinpointed by his Marxist opponents and by some more romantic than objective authors. Some historians find only what they want to look for. Moreover, many authors deal with Bakunin's "secret societies" without distinguishing between those he created or simply imagined before he became an anarchist, and those of his "anarchist" period, after in 1868. Bakunin intended to diffuse his ideas through his many personal relationships rather than through any esoteric societies. One text concerning these questions was published in English in 1974, by someone who probably was the greatest specialist of Bakunin: Arthur Lehning.

Moreover, when the Alliance militants later decided to dissolve the Geneva section, which was public and not secret, and had become little active for lack of militants, they did not even inform Bakunin, who was absent – which says a lot about the "dictatorship" he exercised on it. But there is no doubt that Bakunin's militant life was closely associated with the existence of clandestine organisations. The first reason is simply the repression suffered by opposition groups all over the European continent. A problem Marx was not confronted with in London.

Mehring about the Alliance

About the pamphlet written by Engels, Lafargue and Marx, "The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Workers' Association", Franz Mehring writes in his biography of Karl Marx: "Any critical examination of the Alliance pamphlet, as it came to be called for the sake of brevity, with a view to determining the correctness or otherwise of its detailed charges would demand at least as much space as the original document. However, very lit-

[166] See René Berthier, "Bakounine et les 'sociétés secrètes'", mondenouveau.net