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the achievements—and the failures—of Bakunin and the pioneers who fought for freedom a century ago.

[Originally published in *Freedom Review,* in the latter part of 1976 with the following editorial note: "As avid readers of our contact column will know, an International Conference of Bakunin Studies was recently (September 24th to 26th) held in Venice. The conference was a great success with over 500 people attending from all parts of Italy and abroad. We hope to include a fuller report on the proceedings of the conference (which will be published in Italian by *Edizioni Antistato)* in a special Bakunin Centenary supplement to *Freedom*, which will include a further text on the conference, original materials and translations. In the meantime we publish here, with the permission of the author and of Nico Bert, the organizer of the conference, a text by Sam Dolgoff which was read out on the first day (since Mr. Dolgoff was unable to attend the conference personally)."

but rather, as resulting from the harmonizing by congresses and specialized assemblies of initiatives from below…" (Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*).

Revolution…

Anarchism, on a scale never before attained, was beginning to take root from 1917—the beginning of the revolution—until the crushing of the Makhno movement and the Krondstadt rebellion in 1921. Thousands of Russian revolutionists returned from exile. The weekly organ of the 10,000 member Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada, *Golos Truda* (The Voice of Labor) was transferred to Russia. *Golos Truda* and other groups published a mass of anarchist literature including the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists were active in the unions, societs and factory committees which included bakers, seamen, stevedores, printing, railway workers, metal industry and other trades. Soviet sources recently revealed that in 1918, 55 anarchist newspapers and magazines were published in cities and towns all over Russia. The circulation of the organ of the Anarchist Communist Federation, *Anarkhia* reached 20,000 and the Anarcho-Syndicalist *Volny Golos Truda* (Free Voice of Labor) 18,000.

Aborted

The abortion of the Russian Revolution spurred the search for libertarian alternatives to authoritarian socialism. As the current re-evaluation of traditional socialist theory proceeds, the ideas of Michael Bakunin, the founder of the international anarchist movement, are arousing increasing interest and have become increasingly relevant. In such an examination much can still be learned by

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take upon themselves the political reconstruction of the country on the basis of the widest introduction of federalism…

"…the second task, the total economic reconstruction, must be left to other popular organizations better fitted for the purposes: industrial unions and other economic organizations of the workers and peasants. The confiscation of the land and factories can be undertaken only by federations of unions and laboring peasants, industrial unions, factory committees…and the like, in local districts throughout the country…" (translated in Avrich, *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*).

In the Style of Kropotkin, the Declaration also calls for the incorporation of voluntary associations of all types and purposes in both the political and economic structure of the free society.

Libertarian Direction

The anarcho-syndicalists did not behave like impotent grumblers, but developed constructive, practical measures designed to propel the revolution in a libertarian direction. The purged Bolshevik Victor Serge (an ex-anarchist who had not entirely rejected all he had learned) criticized the criminal inefficiency of the Bolshevik administration in dealing with the economic crisis. In suggesting a different solution to the economic problems, Serge inadvertently illustrated the relevance of anarchist organizational principles, practically duplicating the proposals offered by the anarcho-syndicalists"

"…certain industries could have been revived merely by appealing to groups of producers and consumers, by freeing the state strangled cooperatives and inviting various associations to take over the management of different branches of economic activity…in a word, I argued for a 'communism of associations'—in contrast to communism of the state variety. I thought of the total plan not as something to be dictated by the state from on high,

Bakunin…His new words echo…the old superannuated truths of primitive anarchism…" (Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*).

Organization!

At the turn of the century, the spontaneous revolts of the oppressed workers which swept the industrial areas of Russia, inspired anarchists to participate. Anti-syndicalists and many who opposed all but the most primitive forms of organization, even self-discipline, revised their ideas, while the workers, for their part, proved receptive to anarchist propaganda and spurred the growth of the movement.

In France the revival of anarchism began when anarchists recovered from their anti-social individualism (attentats, esoteric cults, etc.) and resumed action in labor an other mass movements in accordance with the principles championed by Bakunin and his comrades in the First International. In Russia, although the anarchist movement was just beginning to be organized, a similar process was taking place.

By dint of hard work and intensive propaganda the anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists achieved a foothold in the labor movement—so much so that "…fearful of the dangerous competition of the pro-syndicalists, the socialists strove to exclude them from the soviets, trade unions and workers' committees (set up during the 1905 revolution…" (Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*).

"The Declaration of the Petrograd Union of Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda (adopted June 4, 1917) a blending of communalism and syndicalism applied to the problems of the Russian Revolution, recapitulates familiar Bakuninist themes:

"…the state must be replaced by an all-Russian Federation of Free Cities and Free Communes, in urban and rural communes united from the bottom up in local, district and regional federations…the soviets expressing the political will of the masses must

This paper deals exclusively with the impact of Bakunin's ideas on Russian anarchism and on the Russian revolutionary movement in general. It omits discussion of anarcho-pacifists; Tolstoyans; anarcho-terrorists in the style of Ravachol, anarchists who believe that the free society can be attained by gradual reforms; anarchists who oppose struggle for better conditions under capitalism; amoral "Nechaevists"; anti-social individualists who are against all but the most primitive forms of organization; and other tendencies whose ideas are foreign to the main body of Bakunin's thought.

Russian anarchism—a synthesis of communalism and syndicalism—derived its orientation from the ideas of Bakunin. Rural communes were deemed best able to cope with the problems of revolutionizing the peasant economy in a country where the oppressed restless peasants constituted, in Bakunin's time, the vast mass of the populace. Urban communes (sometimes called "free cities") and industrial syndicates were considered best suited to deal with the problems generated by the industrialization of Russia in the later years of the nineteenth century, problems further complicated by the emergence of a new class of rootless proletarians. Co-ordination of the economy would be achieved through an interlocking network of local, district, regional and national federations of communes and syndicates.

Kropotkin considered himself a disciple of Bakunin: "…the theoretical aspects of anarchism as they were beginning to be expressed in the Jura Federation—especially by Bakunin's criticism of state socialism, fear of economic despotism, appealed strongly to my mind…" In his *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Kropotkin further wrote that "…Bakunin in a series of brilliant pamphlets formulated the fundamental principles of anarchism…"

In the main, Kropotkin's anarchism, like Bakunin's, combined communalism (Kropotkin declared that Bakunin was "really a communist") and syndicalism ("…independent communes for the territorial organization and federations of trade unions in

accordance with their different functions…") supplemented by voluntary associations of all descriptions, for the economic organization. Thus, the program of Russian anarcho-syndicalism incorporated the ideas of both Bakunin and Kropotkin. This fact is stressed in all the anarcho-syndicalist literature, and in the declaration of principles of the Anarcho-Syndicalist International organized in Berlin in 1922.

Bakunin's ideas reached Russia through political refugees (mostly in Switzerland) in close touch with the revolutionary underground. In Switzerland the Russian refugees—who adhered to the Russian section of the [First] International—published and (through the underground) circulated anarchist propaganda literature like *Statism and Anarchy* by Bakunin; *The Historical Development of the International*; *Anarchism According to Proudhon*, etc. Illustrating how highly regarded Bakunin was, a declaration protesting Marx's defamation of Bakunin declared: "…as for Russia, we can assure Mr. Marx that Bakunin is too well known and esteemed for calumny to touch him…" The protest was signed by the highly respected Russian revolutionists Vladimir Ozerov, Nicholas Ogarev, Bartholemew Zaitsev, Armand Ross (Michael Sashin), Zampirir Railli, Alexander Celnitz, and Valerian Smirnov.

Youth

The first issue of *Narodnoe Delo* ("The People's Cause"), written almost entirely by Bakunin and, and his *Statism and Anarchy*, had an enormous effect on the Russian youth. Stepniak tells how "Bakunin inspired the young revolutionaries for whom Bakunin's writings symbolized revolution". Count Pahlem, the Czar's Minister of Justice, bemoaned the fact that the "…writings of Bakunin and Lavrov had a devastating bad effect on the subversive movements in Russia…", inciting the youth to "commit crimes against the state". Kropotkin recalls in the Chaikovsky circle to which he

Party (organized 1901) was by no means an anarchist organization, its economic program was in many ways Bakuninist. Instead of nationalization, the Party proposed the socialization of land and industry to be directly administered by peasant communes and workers' syndicates. Similarly, the Maximalists, a group that split off from the Socialist Revolutionary Party, rejected parliamentary action, arguing thay "…Russia required, not a constituent assembly but the federation of revolutionary communes…" (Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets*).

Bakunin's disciple, Z. K. Ralli, published a 530-page book, *The Sated and the Hungry*, a "real encyclopedia of Anarchist Populism". The book explained the policies of the First International. Ralli's circle helped launch the revolutionary syndicalist paper *Rabotnik* ("Worker"), which urged the workers to "Seize the factories from the employers! Seize the land and divide it among the peasants! Do not rebuild the state! Organize a federation of peasant Communes and industrial artels!"

Soviets

The council movement during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 also embodies Bakunin's revolutionary concepts. Oskar Anweiler (*The Soviets*) concludes that "…Bakunin's proposals were strikingly similar to the structure of the subsequent Russian system of Councils. Lenin's condemnation (1905) of the anarcho-syndicalist tendencies among the proletariat was anarchists, the soviets that arose spontaneously embodied the libertarian principle of the *Mir* or *Obschina*; a suitable form for workers' self-management of industry. "…Lenin assimilated the anarchist program to secure the support of the masses for the Bolsheviks…" (Anweiler). I P. Goldenberg, a veteran Russian Marxist, declared that "…Lenin has now made himself a candidate for the throne of

ferred to the peasants who will live on it by their own labor…the transfer will take place in an organized manner according to the decisions of the Peasant Assemblies…"

"…the factories, workshops, mines and other means of production, are to become the possession of the working class as a whole, which through its trade unions…will resume production, link together the industry of the whole country in a single united organization…the true worker-peasant order is not the rule of the Social Democrat Communist Bolsheviks, which now falsely calls itself 'Soviet Power', but a higher form of anti-statist, anti-authoritarian socialism…"

(Paul Avrich, *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*—translation).

South…and North

Venturi notes that "…Bakuninism prevailed in the working class centers of Southern Russia…" In 1879 the Bakuninist Axelroad organized the Southern Union of Russian Workers, which collapsed after Axelrod left to join *Cherny Peredel.* (Both Axelrod and the Bakuninist Plekhanov, Lenin's teacher, became leaders of the Russian Marxists.) The Union, however, was reorganized a year later by "…two revolutionary Populists to pursue to the end earlier attempts to bring Bakuninism to the working class…"

The program of the Northern Union of Russian Workers also reflected Bakuninist ideas (abolition of the state and private property, communal autonomy, federalism, etc.) though paradoxically, the "last paragraph of its program was taken directly from the catechism of the German Social Democrat…"

Socialist Revolutionary Party

The next generation of Populists likewise fell under Bakunin's influence. Thus while the neo-populist Socialist Revolutionary

belonged "…our youth listened to the mighty voice of Bakunin and the agitation of the International had a fascinating effect upon us…" (*Memoirs of a Revolutionist*).

Bakunin decisively influenced the Russian radical movement. Although no specific Bakuninist organization was established in Russia during his lifetime, Bakunin "…inspired a revolutionary spirit in Russia…from Bakunin, the Russian populists sought—and obtained—not so much an organization as a conception of the world which had a profound and lasting effect on the entire revolutionary movement…" (see Franco Venturi's pioneering study of Russian Populism, *Roots of Revolution*).

Bakunin's pamphlet, *Some Words to My Young Brothers in Russia*, foreshadowing Kropotkin's *Appeal to the Young*, called upon the upper and middle-class intellectuals to live with the people and struggle together with them for their liberation.

"…so my young friends, leave this dying world, these universities, academies in which you are now locked and permanently separated from the people, GO TO THE PEOPLE…"

GO TO THE PEOPLE! Became the celebrated watchword of the Narodnik (People's) movement.

Populism

There is, indeed, a striking resemblance between Bakunin's ideas and the libertarian tendencies that emerged from the Populist movement. The essence of Populism (as the name implies) is an abiding faith in the creative and revolutionary capacity of the "ordinary" people. As against Marx, the Populists insisted that the will of man and not the mode of production is the prime condition for social change. Moreover, capitalism was not the indispensable progressive precondition for the transition to socialism and the state was not the consequence but the cause of inequality and subjugation. "…they argued that it was possible to avoid the

evils of capitalism, the despotism of a centralized economy or a centralized government, by adopting a loose federal structure composed of self-governing units of producers and consumers…" The potential for such a society already existed in the Russian peasant commune—the Mir, a federation of self-governing communes "along the lines of the French anarchist-socialist Proudhon" (Isaiah Berlin, introduction to *Roots of Revolution*).

Cherny Peredel ("Black Partition"—division of the land to the former serfs, who used to be called "Blacks") broke away from the Populist *Zemlya i Volya* ("Land and Liberty") because it violated the principles of Bakuninism by placing altogether too much emphasis on terrorism and neglecting propaganda among the worker and peasant masses, isolating itself from the people. Land and Freedom became a sect and not a movement. Every attentat increased the fury of reaction. The revolutionary movement needlessly lost its best and bravest militants. Franco Venturi concludes that *Cherny Peredel's* program called for a "return to the Bakuninist sources of Populist thought…"

The Peasantry

As regards the peasantry, Bakunin did not share the blind faith of the Populists of the Mir. To fulfill its true potential, Bakunin insisted, the Mir would have to be revolutionized from within, purged of paternalism, "the absorption of the individual", and the "cult of the Czar":

"…the family patriarch is simultaneously a despot and a slave; a despot exerting his tyranny over all under his roof…but the domestic despot is the servant of the Mir and the slave of the Czar…the Russian family is a whitewashed graveyard…"

"…the Russian rural community, already weakened by paternalism, is hopelessly corrupted and crushed by the state…communal elections are a mockery. The persons elected by the people became

the tools of the oppressors and venal servants of the rich landlords…"

Bakunin deplored the fact that each community "constitutes a closed circle…therefore one of the main tasks of revolutionary youth is to establish a vital line of revolt between the isolated rural communities…"

With respect to the establishment of co-operatives under capitalism, founding of communist rural colonies like Cabet's New Icaria in America, "organizing their own domestic life on the basis of full liberty…" to serve as an example, and other schemes to reform capitalism or undermine the state, Bakunin argued that "…experience of different countries…has conclusively shown that emancipation of the people…" by such means is impossible: "…there must be a general uprising embracing the whole countryside…that this is possible has been demonstrated by the vast populist uprisings led by Stenka Razin and Pougachev…" but spontaneity is not enough. The revolution must be organized with a realistic consistent program (see Appendix "A" in *Statism and Anarchy*.

Makhno

The Makhno movement, a half century later, was an example of what Bakunin had in mind. Makhno, writes Avrich, "expropriated the gentry and established a Cossack-style republic…while the government denounced him and Arshinov as "bandits"—the epithets with which Moscow maligned its guerilla opponents since the 17th century" (*Russian Rebels*). A proclamation of the Revolutionary Makhno Insurgent Movement (Jan. 7, 1920) addressed to "All Peasants and Workers" practically duplicates the Bakuninist program.

"…the Insurgent Army fought persistently to create a true soviet socialist order…the land of the Gentry, the Church and other enemies of the toilers with all livestock and equipment must be trans-