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Revolution, Socialism, and the Slav Question: 1848 and Mikhail Bakunin

Even though posterity has claimed him as one of the founders of anarchism, notably because of his conflict with Marx during the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA), the Russian revolutionary, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), was principally known during his lifetime for the role he played in the Revolutions of 1848-1849. Perhaps of all of those European contemporaries who were active in the revolutionary events of that time, Bakunin was someone who most incarnated their contradictions. Having hoped for and anticipated a European-wide revolution for several years, Bakunin completely threw himself into revolutionary events, and never ceased to travel throughout the Continent between February 1848 and May 1849, personally taking an active part in several insurrectional events, notably in Prague and Dresden. This revolutionary activity came to an abrupt end in spring 1849 and was followed by twelve years of imprisonment and exile, an interregnum which only ended with Bakunin's famous escape from Siberia and return to Europe via the United States at the end of 1861. If the hiatus in activism imposed by incarceration did not apparently cause Bakunin to reassess his own revolutionary objectives during his actual imprisonment, his subsequent confrontation with changed European geopolitical realities in the 1860s would inflect his thought sufficiently enough such that by the end of the decade he would reemerge in the iconic form remembered by posterity today as one of the founding fathers of "anarchism". This chapter will examine how Bakunin anticipated revolution through a Hegelian lens since the early 1840s; his role in the events of 1848-1849; and how his 1848 manifesto, published in both French and German, *Appeal to the Slavs*, captured many of the different contradictory aspects of the 1848 revolutions, particularly when recast in light of Friedrich Engels's criticisms of it. It will close with some speculation as to what might have been the real impact of those revolutions on Bakunin's subsequent evolution as a cosmopolitan, multilingual revolutionary, once he regained his freedom in the 1860s.

Hegelian Anticipations of Revolution.

Retrospectively, the revolutions of 1848 appear like the natural outlet of a decade of growing protest directed at the established political and social order of the ruling European elites which emerged triumphant after the Vienna Settlement. Spurred on by the confluence of democratic, socialist and nationalist movements, these revolutions were for a lot of revolutionaries like Bakunin the moment they had been predicting and anticipating for many years.

Born to minor Russian landed gentry, Bakunin travelled to Germany in July 1840 in order to complete his philosophical education (as well as likely escape a family environment he found

oppressive). He came at a moment when the country was in a state of intellectual effervescence. The reformist hopes inspired by the arrival of the new Prussian monarch, Friedrich-Wilhelm IV, were in the process of deflating, and the king had named Hegel's old rival, Schelling, at the University of Berlin to fight against the pernicious liberal influence of Hegelian philosophy. Since the publication of David Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, the Hegelian School, itself, had undergone a succession of internal divisions, (first between "left" and "right" Hegelians, then with the growth of the "young" Hegelian movement), which would transform many of its members from liberals into radical democrats, communists, socialists, or even – at least if one thinks in ideological terms of the genealogical status currently assigned to figures like Max Stirner or Bakunin – "anarchists".

Having met Arnold Ruge in Dresden at the end of the summer of 1841, Bakunin would implicate himself in the "young Hegelian" movement, publishing an article in October 1842 for Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst* under the French pseudonym, "Jules Elysard", and entitled "The Reaction in Germany. A Fragment from a Frenchman."[1]. In this brief text, Bakunin, having sketched out a rough tableau of contemporary reactionary beliefs, specifically targeted those who sought to reconcile the medieval social order with the basic tenants of democratic principles. By way of a long peripheral analysis of the categories of opposition and contradiction in Hegel's *Logic*, Bakunin asserted that the current confrontation between reactionaries and democrats in Germany was inevitable. At the end of his article, he even insisted on the signs of an imminent revolution. According to Elysard-Bakunin, the growth of socialist movements in France and Britain constituted the beginnings of a new world of practice that Hegelian philosophy, resolutely theoretical, could only postulate. In spite of their purported rejection of the abstractions of philosophy, Bakunin's writings during the 1848-1849 revolutions would continue to reel from the repercussions of those Hegelian influences explicit in his writings from the early 1840s. As shall be shown below, Bakunin would transpose the role of the Slavic peoples in terms of universal history, translating Hegelian spirit into a world-historical revolutionary spirit supposedly at work in the insurrectionary contagion begun in 1848 and the desires for emancipation of those peoples it expressed.

In the months following the publication of his article, Bakunin no longer felt safe in Germany and left for Switzerland. Simultaneous with this decision, Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher* and Marx's *Rheinische Zeitung* were shut down. In Switzerland, inspired by his reading of the German communist Wilhelm Weitling's *Garantien der Harmonie und Freiheit*, Bakunin wrote an article, "Communism", published in June 1843 in the Zurich-based journal, the *Schweizerischer*

1 Jules Élysard [M. Bakunin], "Die Reaktion in Deutschland. Fragment von einem Franzose", *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, 14-21 October 1842. It can be found in English translation in Arthur Lehning's anthology, Michael Bakunin, *Selected Writings*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), pp. 37-58.

Republikaner.[2] Pursuing his reflections already published in Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, Bakunin asserted a parallel between philosophy and communism (at the same time he denounced too materialistic a conception of communism). The end of both was to liberate mankind on a theoretical and practical level. Bakunin was denounced as a subversive by Johann Kasper Bluntschli, the conservative jurist and state councilor charged with preparing an official investigative police report on the subversive influence of Weitling, whose papers had been seized in Zurich. When Bakunin learned that the Russian government demanded his immediate extradition from Switzerland, he fled for Paris in February 1844. Arriving in early March, Bakunin would remain in Paris until his expulsion in November 1847, with the exception of a few excursions to the French provinces and a prolonged stay in Brussels between April and July 1844.

Although he would claim later in his 1851 *Confession* addressed to Tsar Nicholas I to have been isolated and deprived of any perspective during his time in Paris, Bakunin, in fact, frequented numerous French socialists (Cabet, Pierre Leroux, Victor Considerant, Louis Blanc, George Sand, and Proudhon, with whom he talked about Hegel), German democrats and communist members of the journal, *Vorwärts* (notably Marx, whom he met before Marx was thrown out of France at Prussia's request in February 1845), and Polish patriotic émigrés.[3] Upon learning that he had been stripped of his aristocratic titles and condemned *in abstentia* to lifelong banishment in Siberia, Bakunin reacted in January 1845 by publishing an open letter in Eugène Baune and Ferdinand Flocon's influential republican newspaper, *La Réforme*.[4] In this text, the first in which a Russian subject openly attacked the principle of autocracy, Bakunin rejoiced that he no longer belonged to a social order which, in any case, did not have any genuine political influence in Tsarist Russia, and he affirmed that a democratic revolution was possible in his country. In November 1847, he spoke at a banquet held in honor of the 17th anniversary of the 1830 Polish insurrection and advocated a revolutionary alliance between the Russian and Polish peoples against the Tsar.[5] At the request of the Russian ambassador in Paris, he was expulsed to Belgium.

In spite of the contacts that he had developed in Paris with French socialists, German democrats and Polish émigrés, Bakunin appears to have led during this period the difficult life of a revolutionary without a cause. Whereas his texts from 1842-1843 insisted on the immanence of revolution and the necessity to leave the terrain of philosophy to act concretely in the practical

2 This text has not yet been translated into English. For a French translation of "Der Kommunismus", *Schweizerischer Republikaner*, (2, 3, 13 June 1843), see my critical edition of Bakunin's early Hegelian texts, *Bakounine jeune hégélien. La philosophie et son dehors*, (Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2007), pp. 149-159.

3 For Bakunin's selectively retrospective account of his stay in Paris, see Bakunin, *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin. With the Marginal Comments of Tsar Nicholas I*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 44-52.

4 On the importance of *La Réforme* in the French press on the eve of the February 1848 Revolution, see André Lanza, "Un républicanisme à tendance sociale. *La Réforme* de Baune et Flocon", in Thomas Bouchet et al, *Quand les Socialistes inventaient l'avenir*, (Paris : La Découverte, 2015) , pp. 158-166.

5 On the context of this speech, and more generally on the subject of Bakunin's Polish relations, see H. Elsner, J. Grandjonc, E. Neu et H. Pelger, *Fragmente zu internationalen demokratischen Aktivitäten um 1848 (M. Bakunin, F. Engels, F. Mellinet u. a.*), (Trier, Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus n° 48, 2000), pp. 113-305.

world, he could not find an immediate outlet for his desire for action. If one is to believe his 1851 *Confession*, Bakunin seems to have recognized that only two forces could extricate Western civilization from its current decomposition: "the rude, unenlightened people, called the mob," which "has preserved in itself freshness and power", and the Slavic peoples, notably the Russian people, whose "semi-barbaric nature", Bakunin had claimed in his article published in *La Réforme*, destined it for "a great mission in the world".[6] Despite his relations with German communists, however, he did not rally to their positions. Even though he lived with the editors of *Vorwärts* from July 1844 onwards, Bakunin was more of a circumspect observer of their activities than an active participant in them. Furthermore, when he encountered Marx and his friends again in Belgium towards the end of 1847, they left a disagreeable impression on him.[7] It was thus improbable that the young Russian revolutionary would join forces with the German communists. That left distant Russia, which Bakunin hoped to reach via the intermediary of Poland, at the time territorially occupied in large part by the Tsarist Empire.

The Prague Slav Congress of June 1848.

With such little prospects, Bakunin was struck by the news of the February Revolution in France. He immediately returned to Paris and plunged himself into the drunken political enthusiasm ubiquitous in the capital. Bakunin's 1851 *Confession* vividly recounts this episode and constitutes one of the few sources of information about his activities during the 1848 revolutions.[8] Nevertheless, once the moment of euphoria had passed, Bakunin claimed that his place was not in Paris. As a Russian, he wanted a revolution in Russia, and much of the activity of Bakunin in the following months should be understood in light of this objective, particularly the need to find, as Bakunin put it retrospectively in his *Confession*, "an Archimedean fulcrum for action".[9] In a 13 March 1848 letter published in *La Réforme*, he wrote : "I am Russian, and my thoughts bear naturally on Russia. It is from there that one expects the initial wrath of reaction to emanate. It will come from there, but it will fall back on those who set it in motion."[10]

For tactical, political and personal reasons, it was the prospect of a Polish insurrection which initially preoccupied Bakunin during this period. Strategically, it was clear for someone who was, in many ways, the first revolutionary in Russian history, that the Poles constituted the principal

6 *The Confession,* p. 40 and *La Réforme*, 27 janvier 1845.

7 See Bakunin's late December 1847 letter to Georg Herwegh to this effect. Bakunin Papers, Saint-Petersburg, IRL 28529 CC IV 27, or the Bakunin Papers CD-Rom available from the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

8 For his description of his time in Paris during the February Revolution, see *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin*, pp. 54-58.

9 *The Confession*, *op. cit.*, p. 67. The expression was used by Bakunin to describe why he decided to participate in the June 1848 Prague Slav Congress discussed below.

10 *La Réforme*, 13 March 1848.

geopolitical force of opposition to the Tsar. Furthermore, for several months, Bakunin never ceased to remind his contemporaries that, as a Russian democrat, he considered the condition of the Russian and Polish peoples to be the same, and thus was compelled to advocate the emancipation of Poland. His only divergences with the Polish nationalists related to the boundaries of a future independent Poland. against the opinion of many Polish patriots, Bakunin thought that such a state should only include those territories populated by ethnic Poles, and thus neither "Little Russia", nor "White Russia" (corresponding respectively to today's Ukraine and Belorussia). Finally, even though he tried to dissimulate its importance in his 1851 *Confession* addressed to the Tsar, Bakunin had since 1844 been in repeated contact with Polish patriots, whose aspirations for national self-determination he both claimed to share and believed had to be encouraged were revolutionary action ever successfully to penetrate Russia.

At the beginning of April 1848, flush with a false passport furnished by Ledru-Rollin and funds raised by the Polish émigré community, Bakunin left Paris with the hopes of reaching the region of Poznan. The city of Poznan was under Prussian domination, but following the German revolution in March, it rose up to declare itself for Polish independence. Bakunin never made it to the region, however, because he was arrested in Berlin and had to leave for Breslau (now known as Wrocław). From there, he found himself in the company of Polish émigrés at a congress held to discuss what to do in the wake of Poznan insurrection (the revolt, militarily led by General Ludwik Mierosławski, was crushed during the month of May by Prussian troops). To believe his *Confession*, Bakunin took no part in the congress debates, which mainly revolved around fissures within the Polish nationalist movement, splitting democrats and aristocrats. From April onwards, Bakunin was a skeptical observer of the German Revolution, which he found too verbose and not active enough when it came to concrete political initiatives. Bakunin was favorable to German unification (as well as Italian unification) within a republican framework, and he boasted that he was popular enough in certain radical circles to help get his friend Ruge nominated in Breslau as a delegate to the Frankfurt National Assembly in May 1848, where he would sit with the far-left democratic representatives.[11] Nevertheless, Bakunin thought that German Democrats should openly advocate Polish independence. They should also especially be more sensitive to growing signs of a counter-revolutionary backlash throughout Europe – evident to all in the immediate wake of the failure of the Polish insurrection, the defeat of the German revolutionary democrats in the Grand Duchy of Baden and the collapse of the German legion led by Georg Herwegh, and the eviction of far-left democrats from the Provisional Government in Paris on 15 May.

It was in Breslau that Bakunin heard about the Slav Congress to be held in Prague in the following weeks.[12] This Congress, initially designed for only Austrian Slavs as a sort of equivalent

11 *The Confession*, p. 66.

12 On this congress, see Lawrence D. Orton, *The Prague Slav Congress of 1848*, (New York, Columbia University

of the Frankfurt and Pest Assemblies, in the end was compelled to accept delegates from all the Slavic populations, whether under Prussian, Austrian, Russian, or Turkish domination. In the historiography of the revolutions of 1848, nationalist causes have often been overshadowed by those democratic and socialist causes which motivated revolutionaries, and perhaps partially for this reason, outside of Eastern Europe, the various Slavic uprisings have been the least studied. Yet it was within this exact framework that Bakunin agitated in June 1848.

Even though it was by default that Bakunin decided to participate in the Prague Slav Congress, he managed to find good reasons to attend. In 1848, the Austrian Empire was seen by many revolutionaries as the embodiment of everything they were fighting against. Regrouping Austria, Galicia, Hungary, Bohemia, Slovakia, northern Italy, and Croatia, it was the "prison of peoples" subsequently denounced at the end of World War I.[13] Dominated by the Habsburg dynasty, it was considered to be, courtesy of Metternich's machinations, the principal artisan of the retrograde European political order put in place by the 1815 Vienna Settlement. Since March 1848, the Austrian Empire had come under attack on several fronts. Because of an uprising of workers and democrats in Vienna, the court had fled to Innsbruck. Metternich, forced to resign, went into exile in London; and a Parliament was established. At the same time, the Austrian monarchy was confronted with insurrection in Hungary, whose Magyar leaders at first demanded their own parliament and an imperial constitution, but soon demanded outright independence – despite the opposition of those Slavic minorities present on Hungarian territory and which played an important role later in quashing the Magyar rebellion.

In the crescendo of revolution which marked the first half of 1848, the Czechs had sent Emperor Ferdinand a petition signed by various prominent bourgeois, intellectuals, students and workers demanding the abolition of corvées, the reconstitution of the kingdom of Bohemia, and the same equality for Czechs as that granted ethnic Germans. Nevertheless, confronted with the explosive reemergence of the German and Hungarian nationalist movements and the dangers their growth posed for resolving the demands of different Slav minorities within the Austrian Empire, partisans of the Slavic cause were in a delicate position. At the initiative of the Czech historian, František Palacký (1798-1876), Slavic elites wanted to organize a congress in Prague that might determine what a common future for the Slavic peoples of the Austrian Empire could look like. If one is to believe his 1851 *Confession*, Bakunin held no conception of Pan-Slavic unity before this congress.[14]

Press, 1978).

13 For a discussion of the pertinence of the expression, "prison of peoples", see Jean-Paul Bled, "L'Autriche-Hongrie : un modèle de pluralisme national ? ", in André Liebich et André Reszler (dir.), *L'Europe centrale et ses minorités : vers une solution européenne ?*, (Paris, PUF, 1993), pp. 25-35.

14 For example, *The Confession*, pp. 67-69. However, while in Brussels preparing a second discourse in favor of a Russo-Polish revolutionary alliance in January 1848, Bakunin wrote to the Polish émigré Michal Lempicki that his speech would be "directed particularly against Pan-Slavism and [would contain] a revolutionary appeal to Russians". See H. Elsner et al., *Fragmente*, *op. cit.*, p. 265. This would seem to constitute some proof that Bakunin was at least conscious that Pan-Slavism was pro-Russian at the time.

If true, then it was likely Bakunin's relative ignorance of Panslavism, which caused him to believe, upon his discovery of this movement, that it had only just begun to flourish, whereas, in reality, for the composite ethnicities of the Austrian Empire, the Prague Slav Congress marked an important transition between the Panslavism of the 1830s (which, by 1848, was only really defended by partisans of the Tsar) and the Austro-Slavism of the 1860s (whose partisans sought to attain for the Slavs the same equal legal and political status from which Germans and Hungarians benefited).

It is without a doubt at Prague, where Bakunin discovered the unifying role which Germanophobia played for the different Slavic groups of Central Europe, that was born Bakunin's scheme of using nationalist passions towards revolutionary ends. Bakunin's own platform at Prague is contained in the text he presented at the congress, "Fundamental Principles of the New Slav Politics".[15]. The first half of this manifesto, a patchwork of Hegelian references, affirmed that the Slavic peoples, "the last to arrive in the march of European civilization", were destined to be the people who go furthest in emancipation and realize the "final end of humanity". Much like Marx had done with regards to "the proletariat" four years previously in his article on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* published in the only issue of the Paris-based *Deutsche-französische Jahrbücher*,[16] Bakunin considered the Slavs to be at once the most oppressed national group and the one whose particular liberation necessarily would signal the emancipation of all other peoples. In the same part of "Fundamental Principles" in which he made these claims, Bakunin juxtaposed the mechanistic unity imposed by states and empires which imprisoned the Slavs with the vital, living and natural political life which the Slavic populations were called upon to realize, and he estimated that "the new politics of the Slavic race [would] not be a politics of states but a politics of nations, a politics of free and independent peoples". Nevertheless, he also underscored how the need for strong unity amongst the Slavic peoples, whereas before they only sought their salvation in isolation from one another, engaging in fratricidal wars, allowing themselves even to be used as instruments of repression against one another. Bakunin's position makes some political sense when cast in light of the internal divisions and ethnic tensions well apparent during the Prague Congress, and which Bakunin described three years later in his 1851 *Confession*: "everyone was pulling in his own direction and wished to make of the others a steppingstone for his own advancement".[17] For such reasons, the congress " – just like all other contemporary congresses and political gatherings – was

15 Written in French (no doubt with other democratic participants in the Prague Congress), "Principes fondamentaux de la nouvelle politique slave", has been published for the first time in my critical edition, *La liberté des peuples : Bakounine et les révolutions de 1848*, (Lyon, Atelier de Création Libertaire, 2009), pp. 92-95. The English language translation given in the anthology edited by Sam Dolgoff, *Bakunin on Anarchism* (New York: Vintage, 1972), pp. 63-68, is both incomplete and philologically inadequate (giving no indication to unknowing readers from what draft or published version it was derived).

16 See Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction", in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (henceforth *MECW*), v. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 175-187.

17 *The Confession*, p. 72. Bakunin particularly singled out Czech and Polish participants in this regard.

decidedly empty and meaningless".[18]

Was Bakunin an "anarchist" in 1848? Besides the fact that he did not declare himself to be one until almost twenty years later, the two other parts of "Fundamental Principles" which presented Bakunin's concrete political project, would answer negatively. This text effectively foresaw in its second half, in parallel with the independence of all Slavic peoples, their common submission to a Slavic Council charged with resolving their differences. The Council would alone be granted the right to declare war or to make alliances with foreign powers (even though each Slavic ethnic group had the duty to come to the defense of any other Slavic people, were the latter attacked). It is easy to infer from this sketch of a federal constitution constituted along ethno-cultural lines the sorts of nationalist dissensions present at the Prague Congress which Bakunin's sketch aimed to circumscribe when it declared any hegemonic attempt by one Slavic people to dominate another a crime against all (Bakunin had in mind the Czechs) or forbid any nationality to wage war on its own initiative against a foreign power (like the General Josip Jelačić von Buzim, who wanted his Croatian forces to crush the Hungarians with the support of the Austrian Emperor). On the other hand, the internal constitutions that each people was supposed to adopt were founded on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity; banished aristocratic privileges; guaranteed the access of all to a share of national property; and distinguished nationality and citizenship (such that a Slovakian Croat might have Croat nationality but Slovak citizenship).

The position adopted by Bakunin at the Prague Slav Congress had few followers, even if Bakunin retrospectively thought that he had contributed to giving the congress a more Pan-Slavic and liberal tone (absent a more democratic one). The Congress came to an unexpected end on 12 June 1848 with the outbreak of an insurrection led by students and workers in Prague. As Bakunin recounted in his 1851 *Confession*, when he found out the day before that the insurrection was imminent, he tried "to persuade the students to refrain from an impossible undertaking and not give the Austrian troops an opportunity for an easy victory".[19] Bakunin's fears were well-grounded: the uprising was crushed by the troops of General Windischgrätz who, enraged by the accidental death of his wife, killed by a stray bullet coming from his own troops, bombarded the city until its surrender on 17 June. Yet Bakunin's reluctance did not prevent him from actively participating in the Prague insurrection, for which he would be subsequently indicted during his later trial in Austria in 1850.

Bakunin's *Appeal to the Slavs* and Engels's "Democratic Pan-Slavism".

18 *Ibid.*, p. 69. In the same text, Bakunin recounted how he wanted to give the Pan-Slavic movement a dictatorial allure in order to pre-empt internal divisions and the cooptation of Central European movements for national emancipation by bourgeois Slavs.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

In the months following the Prague Slav Congress, Bakunin returned to Germany, and, in spite of the political turmoil there and the numerous expulsions which it brought on, moved between Dresden, Breslau, and Berlin, before settling in Dessau, in the small duchy of Anhalt-Köthen. It was there that in October 1848 he wrote his *Appeal to the Slavs by a Russian Patriot*, the text most representative of the objectives and contradictions of his action during the 1848 revolutionary period.[20] Because this same text was also subjected to extensive criticism by Friedrich Engels in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, it can be interpreted as the first confrontation between the competing revolutionary visions of Bakunin and Marx and his friends and allies.

Bakunin's *Appeal* was written during a particularly difficult period for European revolutionaries – one marked by the quashing of the Prague insurrection, the June Days in Paris, and the calculated exploitation by the Austrian imperial government of Slavic nationalism against various democratic movements. For Bakunin in particular, it was a time marked by accusations, repeated in the pages of Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in its 6 July issue, that Bakunin was a spy in the pay of the Russian government.[21] At the request of his friend, Hermann Müller-Strübing (1812-1893), Bakunin spent more than a month writing his *Appeal to the Slavs*, which would first be published in German in December 1848, and then in French in January 1849 (in the pages of *La Réforme*). The initial draft of Bakunin's *Appeal*, written in French, as well as the subsequent drafts of the same text, reveal the difficulties Bakunin had both in defining what he thought exactly about the political situation in autumn 1848 and in determining how genuine revolutionaries might influence this situation on the basis of his own fluid assessment. Bakunin's intentions appear clearly in the preamble of the *Appeal* : he was calling on the Slavs of Central Europe to choose between two opposing sides – revolution or counter-revolution – between which no middle way (notably of a diplomatic nature) was possible. Thus, he sought to transform the Slavic cause into a revolutionary cause. In affirming that there was "no middle road", Bakunin reiterated the refusal of mediation which characterized his 1842 article, "The Reaction in Germany". In reality, his *Appeal* aimed less to identify a clear and existing opposition between two invidious political camps than about how to arrive at such an opposition. In this work, as in the two longer texts that he wrote during his subsequent

20 For two versions of this text, see *La liberté des peoples*, pp. 97-132, as well as my analysis of Bakunin's *Appeal* in *ibid.* pp. 27-60.

21 These rumors were initially propagated by the Russian government, itself, around the time it succeeded in getting the government of the July Monarchy to expel Bakunin from France at the end of 1847. They were partially effective in influencing opinion in the milieu of Polish patriots. Despite Marx's denial of any responsibility for these rumors when they met in London in 1862, Bakunin always remained convinced that Marx had been at the source of the charges of espionage leveled in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. For Marx's 2 August 1848 retraction of the slanderous charges in the pages of the same paper, see "Bakunin", in *MECW*, v. 7 (New York: International Publishers, 1977), pp. 315-316. For a complete dossier on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*'s charges in French translation, including Bakunin's reactions to them, see Arthur Lehning's anthology, *Michel Bakounine et l'Italie, 1871-1872. Deuxième partie. La Première Internationale en Italie et le conflit avec Marx*, in Michel Bakounine, *Œuvres complètes*, v. 2, (Paris : Champ Libre, 1974 [1963]), pp. 331-334.

imprisonment ("My Defense"[22] and the *Confession*), Bakunin affirmed that the common target of revolutionaries should be the destruction of the Austrian Empire as both the living symbol of all forms of oppression and the chief representative of imperial domination. If Bakunin singularly targeted Austria, he cautioned Central European Slavs against the temptation of placing their hopes in another empire such as Russia.[23]

All the different versions of the *Appeal* contain a description of the revolutionary ebb and flow of 1848. For the flow, which since February 1848, had carried away everything with it as it went, Bakunin cast the Prague Congress in the most radical light possible by underscoring his own propositions. For the ebb, the dissolution of the Slav Congress had been one of the first manifestations. This revolutionary ebb and flow of expansion and contraction was identified in the German version of Bakunin's *Appeal* with the action of spirit in Hegel's philosophy of history. When Bakunin called on the Slavs to let themselves be carried away by the flow of the revolution, the latter was identified with "the new spirit, with its dissolving spirit" which "had irrevocably penetrated humanity". This spirit "digs down into European society until its most deepest and darkest layers". Bakunin's recourse to Hegel was a way of guaranteeing that the revolution had not ended in defeat, but, like a mole, had simply gone deep underground: continuing to burrow at the roots of the old world, it would soon reemerge in the light of day.[24] The revolutionary ebb, described in the *Appeal,* was seen at work in the counter-revolutionary instrumentalization of nationalist sentiment against the democratic revolutions of Vienna and Pest: it was the Croats, thus the Slavs, who had attacked Hungary during the summer, and it was the Czechs who had bombed Prague under the orders of Windischgrätz in June 1848.

In the published version of the *Appeal*, Bakunin limited himself to discussing the national reaction again democracy. This represented a clear shrinking of his initial project, for the German published version of the *Appeal* cut from the original French-language manuscript version it was drawn from the place Bakunin initially granted the social question. In the first draft of his *Appeal to Slav Peoples*, Bakunin showed how revolution served a dual purpose: the internal emancipation of peoples (the social and democratic question) and their external emancipation (the question of nationalities) – and how reactionary political forces had taken advantage of the different ends of these two goals. In certain cases (notably Poland), the forces of reaction had crushed a national uprising by sparking tensions between different social categories, in others (notably, the Viennese

22 « My defense » was written in German and entitled *Meine Verteidigung*. It was originally published in Vaclav Čejchan, *Bakunin v Čechách*, (Prague: Vojenský archiv RČS, 1928), pp. 101-189. I included the French translation, done by the International Institute of Social History (where most of Bakunin's papers are held) in my edition, *La liberté des peuples*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-226.

23 There is a violent attack on Tsar Nicholas I's Russia in the *Appeal*. See *La liberté des peuples*, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-130.

24 This image, which is often attributed to Marx because he subsequently used it in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, constituted Bakunin's own elliptical appropriation of Hegel's use (in his *Lessons on the history of philosophy*) of the passage in *Hamlet* (Act 1, scene 5) wherein Hamlet, addressing the ghost of his father, exclaims: "Well done, old mole!"

insurrection), they had used ethnic uprisings to crush a democratic and social revolution. In still other cases, the reaction had mobilized the invidious potential of the social and national questions: the hatred of the Austrian empire shared by different ethnic groups could be turned into hatred of the composite ethnic groups of Austria against each other (i.e. Croats against Hungarians), and the democratic aspirations shared by both the the proletariat and the bourgeoisie could disintegrate before the divisions separating those two classes (i.e. as in France during the 1848 June Days in Paris). Many initial variants of the first draft of the *Appeal* went on even to underscore the inherently counter-revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie, whose "happiness is the inverse proportion to the liberty of peoples" and which, by its nature as a class, seeks protection in despots. However, in the version Bakunin finally published, any allusion to the social question entirely disappeared. Because contemporaries were visibly weary of the imminence of a social confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Bakunin decided to spare the former. Nor was he alone: many revolutionaries did this at the time insofar as it was a tactic which allowed one to focus more exclusively on the national and political question, while leaving vague those social tensions contained within this question.

The German version of the *Appeal* was published in December 1848 and quickly inspired a response from Marx's entourage in a two-part article by Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", published in the 15 and 16 February 1849 issues of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.[25] Having first affirmed that "Bakunin is our friend", Engels launched into a violent attack on Bakunin's *Appeal*. Engels's articles leveled two major criticisms. On the one hand, he denounced the chimerical aspirations of Bakunin (which were also those of the 1848 revolutions) and underscored those invariable obstacles political realities would pose to their realization – a point Bakunin, himself, later acknowledged in his 1851 *Confession*. On the other, among those obstacles identified by Engels was the inherently counter-revolutionary character of the Slavic peoples, which prevented them from having any national future or from participating in the unfolding of universal history except through German (and possibly Hungarian) domination. This second line of argument implied a conception of universal history as a civilizing process in which the Slavs were a population which needed civilizing. In his two-part article, Engels even drew a comparison with the recent annexation of California from Mexico by the United States and tried to show that two sovereign peoples do not necessarily fraternize with one another when their relative degrees of civilization differed too greatly. For this reason, the United States had undertaken against Mexico a war "waged wholly and solely in the interest of civilization" to the extent it had caused "splendid California" to be "taken away from the lazy Mexicans".[26]

25 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", in *MECW*, v. 8 (New York: International Publishers, 1977), pp. 362-378.

26 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", p. 365. Interestingly, Bakunin, certainly unaware of the Engels's two-part article, had himself argued around the same time that the territorial expansion of the United States on the North

Interestingly, Engels's article contrasts with an earlier one he published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on 17 June 1848 following the quashing of the Prague uprising by Austrian imperial troops.[27] At the time, it was not the Slavs who were "the main instruments of the counter-revolutionaries",[28] but the Germans, who constituted "a nation which throughout its history has allowed itself to be used as a tool of oppression against all other nations".[29] To which Engels added: "A revolutionized Germany ought to have renounced her entire past, especially as far as the neighboring countries are concerned. Together with her own freedom, [Germany] should have proclaimed the freedom of the nations hitherto suppressed by her".[30] But in February 1849, Engels considered henceforth that there were certain revolutionary peoples destined to play a civilizing role in world history identical with the expansion of capitalism, which were diametrically opposed to other counter-revolutionary peoples "which have never had a history of their own",[31] peoples whose mode of production was pre-capitalist, and which, for this reason, were destined to be civilized by superior peoples. In Engels's article, this opposition was at play in a panegyric to the Germans for "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!"[32] The destiny of the Slavic peoples, whose long-standing submission to ethnic groups like the Hungarians or the Germans "sufficiently proves which was the more viable and vigorous" of ethnicities, could be summarized in the following invidious alternative: either the inferior Slavic peoples should throw themselves into capitalist development under the guidance of "us and the other revolutionary nations of Europe" (i.e. the Germans, the Poles, and the Magyar Hungarians), or they would fall victim to Ottoman expansion.[33] Cast this way by Engels, the Slavs appeared like the world-historical ethno-cultural equivalent of the lumpenproletariat in Marx's more socioeconomic schema of class struggle.[34].

Even though Bakunin was unaware of Engels's article, some of the arguments mobilized by Engels were sufficiently common at the time for Bakunin later to formulate an indirect response to them in his 1850 manuscript, written in German and composed while in prison, "My Defense" ("*Meine Verteidigung*"). This text explained how in Austria, 8 million Germans would have insurmountable difficulties germanicizing the remaining 30 million of the population (of which 16

American continent was occurring "in the interest of civilization, democracy, and labor". See either Čejchan, *Bakunin v Čechách*, p. 119, or *La Liberté des peuples*, p. 173.

27 Engels, "The Prague Uprising", in *MECW*, v. 7, pp. 91-93.

28 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", *MECW*, v. 8, p. 372. Engels continued: "Oppressed at home, outside their country, wherever Slav influence extended to, they were the *oppressors of all revolutionary nations*."

29 Engels, "The Prague Uprising", *MECW*, v. 7, p. 92.

30 *Ibid*.

31 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", *MECW*, v. 8, p. 367.

32 *Ibid.* p. 369.

33 *Ibid.* p. 370 and p. 377.

34 This comparison has been suggested by Benoît P. Hepner in his *Bakounine et le panslavisme révolutionnaire*, (Paris : Marcel Rivière, 1948), p. 279.

million were Slavs). Bakunin proposed a different alternative from that suggested by Engels : either the Germans accept the emancipation of the Slavic peoples, or the latter should turn towards Russia, such that the Slavic "wedge" which constituted Bohemia in the middle of greater Germany could transform itself into an even more menacing Russian "wedge".[35]

For Engels, however, the Slav democrats who, like Bakunin, sought to rally the Austrian Slavs to the revolution and would have them turn against the Austrian empire were either naïves who had been deceived (they reminded Engels of "a hen which despairingly circles the edge of a pond where the young ducklings which she has hatched out now suddenly escape from her into a totally foreign element into which she cannot follow them"[36]), or were simply nationalists disguised as revolutionaries. Such accusations aside, in many ways the difference between Bakunin and Engels on the Slav question can be considered the first version of the conflict, several years later, which would pit Bakunin against Marx and his allies on the question of historical necessity. From 1849 onwards, Engels stressed that history followed a necessary course, in which "nothing is achieved without violence and implacable ruthlessness",[37] and civilization invariably had to experience a capitalist mode of production and state centralization. Praise for capitalist civilization by the communist Engels was inscribed within a conception of history, put forth in the *Communist Manifesto*, in which the capitalist mode of production would give birth dialectically to communist society. If Bakunin would later oppose this overarching historical vision, it is difficult not to note already the national tenor of those differences separating Engels (and, by extension, Marx) from Bakunin. The end of Engels's 1849 article was particularly violent: threatening the Slavic peoples with an "'*inexorable life-and-death struggle*' against those Slavs who betray the revolution", and endorsing "an annihilating fight and ruthless terror – not in the interests of Germany, but in the interests of the revolution" while, nevertheless, reminding readers that "hatred of Russians was and still is the *primary revolutionary passion* among the Germans".[38]

Without exactly endorsing the transformation of Slavic Germanophobia into revolutionary passion, Bakunin did choose to underscore how it constituted its principal nationalist foundation. Belief that the political centralization of Germany was a correlate of economic development was bound to become a source of conflict between Marx and Bakunin. On 20 July 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, Marx revealingly wrote to Engels: "The French deserve a good hiding. If the

35 The ethno-topographic image of a Slavic "wedge" caught between German and Magyar peoples, interfering with the construction of a greater Germany and impossibly separate, as an ethnic bloc, from the Southern Slavs of the Austrian Empire, is mentioned repeatedly by Engels in "Democratic Pan-Slavism", pp. 367-369. Bakunin reverses Engels's focus, recasting such a supposed wedge in light of geopolitics to the east in "My Defense", *La liberté des peoples*, p. 219.

36 Engels, "Democratic Pan-Slavism", p. 377.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 378. For an examination of Engels's anti-Slavic prejudices in comparison with Bakunin, see both my own summary in *La liberté des peoples*, pp. 51-60, as well as Roman Rosdolsky's classic, albeit polemical, study, *Engels and the "Nonhistoric" Peoples: The National Question in the Revolutions of 1848*, (Glasgow: Critique Books, 1987 [1979]), *passim*.

Prussians win, centralization of the STATE POWER will be useful for the centralization of the German working class. German predominance would then shift the centre of gravity of the West European workers' movement from France to Germany, and you need only to compare developments in the two countries from 1866 to the present day to realize that the German working class is superior to the French both in theory and organization. Its predominance over the French on the international stage would also mean the predominance of *our* theory over Proudhon's, etc."[39] For his part, Bakunin would never cease to believe that Bismarck's political centralization of Germany was the principal geopolitical threat to democratic socialism in Europe, best embodied in the French revolutionary tradition.[40]

Nor was Bakunin's underscoring of the solidarity between empires so far-fetched at the time. In February 1849, Russian troops entered Transylvania to help crush the Hungarian insurrection. Retrospectively, in terms of geopolitical realism, however, Bakunin's subsequent trajectory during the revolutionary period of 1848-1849 would seem at least partly to confirm Engels's overall assessment. If Bakunin's *Appeal* was particularly noticed by Western European readers, it had little impact on the Central European Slavic populations to which it was addressed. This did not prevent Bakunin from actively continuing to prepare for an insurrection in Bohemia with Czech democrats from Leipzig, where he secretly arrived in January 1849. Back in Dresden in April, Bakunin published a series of four articles subsequently entitled, in the form of an anonymous pamphlet, "The Situation of Russia" (*Russische Zustände*).[41] In this work, Bakunin at once sought to inform a German readership of its true adversary, Russian autocracy, as well as to raise German consciousness of the revolutionary potential of Russia. While recognizing the inherently reactionary role played by the Russian Empire in European history, he wanted to underscore the fragile nature of Tsarist power, which in his opinion explained Russian intervention in the 1848 revolutions. Moreover, Bakunin asserted that the relative weakness of intermediary powers between the Tsar and the people such as the Church or the aristocracy made the likelihood of a confrontation between the Russian state and the Russian population increasingly probable, especially given popular aspirations for emancipation. In particular, the last article in the series contained an analysis of the opposition of the Russian state's mechanistic brutality to the organic life of peoples which is especially interesting in light of Bakunin's subsequent trajectory.

39 *MECW*, v. 44 (New York : International Publishers, 1989), pp. 3-4.

40 See, for instance, Bakunin's remark, in his August-September 1870 "Lettre à un Français", reproduced in its original manuscript form by Lehning in Michel Bakounine, *La Guerre franco-allemande et la Révolution sociale en France, 1870-1871*, published in v. 7 of the *Œuvres completes* (Paris, Champ Libre, 1979 [1977]), p. 82 : "Imagine Prussia, Bismarck's Germany, instead of the France of 1793, instead of that France we have all been waiting for, which we still are waiting today to initiate the Social Revolution !"

41 The first two articles of *Russische Zustände*, were published in German in the *Dresdner Zeitung* (12 and 14 April 1849), and the second two were added after Bakunin's arrest to form an anonymous pamphlet published in Leipzig. For the complete text in German, seemingly written first in French, see Bakunin, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Band 3, *Russische Zustände*, (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1996). A French translation, taking into account French-language manuscript variants, can be found in my *La liberté des peuples*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-162.

On May 3 1849, Bakunin was still conspiring with a group of young Czech revolutionaries on organizing an insurrection in Bohemia when an uprising broke out in Dresden. The king of Saxony had rejected the federal constitution proposed by the Frankfurt Assembly, approved by the Saxon Diet, and had called on the Prussian army to impose order in his kingdom. Saxon troops had shot on crowds attempting to seize weapons from the local arsenal, and the city was quickly covered in barricades. The king fled to Königstein, and a provisional revolutionary government was constituted. Even though he did not play a part in the initial uprising, Bakunin took an increasingly active role in it as an military advisor to compensate for what he took to be the gross unpreparedness and incompetence of the new government. Ironically, much of Bakunin's subsequent fame across Europe came from his vigorous and energetic actions in this insurrection, one which he neither planned nor initiated but fell into, almost accidentally, much like the relatively moderate middle-class Saxon democrats who, protesting against what they took to be an abuse of royal prerogative, found themselves at the head of Dresden's new revolutionary government.[42] Barely armed and badly outnumbered, the unwitting revolutionaries were quickly crushed by the Prussian and Saxon troops. Bakunin organized the retreat of some of the remaining insurgents from the city, but exhausted, and after having attempted in vain to convince his comrades to march to Bohemia, he was arrested with his band of unlikely bourgeois revolutionaries in Chemnitz on the night of 9-10 May 1849.

The Impact of the Revolutions of 1848-1849 on Bakunin.

Thus, began for Bakunin a long period of waiting through imprisonment, indictment, trial, sentencing, and more incarceration, which would compel him to reexamine the biographical trajectory leading up to his arrest. First imprisoned in the Dresden prison, he was then transferred on 29 August 1849 to the Königstein Fortress (where, ironically, the Saxon king had fled during the original insurrection). After several months of interrogation, he was condemned to death on 14 January 1850. In prison conditions which were much better than what he would subsequently be subjected to in the Austria Empire (first in Prague, then in a fortress in the Moravian town of Olmütz) and Russia (at the notorious Peter-and-Paul Fortress in Saint-Petersburg), Bakunin wrote a long manuscript addressed to his lawyer in order to make a plea for commuting his death sentence. Despite its title, the manuscript, "My Defense", is less an appeal for clemency than the justification

42 The attribution of the role of leader of the Dresden insurrection to Bakunin was notably made by no less than Engels in one of the articles ("Petty Traders", 2 October 1852) of his series, « Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany" published in the *New York Daily Tribune*: « They [the insurgents of Dresden] found *an able and cool-headed commander in the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin* […]. » *MECW*, v. 11 (New York: International Publishers, 1979), p. 90. Bakunin's role in the Dresden uprising were notably discussed in the memoires of Richard Wagner, who also was an active participant in the insurrection.

of a sincere revolutionary's acts cast through the lens of geopolitical considerations. It is possible that Bakunin sought to justify his actions before a German audience by dwelling on the social and political situation of his own native country, a strategy which led him to expand upon many of the points made months earlier in his articles on "The Situation in Russia". In this regard, "My Defense" constitutes at once a concentrated synthesis of Bakunin's analysis of Russia made since the middle of the 1840s and an original examination hinting at points he would make twenty years later, this time in French, in his unwieldy and incomplete 1870-1871 work, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*.[43] Initially, Bakunin described the Russian people in his "Defense" as being at once the slaves of autocracy and the executioners of other peoples, which then allows Bakunin to assert that the liberty of all oppressed peoples is interconnected with that of the Russian people. Bakunin described the Russian state as an exploitative machine, built upon the model of the 17th-century German state artificially imposed upon the organic life of the Russian people. The Russian state appeared like a force of expansion which fed off the vitality of its people, indefinitely enlarging its territory outwards, unable to behave otherwise. The principle difference between this text and those from the later "anarchist" period of Bakunin's writings from the late 1860s and early 1870s lies in his more limited application of this anti-statist analysis to Russia alone.

The second half of "My Defense" was about Germany. Bakunin's strategy of defense clearly aimed at showing that a genuine Russian democrat was necessarily in favor of German unification, whereas Russian autocracy consistently sought to prevent the emergence of a new European power. In these pages, Bakunin lamented the incapacity of the Germans to constitute themselves seriously as a unitary people capable of playing a role in universal history, and castigated them for their propensity to disperse themselves in small groupings rather concentrating their energies within a single ethno-cultural bloc. Again, it is difficult not to draw a parallel with later "anarchist" texts by Bakunin about Germany, in which he would insist on the incapacity of the German people to achieve ethno-political unity democratically, from the bottom up, without having recourse to a strong German state (which Bakunin predicted would be Prussia already in 1850), that would realize Pan-Germanist unification through military conquest. This last scenario was imagined in "My Defense" as regrettably more likely than the democratic or voluntary unification of hundreds of small German states.

On 6 June 1850, the death sentence Bakunin had been given was commuted to one of life imprisonment, although the Kingdom of Saxony transferred Bakunin only a week later to the

43 The entirety of the fragmentary manuscript, *L'Empire knouto-germanique et la revolution sociale en France*, (portions of which were published in Switzerland with the title, *La Révolution sociale ou la dictature militaire* in 1871, and then posthumously, in 1882, as *Dieu et l'État*), were published by Arthur Lehning's edition of Bakunin's writings in *Oeuvres completes*, v. 8, (Paris: Champ libre, 1982).

Austrian authorities who wanted to try Bakunin for his participation in the Prague insurrection of June 1848 and for his conspiratorial planning of an insurrection in Bohemia in the spring of 1849. Imprisoned first in Prague and then transferred to the Moravian fortress of Olmütz in March 1851, Bakunin experienced extremely harsh prison conditions. Chained to the wall, deprived of air and light, his physical and psychological state began to deteriorate. He received a second death sentence on 15 May 1851, immediately commuted to life imprisonment, only to be transferred again, this time to his native country, which had already condemned him in 1844. Sparing him a third trial, Bakunin was directly imprisoned in the Peter-and-Paul Fortress of Saint-Petersburg on 23 May 1851. It was here that Bakunin wrote at the demand of the Tsar his *Confession*, directly addressed to Nicholas I, in which he retraced those different factors which led him actively to participate in the revolutions of 1848-1849. Read and annotated by the Tsar, this exceptional document, unearthed in the wake of the 1917 Revolution, was subsequently subjected to intense partisan interpretations, whose variety depended almost entirely on its reader's desire to defend or condemn a figure by then long identified with revolutionary anarchism.[44] It is true that the deference towards the Tsar that Bakunin accorded in many passages in his *Confession* is not very flattering retrospectively for Bakunin's image as a wild-eyed revolutionary, but then it is equally comprehensible why someone who was for a long time the only living Russian revolutionary would want to win over the Tsar in the tactical interest of gaining Nicolas's clemency. And if Bakunin seized the occasion presented to him by the Tsar to analyze his own evolution and the reasons for his failure to achieve his political aims, he never gave any information, which might compromise or incriminate his conspiratorial associates or fellow travelers in revolution.

One of the most striking things about Bakunin's *Confession* is its author's apparent unwillingness to question the validity of his prior revolutionary agenda.[45] This inflexibility could have been due as much to the experience of prison, never very favorable to genuine self-criticism, as to the particular circumstances which brought to a halt Bakunin's revolutionary career. Whereas

44 The manner in which Bakunin's *Confession* was published in France nicely illustrates these two extreme positions. It was first translated from Russian and edited in 1932 by the anarchists Paulette and Fritz Brupbacher, with footnotes by Max Nettlau. After the war, it was retranslated and published as an appendix to a polemical work written by one of the leaders of the French Communist Party, Jacques Duclos, *Bakounine et Marx. Ombre et lumière*, (Paris, Plon, 1974). Duclos interpreted Bakunin's *Confession* as constituting "the pathetic rejection of his militant action", p. 41. Duclos's accusations bear similarities with the polemical hatchet-job of another French postwar communist, Georges Cogniot. Cogniot's book on Proudhon's attitude to Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in the immediate wake of the 2 December 1851 coup d'État, *Proudhon et la démagogie bonapartiste: Un socialiste en coquetterie avec le pouvoir personnel*, (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1958), likewise attempted to debunk – similarly through charges of apostasy – a canonical figure definitively associated by the 20th century with the ideology of "anarchism". On Proudhon's relations to L.N. Bonaparte during the 1848-1852 period, see Castleton's chapter in this volume.

45 This apparent absence of self-criticism was further confirmed by a characteristic letter – written in French from his prison cell at the Peter-and-Paul Fortress – which Bakunin secretly gave his sister Tatyana in February 1854. In this clandestine missive, Bakunin affirmed that he was only able to survive the isolation of prison by hoping to have "the power to begin anew that which led me here, only perhaps with more wisdom and foresight". See Michel Bakounine, *"Dans les griffes de l'Ours!": Lettres de prisons et de déportation (1849-1861)*, (Paris: Les Nuits rouges, 2010), p. 135.

he had been singularly focused on promoting democratic revolutions in the Slavic countries of Central Europe, Bakunin had been arrested for his participation in one of the last insurrections of the German revolution. The result was that he could not bring to fruition his own revolutionary agenda for Central Europe's Slavs. Indeed, it is possible that his arrest struck him as a sort of accident. This might explain why he took up more or less the same revolutionary agenda he subscribed to in 1848-1849 after his subsequent escape from Siberian exile in 1861, before inflecting it through the lens of anarchism after 1864, in the wake of the failure of yet another Central European Slavic insurrection.

After having written his *Confession*, Bakunin remained until spring 1854 at the Peter-and-Paul Fortress. From 1853 onwards, he suffered from scurvy, lost all of his teeth, and his physical appearance declined radically. Fearing an attack on the capital during the Crimean War, the government transferred him to the Schlüsselberg Fortress, east of Saint Petersburg on the shores of Lake Ladoga. In 1855, Tsar Nicholas I died, and his successor, Alexander II, decided in 1857 in a spirit of clemency to commute Bakunin's sentence to perpetual banishment to Siberia. Bakunin left prison on 8 March 1857, and, after having briefly visited his family, was moved to Tomsk, where he met the 17-year old Antonia Kwiatkowski, whom he married in March 1859 and with whom he left for Irkutsk. Having progressively obtained more and more freedom of movement (partly because of his genealogical relation to the Governor General of Eastern Siberia, Nicholas Muraviev, a second cousin from his mother's side) Bakunin gained salaried employment in a trading company. In this capacity, he took part in an expedition to the mouth of the river Amur on the Pacific Ocean during June and early July 1861 with the intention of escaping Siberia. Managing to hop aboard an American sailing vessel, he arrived, first in Hakodate, Japan, on 14 August, then in Yokohama, on 24 August, from whence he left for the United States, docking at San Francisco on 3 October, then at New York (via the Panama Canal) on 15 November. Having gathered the funds necessary to cross the Atlantic, Bakunin left the United States on 14 December, and arrived in Liverpool on the 27th of the same month to turn up, shortly thereafter, unannounced at Herzen's London residence.[46]

During his stay in the United States, Bakunin wrote to Herzen (3 October 1861) that he was planning to busy himself again with "the Polish Slavonic cause, which has been my *idée fixe* since 1846 and was in practice my specialty in 1848 and 1849", and he added, in a turn of phrase idiomatically reminiscent of his language from twelve years previously, "the destruction, the

46 On Bakunin's arrival and subsequent stay at Herzen's house in London, see Herzen's account in the complete Constance Garnett English-language translation of *My Past and Thoughts*, v. 5 (New York: Knopf, 1926), pp. 131-160; and Natalya Alexyevna Ogaryov-Tutchkov's account in her memoires translated by Garnett and included in *My Past and Thoughts*, v. 6 (New York: Knopf, 1928), pp. xl-xlviii. For the fullest account in English based on Russian sources of Bakunin's stay at Herzen's house, see E.H. Carr's still amusing *Michael Bakunin*, (New York: Vintage, 1961 [1937]), pp. 251-294.

complete destruction, of the Austrian Empire will be my last word".[47] Indeed, during the first two years subsequent to his escape, Bakunin seems to have sought to pick up where he had left off his revolutionary activity in 1849.[48] This comes through in both many of the texts he wrote in either pamphlet form or for Herzen's *Kolokol* about Russia and the Slavic question in 1862 as well as in his attempts to involve himself in the 1863 Polish insurrection and his articles in the Swedish press from this time.[49] It was only after the failure of the Polish insurrection that Bakunin began to call into question the possibility of transforming patriotic nationalist uprisings into revolutionary movements. Beginning in 1864, Bakunin began to criticize what he called nationalist radicalism, and, in this vein, he wrote his first revolutionary programs characterized by an avowedly federalist and anti-statist socialism. From 1867 onwards, his writings took on a more seemingly explicit anarchist tenor, and Bakunin the radical Hegelian Pan-Slavist of 1848-1849, became the better known Bakunin made famous by the posthumous ideological quarrels of the 20th century.[50] Having become a member of the IWMA in 1868, Bakunin would subsequently clash with Marx. Through the latter's machinations on the General Council, he would be kicked out of the International in 1872. After having published in Russian his last important text (the only substantial work he managed to complete in book form), *Statism and Anarchy*, in 1873,[51] Bakunin, increasingly sick, abandoned political life altogether after one last botched attempt at insurrection in Bologna in August 1874. He died in Berne in 1876.

Yet during these last years of revolutionary activity, vestiges of 1848 were nevertheless still present. Indeed, it was most often with former actors of 1848 that Bakunin found himself in conflict during this period. This was initially the case with Mazzini, whom Bakunin sparred with after the latter condemned the Paris Commune.[52] This conflict was partly driven by the fact that many of Mazzini's former followers had embraced Bakunin's ideological leadership in the early 1870s. But Bakunin's struggle with Mazzini also revolved around the competing aspirations for social and national emancipation among Italian radicals. Those clashes pitting these aspirations against one

47 Bakunin added: "[…] to promote it, I am ready to become a drummer-boy or even a rascal, and if I should succeed in advancing it by one hair's-breadth I shall be satisfied. And after that will come the glorious free Slav federation, the one way out for Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and the Slavonic peoples more generally." Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, v. 5, p. 131.

48 A point first made by Herzen, *ibid.* v. 5, pp. 131-132, among many others. See also Carr's account in *Bakunin*, especially pp. 251-253.

49 For an anthology of Bakunin's writings from this period in French translation (largely done by the International Institute of Social History), see Réné Marie Berthier (ed.), Michel Bakounine, *Textes sur la question slave et l'Europe du Nord, 1862-1864* (n.p.: Éditions des Sorbiers, n.d.),

50 The image of Bakunin, the revolutionary anti-Marxist anarchist of the period of the First International (as opposed to, for example, Bakunin the idiosyncratic Hegelian Pan-Slavist of 1848-1849), has been undeniably reinforced by the fact that the two most accessible collections of Bakunin's writings – the first published by Max Nettlau with James Guillaume's assistance in the early 20th century, and the second by Arthur Lehning after World War II – have focused exclusively on Bakunin's writings from 1867 onwards, ignoring his earlier writings from the 1840s until the time of the IWMA.

51 Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

52 This conflict is well-documented in Lehning's two-volume anthology, *Michel Bakounine et l'Italie, 1871-1872*, published in Michel Bakounine, *Oeuvres completes*, v. 1, *op. cit.* and v. 2 (Paris: Champ Libre, 1974 [1963]), *passim*.

another during the close of the *Risorgimento* obviously resuscitated many of the dilemmas Bakunin, himself, had been acutely confronted with in 1848-1849 when he attempted to formulate a revolutionary platform for the Slavs of Central Europe. As for Bakunin's sparring with Marx in the IWMA, it would, of course, garner much more attention from both scholars and left-leaning militants a century later. But, likewise, it is important to remember that Bakunin never forgave Marx for the accusations of espionage published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* back in the summer of 1848. Bakunin returned to this libel regularly in his writings from the early 1870s, frequently noting as well how Marx and his allies were distinctly "German" socialists, whose attachment to the state stemmed in large part from a defect as old as his 1850 "My Defense": the incapacity of the German people to unify itself spontaneously, without outside, artificial (and Prussian) government intervention from above during the 1848-1849 period.[53] This paradoxical admixture combining the idealization of ethno-cultural unification with anti-statism is alone perhaps proof enough that even though posterity since the 20th century has chosen to remember Bakunin as one of the founding doctrinal figures of "anarchism", he remained all his life very much a creature of the contradictory aims of the European revolutions of the mid-19th century.

53 For recurrent references to the slanderous rumors purported by the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Bakunin's manuscript, "Rapports personnels avec Marx", pp. 121-130, esp. pp. 125-128, in Lehning, *Michel Bakounine et l'Italie*, *deuxième partie*, *La Première Internationale en Italie et le conflit avec Marx*, v. 2 of *Œuvres complètes*, *op. cit.*; as well as Lehning's anthology, *Michel Bakounine et les Conflits dans l'International : La Question germano-slave et le communisme d'État*, published in Bakounine, *Œuvres complètes*, v. 3, (Paris: Champ libre, 1975 [1965]), pp. 156-157; and *L'Empire knouto-germanique et la revolution sociale en France*, in Bakounine, *Œuvres complètes,* v. 8, *op. cit.* pp. 83-87 *passim*. The charge that the statist character of German socialism adopted by Marx and his allies stemmed in part from the ethno-cultural incompetence of the German people can be found in passing in the latter two volumes as well as in *Statism and Anarchy*, pp. 144-164, *passim*.